Together we will end homelessness

The homelessness monitor: England 2021

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March 2021

The homelessness monitor

The homelessness monitor is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments across the United Kingdom. Separate reports are produced for each of the United Kingdom nations.

This ninth annual report updates our account of how homelessness stands in England in 2020, or as close to 2020 as data availability allows. It also highlights emerging trends and forecasts some of the likely future changes, identifying the developments likely to have the most significant impacts on homelessness.

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March 2021

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About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. We help people directly out of homelessness, and campaign for the social changes needed to solve it altogether. We know that together we can end homelessness.

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Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned and funded by Crisis, and our thanks go to Sophie Boobis, Dr Francesca Albanese and Matthew Downie at Crisis for all of their support with this work. In addition, we are extremely grateful to all of the key informants from the statutory and voluntary sector organisations across England who found time amid the COVID-19-related pressures to help us with this, and likewise to all 148 local authorities who completed the online questionnaire despite the extraordinary strain they were under as a result of the pandemic. We would like to record our sincere appreciation for Rhiannon Sims' excellent analysis of social security and housing policy developments that we were able to draw on in preparing Chapter 2 of this report. We would also like to thank Dr Filip Sosenko for his assistance in setting up the survey, Jill McIntyre for all her help with chasing survey responses and with the overall logistics of the project, and Lynne McMordie for undertaking the formatting and proofing tasks (all I-SPHERE).

Disclaimer: All views and any errors contained in this report are the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed should not be assumed to be those of Crisis or any of the key informants who assisted with this work.

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Acronyms

B&B	Bed and Breakfast
BAU	Business as Usual
BNL	By Name List
CHAIN	Multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CTS	Council Tax Support
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment
DTR	Duty to Refer
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EEA	European Economic Area
EHS	English Housing Survey
FCA	Financial Conduct Authority
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
HB	Housing Benefit
H-CLIC	Case-level statutory homelessness data collection tool
HMRC	HM Revenue & Customs
HRA	Homelessness Reduction Act
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA	Local Authority
LGA	Local Government Association
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
LWA	Local Welfare Assistance
MD	Main Duty
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
NAO	National Audit Office
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PRS	Private Rented Sector
RSI	Rough Sleepers Initiative
SMD	Severe and Multiple Disadvantage
SRHMM	Sub-Regional Housing Market Model
TA	Temporary Accommodation
UC	Universal Credit
UK	United Kingdom
UKHLS	UK Household Longitudinal Study

Executive summary

The Homelessness Monitor series is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments in England and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.[1] This ninth annual Homelessness Monitor England updates our account of how homelessness stands in 2020, or as close to 2020 as data availability allows, and covers a year dominated by the twin major events of the COVID-19 pandemic[2] and Brexit. It is also the first Monitor in which a comprehensive analysis of Homelessness Reduction Act processes and outcomes is included and we offer detailed modelling estimates and forward projections of extreme forms of 'core' homelessness.

Key points to emerge from our latest analysis are as follows:

- Some 305,000 single people, couples and families registered homelessness applications with local authorities in 2019/20. Of these, 289,000 (95%) were judged as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- Amongst those threatened with homelessness and entitled to a 'prevention' duty half (49%) are single adults and amongst those actually homeless and entitled to a relief duty almost three-quarters (72%) are single people. This is in stark contrast to the pre-Homelessness Reduction Act era when the key headline statistic – households 'accepted' by local authorities as in 'priority need' – comprised only around one-third single people.

- Nonetheless substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants still reach the end of the post- Homelessness Reduction Act operational procedures without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them (around 20,000 households in 2019/20).

- Some 48 per cent of all 2019/20 'owed a duty' applicants were judged as having some form of support need, and in 23 per cent of (all 'owed a duty') cases, this was linked to a history of mental ill-health. Only a small proportion of applicants are subject to 'complex support needs' (e.g., 3 per cent of 'owed a duty' applicants in London had support needs associated with drug dependency; 7 per cent in rest of England).

- Temporary accommodation placements show a 91 per cent increase since 2011 (and 9 per cent in the 12 months to March 2020). Bed and Breakfast hotel placements have continued to increase at a rate exceeding that of all temporary accommodation – up by 17 per cent in the 12 months to March 2020, and by 299 per cent since 2010.

- Thanks to various temporary protective measures (especially income protection programmes and eviction moratoria), the COVID-19 pandemic triggered no immediate overall increase in homelessness applications. Indeed, the number judged as threatened with homelessness fell back significantly April-June 2020 (down 35 per cent on the previous quarter). But temporary accommodation placements surged, particularly of single homeless people, as a result of the emergency measures to protect people at risk of rough sleeping during the pandemic.

- 'Core homelessness' in England – a concept which captures the most severe and immediate forms of homelessness – is estimated to have totalled nearly 220,000 in 2019, having risen from about 187,000 in 2012. During 2020 these numbers dropped somewhat to around 200,000, mainly due to the effects of the Government's emergency measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 there were an estimated 10,500 people currently sleeping rough on any given night which had dropped by a third on the previous year.

- The largest element of core homelessness in 2018-19 was its least visible manifestation, sofa surfing, accounting for more than half (110,000 households or individuals). Next in numerical importance was hostel and similar accommodation (42,000), followed by unsuitable temporary accommodation and other unconventional accommodation, at around 19,000 each. The least numerous group were those actually sleeping rough at a point in time, which we estimate at 13,600.

- It is predicted that the economic aftermath of COVID-19 risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping, unless the Government implements a range of housing and welfare mitigation interventions, including continuing with emergency accommodation measures for those at risk of rough sleeping.

- In the longer term, the largest projected impact on reducing core homelessness would result from a large expansion of total and social housing supply and consistent, large-scale application of Housing First accompanied by appropriate support for mental health and substance misuse issues, alongside the raising of the Local Housing Allowance. A meaningful levelling up of economic performance across the English regions would also contribute to the reduction of core homelessness.

- Levels of infection and COVID-related deaths have been low amongst homeless people in England, indicating an effective public health strategy with regards to this vulnerable population. Critical

1 Parallel Homelessness Monitors are being published for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. All of the UK Homelessness Monitor reports are available from http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html

2 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Sims, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/

to this successful outcome was the national 'Everyone In' emergency accommodation initiative for people sleeping rough and those at risk; around 30,000 people in total had been assisted under these arrangements by autumn 2020.

- The speed and clarity of the early central Government response on rapidly accommodating people sleeping rough, eliminating the use of communal shelters, enhancing welfare benefits, and halting evictions, was widely welcomed, with local authorities and homelessness charities also praised for rapidly rising to an unprecedented challenge.

- However, subsequent 'mixed messages' from central Government, particularly on assistance to non-United Kingdom nationals ineligible for benefits and on the continuation of Everyone In, became a matter of acute concern amongst local authorities and their third sector partners as the crisis progressed.

- Many local authorities offered an upbeat assessment of their own performance in response to the homelessness consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and initial lockdown period, though it was clear that the resilience of both staff and resources had been severely tested, with many local authorities surprised by the sheer scale of need that the emergency measures uncovered.

- While acknowledging the large amount of homelessness emergency funding made available by central Government during the pandemic, other stakeholders criticised the proliferation of highly specified, short-term funding pots, focused overwhelmingly on rough sleeping, as well as the apparently 'transitional' nature of the accommodation to be provided under the Next Steps programme

- Local authorities expressed qualified approval for the role played by the Homelessness Reduction Act legal framework in facilitating their responses to homelessness during the early pandemic period. Councils more critical of the Act dislike what they perceive as the excessive bureaucracy associated with it.

- Key changes to local authority working practices prompted by the COVID-19 emergency include a shift to remote/online working with service users, which was viewed as having been largely successful. Some Councils intend to make a decisive shift away from communal forms of sleeping provision for homeless people post-pandemic, though others feel that financial and legal constraints make the use of night shelters unavoidable.

- While the COVID-19-prompted £20 weekly enhancement to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits have been widely welcomed, at the time of writing the Government planned to withdraw these uplifts from April 2021. There is also no indication that they will be extended to legacy benefits. The restoration of the Local Housing Allowance maxima to cover 30 per cent of private sector rents was especially beneficial in the context of managing homelessness risks, but Government plans to refreeze these rates from April 2021 will cause dismay.

- COVID-19 has inflicted extensive damage on the economy and on the public finances. There is acute concern about a potential tidal wave of 'new' homelessness as the COVID-19-induced recession takes hold, Brexit causes disruption to trade and various temporary labour market, welfare and housing protections are scaled back or ended during 2021.

Trends in homelessness

Statutory homelessness

This year's Monitor was the first where the analysis of statutory homelessness trends was substantially based on the operation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and its associated (H-CLIC) administrative dataset. Some 305,000 households registered homelessness applications with local authorities in 2019/20. Of these, 289,000 (95%) were judged as homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is slightly higher than the 272,000 'local authority case actions' as estimated for 2017/18, the last year of the 'old regime'.[3]

By comparison with the Housing Act 1996 regime, a much-increased proportion of those seeking help under the Homelessness Reduction Act are being formally assisted under prevention or relief duties, with the result that far fewer applicants/applications are 'progressing' through the system as far as being assessed as owed a main statutory rehousing duty. This traditional headline indicator of homelessness demand – at 40,000 in 2019/20 – was well below the 57,000 recorded in 2017/18.

A substantial proportion of 2019/20 prevention and relief actions ended with accommodation having been secured. Thus, households have been enabled to retain existing – or to obtain new – accommodation. This was the outcome for most prevention duty cases ended during the year (58%), with the equivalent figure for relief cases ended being 40 per cent. Assisting an applicant to obtain a new place to live (rather than to retain existing housing) was, by definition, the 'accommodation secured' result for all of the 2019/20 relief cases with this outcome, as well as for 51,490 (63%) of the 81,500 prevention cases logged as 'duty ended' during the year.

While fundamental changes to the legal framework for homelessness application assessment under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have made 'new homelessness' trend over time comparisons more difficult, temporary accommodation placements, which can be legitimately graphed over a long time series, show a 91 per cent increase since 2011 (and 9 per cent in the 12 months to March 2020).[4] Bed and Breakfast hotel placements have continued to increase at a rate exceeding that of all temporary accommodation – up by 17 per cent in the 12 months to March 2020, and by 299 per cent since 2010.

The increased 'visibility' of single adults in the official homelessness statistics is one of the most striking changes brought about by the new legislative framework. This group accounted almost three-quarters (72%) of all of those assessed as homeless and entitled to the 'relief' duty, and half (49%) of those threatened with homelessness and entitled to a 'prevention' duty. This is in stark contrast to the pre- Homelessness Reduction Act era when the key headline statistic – households 'accepted' as owed the main duty – comprised only around one-third single people.

Also notable is the emerging intelligence from H-CLIC on the profile of support needs in the statutory homeless population. While almost half (48%) of all households assessed as owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty are recorded as having a relevant support need, these needs were highly diverse in nature. Far from being dominated by complex

3 See Figure 4.11 in: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. London: Crisis. Local authority case actions' in this context refers to the households subject to Housing 1996 main duty decisions plus those assisted by local authorities via informal prevention or relief in that year (2017/18).

4 That is, at the effective start of the COVID-19 pandemic, largely preceding the impact of the Everyone In programme.

support needs associated with drug or alcohol problems, offending or rough sleeping histories, as some might assume, mental or physical ill-health problems, and experience of domestic violence, were more prominent. In fact, only a small proportion of applicants are subject to 'complex support needs' (e.g. 3 per cent of 'owed a duty' applicants in London had support needs associated with drug dependency; 7 per cent in rest of England).

Other key points to flag from analysis of these first two years of the Homelessness Reduction Act operation include some positive signs that may allay initial concerns about certain aspects of the legislation (e.g., discharge of duty on grounds of 'non-cooperation' is rarely recorded in practice), but also its limitations. Principal amongst these limitations is that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants still reach the end of the post- Homelessness Reduction Act operational procedures without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them (around 20,000 households in 2019/20).

Thanks to various temporary protective measures (especially eviction moratoria, see below), the COVID-19 pandemic triggered no immediate overall increase in homelessness applications. However, temporary accommodation placements surged in Q2 2020. By quarter end, the overall national total was more than 6,000 higher than at the start, with additional Bed and Breakfast hotel placement accounting for half of this change. The latter, therefore, rose from some 8,000 to some 11,000 over the period – a 40 per cent increase. Significantly, virtually all of this increase resulted from growth in single adult placements (especially single men) – most probably associated with the Everyone In emergency rough sleeper temporary housing initiative launched in March 2020, as discussed further below.

Core homelessness

For the first time in this year's Monitor, we present quantitative analysis of 'core homelessness', which captures some of the most severe and immediate forms of homelessness.[5]

The key categories captured by core homelessness include people sleeping rough, staying in places not intended as residential accommodation (e.g. cars, tents, boats, sheds, etc.), living in homeless hostels, refuges and shelters, placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (e.g. Bed and Breakfast hotels, Out of Area Placements, etc.), and sofa surfing (i.e., staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions).

We estimate core homelessness in England to have totalled nearly 220,000 in 2019, having risen from about 187,000 in 2012. During 2020 these numbers dropped somewhat to around 200,000, including a drop in rough sleeping by a third mainly due to the effects of the emergency COVID-19 'Everyone In' programme aimed at those at risk of rough sleeping (see further below).

The largest element of core homelessness in 2018-19 was its least visible manifestation, sofa surfing, accounting for more than half (110,000 households or individuals). Next in numerical importance was hostel and similar accommodation (42,000), followed by unsuitable temporary accommodation and other unconventional accommodation, at around 19,000 each. The least numerous group were those actually sleeping rough at a point in time, which we estimate at 13,600.

5 The core homelessness concept was introduced in research undertaken with Crisis in 2017 and updated in 2018, with this Monitor representing a further major update. Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf; and Bramley, G. (2019) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for Low-Income Households and Homeless People: Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation; Main Technical Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/bramley.2019.04

The gradual increase in overall numbers from 2012 to 2019 concealed wide differences between different categories, with hostel placements declining by 13 per cent, and sofa surfers and other unconventional increasing by 16 per cent and 13 per cent, while rough sleeping virtually doubled (99%) and unsuitable temporary accommodation rose by 171 per cent.

Our predictions indicate that the economic aftermath of COVID-19 risks a substantial rise in core homelessness unless the Government implements a range of housing and welfare mitigation interventions. This should include continuing with emergency accommodation measures for those at risk of rough sleeping on a substantial scale, maximising targeted homelessness prevention measures, ensuring social rehousing quotas for homeless people, placing limits on evictions, and implementing key welfare changes (especially raising the level of Local Housing Allowance to the level of median actual rents (and maintaining that level).

In the medium term, the most effective policies for reducing core homelessness would be large increases in welfare benefit levels and associated measures to reduce destitution, including raising the level of Local Housing Allowance as just noted. In the longer term, the largest projected impact on reducing core homelessness would result from a large expansion of total and social housing supply (accompanied by the maintenance of social housing quotas for core homeless households), the national application of Housing First, and increased rates of Local Housing Allowance). A successful levelling up of economic performance across the English regions would also contribute to the reduction of core homelessness.

Economic, policy and COVID-19 impacts on homelessness

Going into COVID-19, the United Kingdom had experienced a decade of austerity, which included public expenditure constraints affecting public services and social security benefits. In 2018/19, 17 per cent of individuals in the United Kingdom lived in households whose income before housing costs (adjusted for household composition) fell below the relative poverty threshold. Research conducted by Heriot-Watt University for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicated that some 2.4 million people, including 550,000 children, experienced destitution at some point in 2019.[6] The survey also found that the extent of destitution had grown, with the numbers of adults and children affected rising by more than half since 2017. Consequently, the relatively stable overall poverty rate over the past 15 years seems to disguise increases in very extreme experiences of hardship that reflect the impacts of labour market and social security change.

COVID-19 has caused the most dramatic shrinkage of the economy ever experienced and in any other circumstances such as massive contraction of the economy would have resulted in mass unemployment. But lockdown was accompanied by unprecedented peacetime levels of economic stimulation and, notably, the various job 'furlough' schemes. The first Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, introduced in April 2020, met 80 per cent of a furloughed employee's salary up to £2,500 per month (with the Government funding

6 See Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020

75 per cent of this cost). The scheme was extended until the end of March, and then, in December, the Chancellor announced a further extension until the end of April 2021. By the end of October, the scheme had supported almost 10 million (9.9 m) jobs at a cost of £46.4 billion.[7] The initial furlough scheme was also, according to our local authority survey, crucial in mitigating homelessness risks during the COVID-19 crisis: 80 per cent of respondents considered it 'very' or 'somewhat' important in this regard.

Lockdown brought the housing market to a halt, whilst the wider economic dislocation brought fears of mass evictions and mortgage possessions. The Government acted to protect tenants and mortgaged owners from eviction during the pandemic by introducing compulsory and blanket forbearance on the part of landlords and mortgage lenders. For renters, forbearance relied on two main mechanisms. First, legal proceedings were halted and sometimes enforcement action suspended. Second, notice periods have been extended to six months until at least the end of March 2021 in the majority of cases (with exceptions for anti-social behaviour and fraud). In this year's national online survey, 87 per cent of responding Councils considered the evictions moratorium to have been 'very important' in preventing or minimising homelessness in their area.

Notably, however, the Chancellor chose not to increase the supply of new affordable housing as part of the Government's COVID-19 stimulus package, in contrast to the response to the 2008 financial crisis, with his 2020 Summer Statement reaffirming planned housing investment as announced earlier in the year. The Affordable Homes Programme will be worth £12.2 billion over the five years to 2025/26, with annual spending rising by a quarter from £1.95 billion in 2020/21 to an average of £2.44 billion.[8] However, the new Affordable Housing Programme differs from its predecessors in some important ways: in particular, it shifts funding away from renting and towards ownership by reverting to a roughly 50:50 split between these tenures.[9]

Access to long-term housing was the capacity challenge most widely seen as having been posed (or emphasised) by the pandemic by local authorities in our national online survey. Some 61 per cent of local authority respondents considered that their authority was poorly or otherwise inadequately equipped to deal with the crisis in this respect. Among the minority of authorities where it became easier to access social rental tenancies during the pandemic, explanatory responses related in the main to amended housing association or council allocation policies that gave increased or overwhelming priority to homeless households, usually for a time limited period.

As reported in the *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing,*[10] (July 2020), the pandemic prompted a radical and rapid nation-wide shift in responses to some of the most extreme forms of homelessness with a remarkable degree of success and speed.[11] On 26th March, a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

7 Gov.UK (2020) *HMRC Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics, last updated 17 December.* Online: Gov.UK https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-december-2020

8 Perry, J. (2020) 'Building back better? Post-Covid housing programmes', in Stephens, M. et. al. (eds) *UK Housing Review Autumn Briefing.* Coventry: CIH

9 Ibid.

10 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Sims, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing.* London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/

11 See also National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic.* London: NAO

letter instructed all local authorities in England to move everyone sleeping rough and in communal shelters into a safe place, ideally in self-contained accommodation, over the following two days.[12] Over 90 per cent of people sleeping rough known to Councils at the beginning of the crisis were reported to have been offered accommodation in commercial hotels, Bed and Breakfasts, holiday lets, university accommodation or housing association stock, many of whom had been sleeping on the streets for years. By autumn 2020, around 33,000 people had been assisted under these 'Everyone In' arrangements.[13]

This Everyone In initiative was preceded by £3.2 million targeted funding to local authorities to support people sleeping rough and those at risk, alongside £4.6 billion un-ringfenced funds[14] to help councils cope with the overall financial pressures of the pandemic.[15] On 24th May the Government announced that it was to bring forward £161 million out of an (increased) £433 million four-year budget to provide 6,000 new supported housing units for ex-rough sleepers, with 3,300 of these units to become available over the next 12 months.[16] On 24th June, it was announced that £105 million would be made available for interim accommodation to ensure that those currently being assisted under Everyone In did not return to the streets in winter.[17] Various other smaller pots of funding targeted at rough sleeping were announced over the course of the year, to operate alongside pre-existing funding streams targeting homelessness, including the third year of the Rough Sleepers Initiative programme, amounting to £112million in 2020/21. In the Spending Review on 25th November, the Chancellor made available further new monies (£151 million) for local authorities to spend on rough sleeping in 2021-22.

Notable by its absence, at the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, was any notion of a purely 'localist' approach to assisting the homeless population:[18] instead, strong, decisive and hands-on leadership was offered by central Government and received and acted upon by Councils and other local stakeholders with a sense of urgency and collective endeavour. While this weakened over time, as discussed below, homeless people were, by and large, kept safe in in the early stages of the pandemic. Levels of infection and COVID-related deaths have been kept low amongst this highly vulnerable population, so far at least, indicating a successful public health strategy.[19]

Other crucial factors in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on homeless people included substantial additional resources, radically improved

12 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Letter from Minister Hall to Local Authorities on Plans to Protect Rough Sleepers.* Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-minister-hall-to-local-authorities

13 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Accommodation Survey Data: November 2020.* Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-emergency-accommodation-survey-data-november-2020

14 As at October 2020 National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic.* London: NAO

15 National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic.* London: NAO

16 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *6,000 New Supported Homes as Part of Landmark Commitment to End Rough Sleeping.* Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/6000-new-supported-homes-as-part-of-landmark-commitment-to-end-rough-sleeping

17 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *£105 Million to keep Rough Sleepers Safe and off the Streets During Coronavirus Pandemic.* Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/105-million-to-keep-rough-sleepers-safe-and-off-the-streets-during-coronavirus-pandemic

18 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Watts, B. (2020) 'The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England', *Policy and Politics*, 48(4), 541-561. https://doi.org/10.1332/030557320X15857338944387

19 Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M.T., White, P.J., Aldridge, R.W., Story, A. & Hayward, A.C. (2020) 'Covid amongst people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study', *The Lancet*, 8(12), 1181-1191. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70

collaborative working (especially between health and homelessness services), and a workforce that adapted swiftly to a wholly unprecedented challenge. While local authorities generally gave an upbeat assessment of their own performance in response to homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis, it was clear that the resilience of both staff and resources had been severely tested, with the National Audit Office remarking that many councils were surprised by the sheer scale of need that Everyone In uncovered. The large amount of emergency funding made available by central Government to respond to homelessness during the pandemic was widely acknowledged by key informants, but the proliferation of highly specified, short-term funding pots was viewed as less than strategic, with rapid turnaround bidding processes layering further stress onto struggling local authorities.

Supportive wider changes to welfare policy were also vital in protecting homeless people and other low-income groups during the crisis. In particular, the raising of the Local Housing Allowance maximum to cover the 30th percentile of private rents was considered 'very' or 'somewhat' important in mitigating homelessness risks by 82 per cent of local authorities in our national survey, while the corresponding percentage was almost as high (74%) with regard to the temporary suspension of benefit sanctions. Around two-thirds of all local authority respondents (66-68%) considered additional Local Welfare Assistance funding, enhancement of Universal Credit standard allowances (by £20 per week), and the temporary suspension of (most) debt-related benefit deductions, as likewise important in preventing or minimising homelessness in their area. However, both local authorities and key informants raised concerns about the deleterious impacts on homelessness if enhancements to Local Housing Allowance and Universal Credit were not sustained in the longer-term, about the failure to uprate 'legacy' benefits such as Income Support,[20] and the offsetting effect of the Total Benefit Cap on the Local Housing Allowance uplift in particular.

Moreover, the official homelessness statistics for April-June 2020 capture the dramatic impact of the evictions ban, with the number of homeless households assisted as a result of the ending of private and social tenancies plummeting, while cases associated with family and friend exclusions or domestic violence remained steady. The suspension of evictions from asylum accommodation, and easement of restrictions on support for people originally from the European Economic Area who are not in employment,[21] were humanitarian interventions that also likely saved lives, or at least immense suffering.

It is striking that, despite the scale and apparent success of the Everyone In initiative, enumerated levels of rough sleeping in London, as captured in the CHAIN dataset, did not alter much during 2020, with new rough sleepers even spiking during the most active phase of Everyone In (April-June 2020). However, the extent to which these statistics reflect 'real' patterns in levels of rough sleeping over the course of this extraordinary year, as opposed to variations in the intensity of outreach activity and data capture, is difficult to judge

However, subsequent 'mixed messages' from central Government, particularly with regard to the accommodation of non-United Kingdom nationals ineligible for benefits and the continuation of Everyone In, became a matter of acute concern for Local Authorities and their third sector partners as the crisis progressed. It also resulted in growing variation in local authority practice across the country as the year progressed, notwithstanding a change in the Homelessness Code of Guidance advising local authorities to respond sympathetically to those made vulnerable as a result of the pandemic.[22] The protections offered to those in asylum accommodation, for example, has also weakened in the second and third COVID lockdowns.

Key informants pointed to the strong foundations laid by the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the Homelessness Reduction Act in enabling a more effective response to COVID-19 than might otherwise have been the case, particularly with regards to single homeless people. That said, the Homelessness Reduction Act received only qualified endorsement from local authority respondents with regard to the role it played during the pandemic; those who were positive pointed to its pivot towards earlier forms of intervention, while the (very small) minority who were singularly critical flagged what they perceived as excessive bureaucracy associated with specified operational procedures and statistical monitoring.

One striking point to emerge during the pandemic was the extent to which dormitory-style shelters have continued in use to accommodate homeless people in at least some parts of England. Over half (52%) of local authorities reported at least some homelessness accommodation of this type in their area pre-pandemic, albeit often confined to winter or extreme weather conditions. A decisive shift away from the use of night shelters was, unsurprisingly, a priority of many of the senior homelessness experts we interviewed mid-pandemic. Interestingly, the local authority survey also indicated that only a very small number of councils expected to continue to use dormitory-style provision post-pandemic. However, given the high-profile Government commitment to 'end' rough sleeping by 2024, fears were expressed by some key informants that communal shelter provision, or at least more congregate-style hostels, might be expanded to help meet this target. Furthermore, the speed with which the capital budget in the Next Steps programme was required to be spent was argued as undermining the ability to deploy these resources strategically and, potentially, opening up the danger of damaging new 'path dependencies' associated with hasty investments in inappropriate forms of accommodation.

Conclusion

The sharp disjuncture represented by the catastrophe of the COVID-19 pandemic opens up an opportunity to reflect on the shape of homelessness services in the future, and in particular the future role of congregate models of accommodation, especially that employing dormitory-style shared sleeping provision. On the more immediate horizon, a pressing priority remains effective move-on arrangements for people temporarily accommodated during the COVID-19 crisis, especially those with No Recourse to Public Funds who, by autumn 2020, comprised around half of the population accommodated in London under 'Everyone In'.

The 2022 Homelessness Monitor England will be able to assess the success or otherwise of efforts to resolve the predicament of these vulnerable migrants, as well as to stem the potential tidal wave of 'new' homelessness expected as the COVID-19-induced recession takes hold, Brexit causes disruption to trade and various

20 Child Poverty Action Group (2020) *Supporting Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Online: CPAG. https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/supporting-families-during-covid-19-pandemic

21 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Letter from Minister for Rough Sleeping on Funding for Emergency Accommodation During the Pandemic, and Support for EEA Rough Sleepers*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-letter-from-minister-hall-to-local-authorities-on-funding-support-for-those-in-emergency-accommodation-and-eea-rough-sleepers

22 See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/updates

temporary labour market, welfare and housing protections are scaled back or ended. More positively, it should also enable reflection on the extent to which opportunities to 'build back better' are starting to materialise in the post-pandemic era.

Longer-term, a key factor in determining economic prospects and the level of social protection is whether the Government returns to a policy of austerity in order to reduce the levels of debt built up as a result of COVID-19. The lesson of the last 10 years is that this will be of fundamental importance to determining the context of homelessness over the next decade.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study provides an independent analysis of the impact on homelessness from recent economic and policy developments in England. It considers both the consequences of the post-2007 economic and housing market recession, and the subsequent recovery, and also the impact of policy changes implemented under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015), and the post May 2015 Conservative Governments under Prime Ministers David Cameron, Theresa May and Boris Johnson.

This ninth annual report provides an account of how homelessness stands in England in 2020 (or as close to 2020 as data availability will allow), and analyses key trends in the period running up to 2020. This year's report focuses in particular on what has changed over the past year, with a particular focus on the impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Note that a *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*[23] has already been published, in July 2020, to capture key homelessness developments during the initial lockdown period. We also for the first time this year, in this main *Homelessness Monitor* report, provide an analysis which projects homelessness trends in England into the future.

Readers who would like a fuller account of the recent history of homelessness in England should consult with the previous Homelessness Monitors for England, which are available on Crisis's website.[24] Parallel Homelessness Monitors are being published for other parts of the United Kingdom (UK).

1.2 Scope of report

There is a great deal of debate on the most appropriate definition of homelessness, with stakeholders often disagreeing vigorously on where the boundary should lie between 'homelessness' and other forms of housing need.[25] In order for this report to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible, we adopt a range of definitions or 'perspectives' on homelessness, considering the impacts of relevant policy and economic changes on the following (partially overlapping) groups:

- 'Statutorily homeless households': that is, households who seek or receive housing assistance from local authorities (LAs) on grounds of being currently or imminently without accommodation.

- People experiencing 'core homelessness':[26] this refers to households who are currently experiencing the most acute forms of homelessness. It includes people in the following situations: rough sleeping; sleeping in cars, tents and

23 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Sims, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/

24 See http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html

25 Busch-Geertsema, V., Culhane, D. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2016) 'Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness', Habitat International, 55, 124-132. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197397515300023?via=ihub

26 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf

public transport, unlicensed squatting, or occupation of non-residential buildings; staying in hostels, refuges and shelters; living in 'unsuitable' temporary accommodation (TA) (e.g., Bed and Breakfast (B&B)); sofa-surfing (i.e., staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions).

1.3 Research methods

To date, five main methods have been employed in this longitudinal study:

- First, relevant literature, legal and policy documents are reviewed each year.

- Second, we undertake annual interviews with a sample of key informants from the statutory and voluntary sectors across England. The current sample of 15 key informants includes representatives of homelessness service providers, as well as other key stakeholders with a national overview of relevant areas of policy and practice. Some of these participants were interviewed in the spring of 2020,[27] during the initial COVID-19 lockdown, and others in autumn 2020,[28] as the second wave of the pandemic took hold. See Appendix 1 for the basic topic guide used to structure these interviews, though note that this guide was tailored for each interviewee and adjusted appropriately between the spring and autumn interviews.

- Third, we undertake detailed statistical analysis on a) relevant economic and social trends in England; and b) the scale, nature and trends in homelessness amongst the sub-groups noted above.

- Fourth, for the fifth Homelessness Monitor report in a row we have conducted a bespoke online survey of England's 314 LAs (in summer/autumn 2020). The main aim of this particular survey was to understand how the housing, social security, labour market and other COVID-19 related policy responses were impacting on homelessness trends and responses at local level. In all, 148 (47%) of all LAs in England responded to the survey with a very even spread across all broad regions. Note that, in order to achieve this high survey response rate, amid the extraordinary crisis conditions engendered by the pandemic, a much lengthier time window for responses was allowed than we would normally offer (from mid-July to mid October 2020). This variability in the precise timing of survey responses is taken into account in the interpretation of the results that we offer, especially in light of the rapid nature of policy change over this period. See Appendix 2 for details.

- Fifth, for the first time in this Homelessness Monitor series, we incorporate a statistical modelling exercise which both estimates 'core' forms of homelessness, and projects trends in these forms of homelessness into the future. See Appendix 3 for technical details.

1.4 Causation and homelessness

All of the Homelessness Monitors are underpinned by a conceptual framework on the causation of homelessness that has been used to inform our interpretation of the likely impacts of economic and policy change.[29]

Theoretical, historical and international perspectives indicate that the causation of homelessness is multi-dimensional, with no single 'trigger' that is either 'necessary' or 'sufficient' for it to occur. Individual, interpersonal and structural factors all play a role – and interact with each other – and the balance of causes differs over time, across countries, and between demographic groups.

With respect to the main structural factors, international comparative research, and the experience of previous UK recessions, suggests that housing market trends and policies have the most direct impact on levels of homelessness, with the influence of labour-market change more likely to be lagged and diffuse, and strongly mediated by welfare arrangements and other contextual factors. The central role that poverty plays in shaping homelessness risks in the UK is also now well established.[30]

The individual vulnerabilities, support needs, and 'risk taking' behaviours implicated in some people's homelessness are themselves often, though not always, also rooted in the pressures associated with poverty and other forms of structural disadvantage. At the same time, the 'anchor' social relationships which can act as a primary 'buffer' to homelessness, can be put under considerable strain by stressful financial circumstances. Thus, deteriorating economic conditions in England could also be expected to generate more 'individual' and 'interpersonal' vulnerabilities to homelessness over time, with any improvement in such conditions tending to have the reverse effect. The longer-term structural, social, economic and health effects of COVID-19 are, of course, yet to emerge.

1.5 Structure of report

The structure of this year's *Homelessness Monitor* report differs somewhat to that of previous reports. Chapter 2 reviews the wider context for homelessness, including economic, poverty and labour market trends, housing market developments, and social security policy changes: all of this heavily impacted by responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Chapter 3 shifts focus to homelessness-specific policies and practices at national and local level, including in direct response to the pandemic. Chapter 4 provides a fully updated analysis of the available statistical data on the current scale of and recent trends in homelessness in England. For the first time this analysis is substantially based on the operation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, in force from 1st April 2018. This chapter also reviews data associated with the COVID-19 prompted homelessness initiatives, led by Government and implemented by Local Authorities and their voluntary sector partners. Chapter 5 provides estimates of the current scale of core homelessness in England, while Chapter 6 projects trends in these forms of homelessness into the future. All of these chapters are informed by the insights derived from our in-depth interviews with key informants conducted in 2020, and from the statistical and qualitative information gleaned from this year's online survey of LAs. In Chapter 7 we summarise the main findings of this year's report. Each edition of the Monitor adopts a particular theme. This year, for obvious reasons, the Monitor is primarily concerned with the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis for homeless people, both now and in the future.

27 The spring 2020 interviews were drawn upon in the July 2020 Briefing Paper, see Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Sims, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/

28 We are particularly grateful to two interviewees who allowed us to interview them twice – in spring and again in autumn 2020 – in order to update us on how responses to the pandemic had unfolded over the course of the year.

29 For a more detailed account of this conceptual framework please consult with Chapter 2 in the first Homelessness Monitor: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor: Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013*. London: Crisis.

30 Bramley, B. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?', *Housing Studies*, 33:1, 96-116.

2. The context for homelessness: wider economic, housing, and welfare drivers

2.1 Introduction

This chapter places homelessness within the wider social, economic and housing policy context, with special emphasis on income support including social security.

Although COVID-19 inevitably has had a very strong impact on our analysis, it is important to place the health emergency within the social and economic context of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and the aftermath of a decade of austerity. Therefore the chapter begins, in Section 2.2, with an overview of employment, earnings and poverty as we went into the COVID-19 crisis. It then examines the Government's response to the crisis and outlines the prospects in terms of unemployment going forward.

In section 2.3 we examine the housing market and housing policy context, including the emergency measures adopted in response to COVID-19. Section 2.4 provides an overview of income support policies, including the furlough schemes and changes made to social security in response to the crisis.

2.2 The social and economic context

Going into COVID-19, the UK had experienced a decade of austerity, which included public expenditure constraints affecting public services and social security benefits. This section begins with a brief review of the social and economic legacy of austerity because it is important for the fuller consideration of the impact of COVID-19.

Although employment levels reached record levels in 2019, earnings growth was squeezed to an extent never experienced at least in the post-1945 period. After adjusting for inflation, earnings fell for six consecutive years from 2008/09 until 2014/15 (Figure 2.1). Despite real earnings growth since then, they remained 3.5 percentage points lower in 2018/19 than in 2007/08.

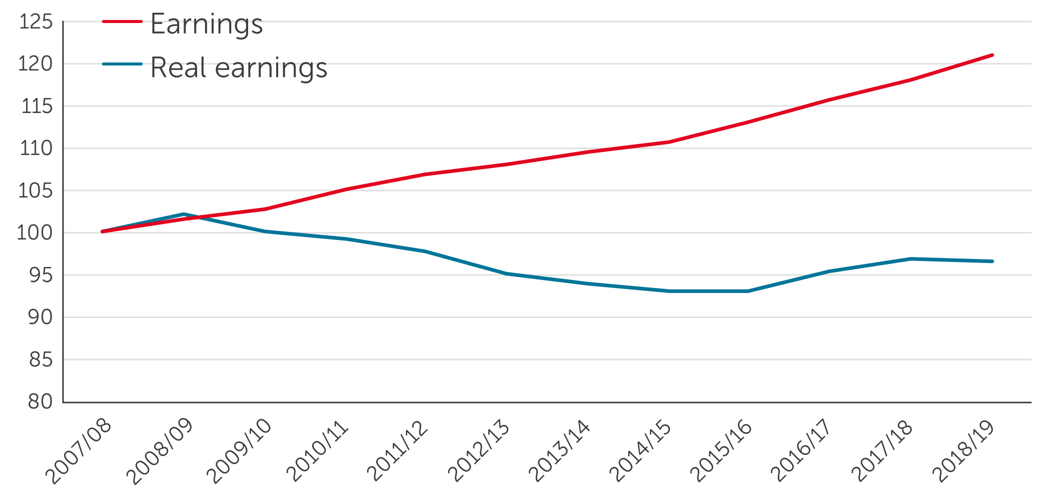
In 2018/19, 17 per cent of individuals in the UK lived in households whose income before housing costs (adjusted for household composition) fell below the relative poverty threshold. Children were more likely to experience poverty (20%), whilst working age adults were less likely to experience poverty (15%). Pensioners experienced a level of poverty similar to the average (18%). The overall poverty rate in 2018/19 was very similar to the rate seen in 2007/08 on the eve of the GFC. However, over the time period, relative poverty rates fell from 2007/08 to 2010/11-2013/14, before rising almost to the 2007/08 level in 2018/19. Similar trends were experienced by children and pensioners, although these groups' poverty rates were still below those experienced in 2007/08 in 2018/19. For working age adults, the poverty rate was pretty much flat throughout the period.

Housing costs have the effect of raising the poverty rate by around five percentage points overall (taking the average over the 2007/08-2018/19 period) (Figure 2.2). However, they have a large and malign effect on child poverty rates – raising them by some 10 percentage points to 30 per cent. In contrast they reduce pensioner poverty by around three percentage points to 16 per cent. This means that after housing costs the child poverty rate is almost 50 per cent higher than the average and approaching twice that of pensioners.

Housing costs seem to have had a larger impact on child poverty towards the end of the period, and their impact on pensioners has also become less favourable, whilst remaining fairly even for working age adults.
In the last edition of the Monitor, we referred to Institute for Fiscal Studies analysis which found that households with children in lower income households experienced disproportionate increases in housing costs as a result a shift towards private renting where housing costs are higher, and their tendency to be housed in social and private rental housing where housing costs rose most strongly.[31]

It may seem surprising that poverty has remained relatively stable, given the

Figure 2.1: Trends in earnings and real earnings 2007/08-2018/19 (2007/08 = 100)



Source: calculated from Department for Work and Pensions (2020) Households Below Average Earnings, Table 2a

31 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. London: Crisis

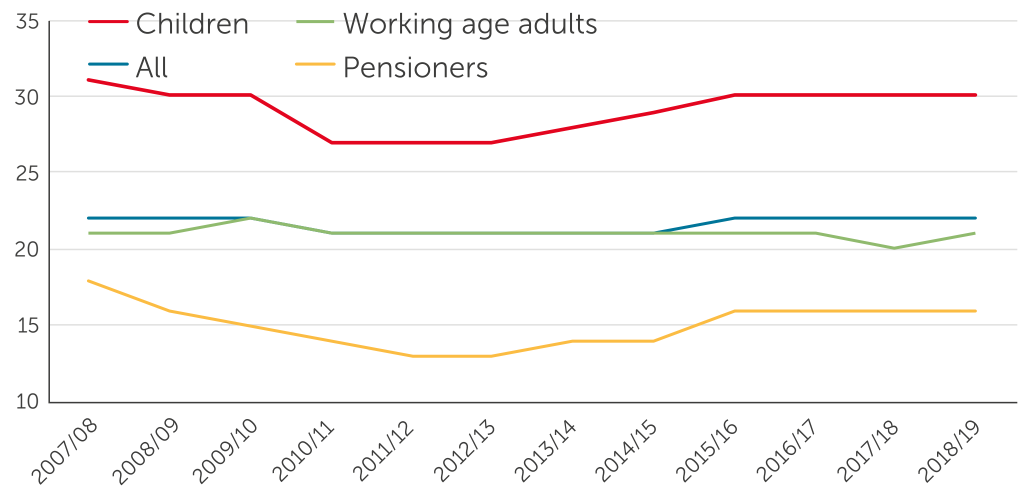
squeeze on real earnings and the cuts to social security benefits since 2010, including the benefits freeze. Part of the explanation may lie in the way in which the poverty line is set at 60 per cent of median income. Historically, median incomes have risen, so this relative poverty line was intended to reflect rising living standards. However, as we have seen, incomes have been constrained after the GFC. Institute for Fiscal Studies analysis of the Family Resources Survey suggests that real median incomes fell from £498 per week in 2007/08 to £480 in 2011/12, before recovering to £514 in 2018/19.[32] A similar pattern occurred with incomes after housing costs.[33]

However, the household surveys that are used to estimate poverty rates tend to have difficulty in picking up households on very low incomes. In contrast, the surveys conducted by Heriot-Watt University for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) identify a growing problem of destitution in the UK.[34] Whilst the Family Resources Survey estimated that some 14 million people, including 4.1 million children, were living in poverty (after housing costs) in 2018/19, the JRF report suggested that some 2.4 million people, including 550,000 children, living in more than one million households experienced destitution at some point in 2019. The experience of destitution most commonly involved lacking food, clothing and toiletries. The survey also found that the extent of destitution had grown, with the numbers of adults and children experiencing destitution rising by more than one-half since 2017.

Consequently, the relatively stable long-term overall poverty rate seems to disguise increases in very extreme experiences of hardship that reflect the impacts of labour market and social security change.

COVID-19 has caused the most dramatic shrinkage of the economy ever experienced. When the GFC struck in 2008, the British economy shrank by 2.1 per cent in the final quarter of 2008.[35] In contrast, almost one-fifth (19.8%) of the value of economic activity disappeared as lockdown took effect in the second quarter of 2020. Whereas the GFC arose from a massive external shock as bank shares collapsed across the world, the COVID-19-induced lockdown represented a deliberate attempt to close down the economy temporarily. Consequently, the monthly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures show that the shrinkage of 19.5 per cent in April was followed by a 'bounce back' as restrictions were eased in June and July, when the economy grew by 9.1 per cent and 6.4 per cent respectively. However, recovery slowed to just 2.1 per cent in August and 0.4 per cent in October. By the end of October, the economy was still almost eight per cent (7.9%) smaller than it had been in February, representing a contraction of historic proportions.

Figure 2.2: Relative poverty after housing costs (UK, 2007/08-2018/19)



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2020) Household Below Average Earnings, Tables 3a, 4a, 5a, 6a.
Note: Poverty = % individuals living in households whose net incomes, adjusted for household composition, are below 60 per cent of the median.

32 Bourquin, P., Joyce, R. & Norris Keiller, A. (2020) *Living Standards, Poverty, and Inequality in the UK: 2020*. Report no. 170. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Online appendix, Figure 2.1.
33 Ibid., Figure 2.2
34 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020

In any other circumstances such a massive contraction of the economy would have resulted in mass unemployment. But lockdown was accompanied by unprecedented peacetime levels of economic stimulation and, notably, the furlough scheme discussed in more detail later in this chapter. As a consequence of these measures, unemployment was contained. The Labour Force Survey[36] recorded an unemployment rate of 4.9 per cent in August-October, 1.2 percentage points higher than a year earlier, and 0.7 percentage points higher than the previous quarter. This relatively modest rise disguises marked variations according to age. The equivalent unemployment figure for 18-24 year olds was 13.1 per cent.[37]

A survey by the Resolution Foundation found that nine per cent of people who had been furloughed during 'peak' lockdown (March – June) had lost their jobs by the last week of September. However, the risk of job loss was much higher among Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups and young people.[38] Just over one in five people who are Black, Asian and a member of another ethnic minority group who had been furloughed had lost their jobs in September. A slightly lower proportion of (19%) 18-24 year olds who had been furloughed had lost theirs in September. Overall, close to 60 per cent of people who had been furloughed had returned to work whilst around one in three remained partially or wholly furloughed. This has given rise to predictions that unemployment among young people will rise to above 20 per cent.

Future economic prospects are uncertain but will be affected by a number of factors over the coming year. First, the duration of the virus and the degree and duration of restrictions put in place to combat it. Second, the policy responses to the virus, in particular the extent to which Government schemes protect jobs and incomes. Third, the consequences of the trade deal negotiated between the UK Government and the European Union now that the UK has left the European single market and customs union.

Longer-term a key factor in determining economic prospects

35 Office for National Statistics (2020) *Monthly GDP Estimate, UK: October 2020* (released 10 December 2020). Online: ONS. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/gdpmonthlyestimateuk/october2020
36 Office for National Statistics (2020) *Labour Market Overview, UK: December 2020* (released 15 December 2020). Online: ONS. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/october2020
37 Staton, B., Cameron-Chileshe, J., Bounds, A. & Tighe, C. (2020) 'British Youth Count Cost of Covid on their Future.' 3 October. *Financial Times*. Online: Financial Times. https://www.ft.com/content/1220ba66-de09-4507-8616-ef112cd2c109
38 Financial Times (2020) 'One in five furloughed young people lost job last month.' 28 October. *Financial Times*.

and the level of social protection is whether the Government returns to a policy of austerity in order to reduce the levels of debt built up as a result of COVID-19. The UK Government is expected to borrow in excess of £400 billion in 2020/21, which is above 20 per cent of GDP. The budget deficit remains sustainable so long as the Government can refinance it, and it is helped by the ultra-low cost of borrowing. A key factor will be whether this is a one-off acquisition of debt to deal with the pandemic or whether there is a structural rise in expenditure and borrowing as a result of the virus. The latter increases the chances of austerity. The lesson of the last 10 years is that this will be of fundamental importance to determining the context of homelessness over the next decade.

2.3 Housing policies and the housing market

Lockdown brought the housing market to a halt, whilst the wider economic dislocation brought fears of mass evictions and mortgage possessions. This section examines the role of government interventions, including the evictions moratorium. It also examines the potential impact of the market and policy proposals that may affect the supply of affordable housing through planning agreements. It also analyses the Government's affordable housing programme and progress on ending 'no fault' evictions in the private rented sector. Finally, it considers the impact of the pandemic on access to long-term housing.

Evictions moratorium

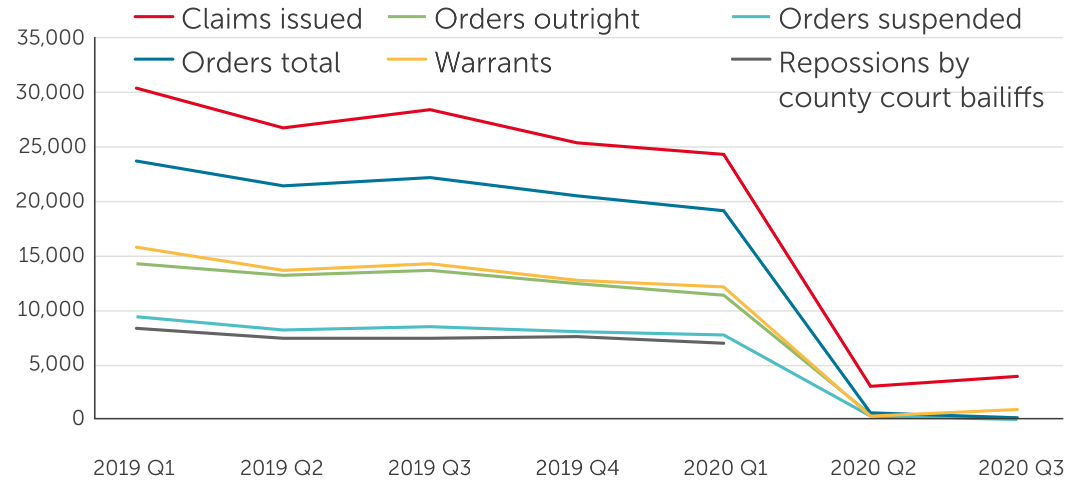
The prospect of lockdown gave rise to widespread fears of mass job losses, leading to an upswing in rent arrears, evictions and homelessness. The New Economics Foundation estimated that more than 1.2 million tenants were in danger of losing their jobs, and in late April Citizens' Advice estimated that 2.6 million UK tenants had either missed a payment or expected to do so.[39] The Government acted to protect tenants and mortgaged owners from eviction during the pandemic by introducing compulsory and blanket forbearance on the part of landlords and mortgage lenders. Such an intervention is without precedent in the UK.

For renters, forbearance relied on two main mechanisms. First, legal proceedings were halted and sometimes enforcement action suspended. Court proceedings were suspended for 90 days from 27 March. This was then extended until 23 August, and then to 21 September when courts began to hear proceedings again. The Government suggested that cases involving anti-social behaviour and other criminal offences would be prioritised alongside 'extreme' rent arrears, and landlords would need to provide information on how a tenant had been affected by the pandemic. In September it was announced that evictions would not be enforced in areas where local lockdown rules prohibited gatherings in homes. Further, the enforcement of evictions was suspended across the country in the run up to and over Christmas and up to 21st February 2021, except in cases such as anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, and with arrears of more than six months being added in January. Second, notice periods have been extended to six months until at least the end of March 2021 in the majority of cases (with exceptions for anti-social behaviour, fraud and more than six months rent arrears).

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 demonstrate the dramatic effect of the moratorium. Possession orders fell from 19,133 in the first quarter of 2020 to 656 in the second, and to 131 in the third. Warrants fell from 12,148 to 274 in the second quarter but rose to 911

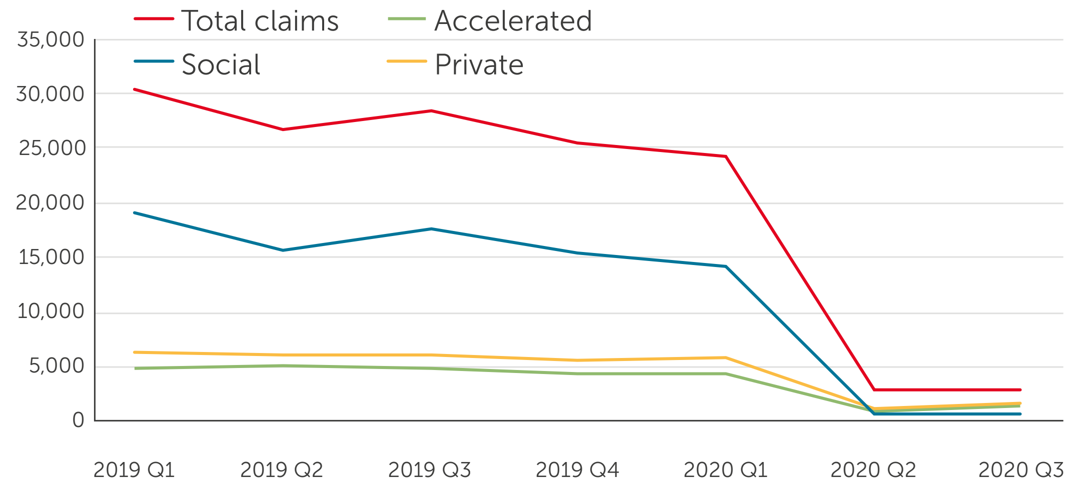
39 Reported in Stephens, M., Perry, J., Watts, B., Williams, P, and Young, G. (2020) *UK Housing Review Autumn Briefing*. Coventry: CIH

Figure 2.3: Landlord possession actions in the county courts (England & Wales) Q1 2019-Q3 2020



Source: Ministry of Justice, Mortgage and Landlord Possession Statistics Quarterly, Table 4.
Note: 2020 Q3 = provisional

Figure 2.4: Landlord possession claims (England & Wales) Q1 2019-Q3 2020



Source: Ministry of Justice, Mortgage and Landlord Possession Statistics Quarterly, Table 7.
Note: 2020 Q3 = provisional

in the third (Figure 2.3). Claims fell from 24,320 in the first quarter of 2020 to 3,022 in the second, rising to 3,954 in the third (Figure 2.4). Of these 1,713 were issued by private landlords and 887 by social landlords, the latter in particular marking a remarkable decline. A further 1,354 were attributable to the accelerated procedure which is normally employed when leases are nearing their end, and where the landlord type cannot be identified.

In this year's Homelessness Monitor survey, 87 per cent of responding councils considered the evictions moratorium to have been 'very important' in preventing or minimising homelessness in their area, with almost all of the remaining authorities (12%) considering it 'somewhat important' (see Appendix 2, Table 7). Key informant interviewees concurred about the importance of the evictions 'ban', particularly in stemming a potential tide of family homelessness, but at the same time sounded some notes of caution:

"It was essential to have the evictions ban... it would have been exceptionally difficult to find family-size accommodation for anybody during the pandemic...It was terrifying housing directors, the idea of that. So, it was essential, but at the same time... I can't imagine it provided that much relief to the households who were in arrears with their landlord. ...I just really felt for families who were potentially going deeper and deeper into arrears, couldn't be evicted, but having to live in the house."
(Statutory sector key informant, Autumn 2020)

"...the eviction freeze has been really important and very progressive. [But] ... people... [who are] assaulting their partners... brutally racially abusing people...these are all very messy, complicated issues, and I fear around the country there's a whole load of people who are suffering through there not being an eviction... Eviction is sometimes a good thing. It's not in itself, but it has to happen occasionally to protect people."
(Statutory sector key informant, Autumn 2020)

Support for home-owners and private landlords took the form of the right to a three month mortgage payment deferral (often misleadingly labelled as a 'holiday' even though interest continues to accrue), with a second three month deferral permitted from June. The scheme was due to end at the end of October 2020, but the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) issued guidance in November under which lenders are expected to allow applications up until the end of March 2021.[40]

Initially, some 17 per cent of owners and investors with mortgages took advantage of this provision.[41] The trade body UK Finance suggested that by November 2020 there had been 2.7 million deferrals in total, with 127,000 agreements still in place.[42] It reported that 89 per cent of people whose deferral had ended had gone back to making mortgage payments. The Financial Times' crude calculation based on these figures suggests that some 283,000 households still require lender support. In turn, by our calculation, this represents just over 2 per cent of the 13.4 million mortgages in the UK.[43]

A similar moratorium on mortgage possessions as has been applied to renters was also introduced. The most recent statistics on mortgage arrears relate to the third quarter of 2020 and suggest that new possessions fell dramatically from 1,772 in the first quarter to 246 in the second, rising to 377 in the third.[44]

The major concern is what happens as these moratoria unwind.

A YouGov poll of 1,068 people for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that 37 per cent of furloughed private tenants were worried about paying their rent when the furlough scheme ends.[45] A report from Citizens' Advice confirms the financial hardship experienced by many tenants as a consequence of the pandemic. For example, one-third of private tenants have lost income as a result of the pandemic, and 58 per cent of those in arrears were not in arrears before it.[46] Another YouGov poll of 1,008 landlords in England conducted for the National Residential Landlords' Association found that just over one-fifth (22%) had lost rental income due to COVID-19.[47] Of these a quarter (26.3%) had lost more than 30 per cent of their rental income, and 12 per cent more than half. The same survey found that 9 per cent of landlords planned to leave the sector altogether in the next year and 7 per cent intended to sell some of their properties. The difficulties faced by both tenants and landlords is likely to take some considerable time to resolve.

A survey of 7,000 adults by the FCA suggested that 12 million people have a low level of financial resilience (defined by struggling to pay bills or repay loans), and that this has increased by two million since February.[48] The survey found that 42 per cent of renters were worried about falling into arrears. Further, younger people (25-34) are by far the most likely to have experienced a change in employment due to the pandemic.

The effects, though, are likely to take some time to filter through into evictions and, ultimately, homelessness:

"...there's such a backlog, essentially, for evictions to be processed, I guess, the impact on people who've been affected by coronavirus, I don't think anyone's expecting to really kick in until later on in the year.... [courts are] prioritising antisocial behaviour stuff, and stuff that has been slowed down pre, during the COVID crisis."
(Voluntary sector key informant, Autumn 2020)

"We'll see a long, slow flood [of evictions]. We won't see a tsunami, because of the six-month thing they've got in at the moment, but most importantly, because of the court capacity."
(Statutory sector key informant, Autumn 2020)

The housing market

Housebuilding had slowed in 2019, although there is some evidence that this was caused by uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the December 2019 general election.[49] Having been shut down in the early part of lockdown, the resumption of housebuilding was seen as being a priority. There has been a strong 'bounce back' in housebuilding and the wider housing market, encouraged by the increase in the threshold for stamp duty from £125,000 to £500,000 from July 2020 until March 2021, at an estimated cost of between £2.6 billion and £3.8 billion.[50] In turn this has increased demand for mortgages and led to record levels of house prices.[51]

40 Financial Conduct Authority (2020) *Mortgages and Coronavirus: Payment Deferral Guidance, November 2020*. Online: FCA. https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/finalised-guidance/mortgages-coronavirus-payment-deferral-guidance.pdf
41 Stephens, M., Perry, J., Watts, B., Williams, P, and Young, G. (2020) *UK Housing Review Autumn Briefing*. Coventry: CIH
42 Financial Times (2020) 'Mortgage lenders loosen the reins even as thousands of households struggle.' *Financial Times*. 18 December. Online: Financial Times. https://www.ft.com/content/6fc2e391-6266-417b-a573-5d98b038f8b9
43 Bank of England & Financial Conduct Authority (2020) *MLAR Statistics*, Summary Tables, Table 3, September. Online: FCA. https://www.fca.org.uk/data/mortgage-lending-statistics
44 Ibid.
45 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020) *A third of furloughed private renters worried about paying their rent when lockdown ends*. 14 June. Online: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/third-furloughed-private-renters-worried-about-paying-their-rent-when-lockdown-ends
46 Derricourt, R., Hann, C. & Byrne, G. (2021) *New Year, Same Arrears: How the Pandemic is Leaving Private Renters with Unmanageable Debt*. 5th January. Online: Citizens Advice. https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/policy/policy-research-topics/housing-policy-research/new-year-same-arrears-how-the-pandemic-is-leaving-private-renters-with-unmanageable-debt
47 National Residential Landlords Association (2020) 'Landlords losing out due to covid-19.' 29 September. Online: NRLA. https://www.nrla.org.uk/research/deep-insight/yougov-sept-2020
48 Financial Conduct Authority (2020) *FCA Highlights Continued Support for Consumers Struggling with Payments*. 22 October. Online: FCA. https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/fca-highlights-continued-support-consumers-struggling-payments
49 Stephens, M. (2020) 'The Fluctuating Fortunes of Housebuilding', in Stephens, M. et. al. (eds) *UK Housing Review Autumn Briefing*. Coventry: CIH
50 Stephens, M. (2020) 'Stamp Duty – Back to the Future?', in Stephens, M. et. al. (eds) UK *Housing Review Autumn Briefing*. Coventry: CIH
51 Romei, V., Giles, C. & Strauss, D. (2020) 'UK House Prices Surge to Record High.' 2 September. *Financial Times*. Online: Financial Times. https://www.ft.com/content/53a76828-7763-451a-99d6-e7bdd2bd96d7

There must be considerable doubt whether the strong growth in the housing market can continue, given the impact of the pandemic on the labour market as well as the impact of the UK's exit from the European single market. It is true that the impact of the pandemic is uneven, so some people whose jobs are unaffected may remain active in the housing market and will be able to take advantage of low mortgage interest rates. It is also inevitable that the Chancellor will come under pressure to extend the stamp duty concessions beyond the current expiry date.

An important implication of reductions in private housebuilding that have occurred as a result of the pandemic and will probably occur subsequently is that the numbers of affordable homes provided through developers' s106 contributions will fall. Given that almost one-half of affordable housing supply in England has been supported by developer contributions in recent years,[52] this will reduce supply and contribute to the shortage of social and other forms of affordable housing. Further, housing associations which cross-subsidise affordable house building from the sales of market housing will also be exposed to any slowing or recession in the housing market.

A further threat to affordable housing delivered through s106 may arise should the Government introduce its First Homes policy which would use the planning system to provide houses discounted by at least 30 per cent for sale to first time buyers, people serving in the Armed Services, veterans, and key workers. A consultation was published in February 2020.[53] An illustrative table within the consultation document suggests that 80 per cent of s106 contributions would need to be diverted from affordable housing in order to meet the figure of 19,000 First Homes sales mooted by the Conservative Party during the election.[54]A crude calculation would suggest that this might represent 40 per cent of affordable housing output.

Additionally, the Government's planning white paper envisages the replacement of s106 with a levy to be set nationally but collected and spent locally. Although the Government claims that this will support at least as much affordable housing as is the case now, it is not clear that it will. For example, one concern is that affordable housing would be supported through monetary contributions rather than through housing provided on mixed developments as is usually the case now. Where there are land shortages, provision of affordable housing could then become problematic.[55]

It is notable that the Chancellor chose not to increase the supply of new affordable housing as part of the Government's stimulus package, in contrast to the response to the 2008 financial crisis. The Chancellor's Summer Statement reaffirmed the levels of housing investment announced earlier in the year. The Affordable Homes Programme will be worth £12.2 billion over the five years to 2025/26, with annual spending rising by a quarter from £1.95 billion

52 Stephens, M. (2019) 'Land Value Capture through Planning and Taxation', in Stephens, M. et. al. (eds) *UK Housing Review 2019*. Coventry: CIH
53 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *First Homes: Consultation on the Design and Delivery of First Homes*. London: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/864265/First_Homes_consultation_document.pdf
54 Simpson, J. (2020) 'Sector bodies raise concerns that First Homes plan could hit social housing numbers.' 7 February. *Inside Housing*. Online: Inside Housing. https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/sector-bodies-raise-concerns-that-first-homes-plan-could-hit-social-housing-numbers-64997
55 Perry, J. (2020) 'A Better Alternative to Section 106 Agreements?', *Town & Country Planning*, October, pp. 310-313

in 2020/21 to an average of £2.44 billion.[56]

However, the new Affordable Housing Programme differs from its predecessors in some important ways. As John Perry has noted, it shifts funding away from renting and towards ownership by reverting to a roughly 50:50 split between these tenures. It also marks a shift in funding away from London and towards the rest of England, as the current 50:50 split gives way to one that allocates 35 per cent to London and 65 per cent to the rest of England.[57]

Reform of private renting

Following a consultation in 2019, the Government announced in the Queen's Speech that legislation would be introduced to abolish Section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act which allows for 'no fault' evictions. Such a reform, if it mirrored the approach taken in Scotland, may still allow for the retention of some 'no fault' grounds for eviction, such as the landlords wishing to move into or sell the property. However, in September a housing minister confirmed that legislation had been postponed until an *"appropriate time when there is a sensible and stable economic and social terrain on which to do it."*[58] Given that the increase in homelessness arising from ending of private tenancies has been such a dominant trend in recent years (see Chapter 4), the ending of 'no fault' could be expected to have significant (beneficial) impacts on homelessness levels over time.

Access to long-term housing during pandemic

Access to long-term housing was the capacity challenge most widely seen as having been posed (or emphasised) by the pandemic by LAs in our national online survey. Some 61 per cent of LA respondents considered that their authority was poorly or otherwise inadequately equipped to deal with the crisis in this respect (see Appendix 2, Table 11). Relevant here is that in most authorities, pandemic conditions reportedly made it more difficult to place homeless households in both social rental housing (reported by 57% LAs) and private lets (61%) (see Appendix 2, Tables 9 and 10 respectively). Among the minority of authorities where it became easier to access social rental tenancies during the pandemic, explanatory responses related in the main to amended housing association or council allocation policies that gave increased or overwhelming priority to homeless households, usually for a time limited period. In the more common circumstance – where access to social rental tenancies reportedly became more difficult – this usually reflected a slowdown or complete cessation of allocations activity during the initial March-June 2020 national lockdown:

> **"For some months at the start of lockdown, no social housing allocations were taking place."**
> (LA respondent, the South, 2020)

> **"Void turnaround was longer in some cases due to certain kind of works being delayed due to social distancing/lockdown restrictions."**
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

It was in the Midlands and the North of the England that Authorities were most likely to report having found it more difficult to place homeless households into private tenancies since the start of the pandemic. Perceived contributory factors included the evictions moratorium, which has contributed to a downturn in lettable vacancies, as

56 Perry, J. (2020) 'Building back better? Post-Covid housing programmes', in Stephens, M. et. al. (eds) *UK Housing Review Autumn Briefing*. Coventry: CIH
57 Ibid.
58 Cowburn, A. (2020) 'Tories postpone pledge to ban no-fault evictions for renters until economy recovers.' *Independent*. 20 September. Online: Independent. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/no-fault-eviction-housing-minister-section-21-coronavirus-tory-manifesto-b551811.html

well as revived market demand from non-homeless households after the first lockdown ended in July:

> "For long periods the letting agents were shut and there has been less 'churn' in the market. This could be attributable to the eviction moratorium."
> (LA respondent, the Midlands, 2020)

"There is a lot more competition now that restrictions on moving have been lifted and typically our customers were not first pick for landlords." (LA respondent, the Midlands, 2020)

Interestingly, albeit based on a rather small number of responses, there appeared to be a distinctly different situation in London from that prevailing elsewhere, with 40 per cent of responding boroughs reporting that access to private tenancies for homeless households had eased from the start of the COVID-19 crisis. This seems to have resulted from the impact of the increased Local Housing Allowance (LHA) combined with reduced demand which placed councils in a position of relative strength, although the benefit cap also remained as a constraint (see 2.4 below):

> "Market appears to have opened up and more PRS properties being made available to this client group – likely to be largely due to increase in LHA however this is to some degree being offset by a significant increase of the numbers of HH being affected by the benefit cap."
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

> "Less competition from others due to lockdown. Landlords have been glad of the business."
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

2.4 Income support policies

Furlough schemes

The first Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, introduced in April 2020, met 80 per cent of a furloughed employees' salaries up to £2,500 per month (with the Government meeting 75 per cent of this cost). Employers were eligible to claim for employees who were no longer working as well as those employed part-time. The Government's plans to reduce support announced in the autumn were withdrawn as the pandemic necessitated the reintroduction of restrictions including an England-wide lockdown. The scheme was extended until the end of March, and then, in December, the Chancellor announced a further extension until the end of April 2021.

The New Economics Foundation had forecast that 2.2 million jobs would be at risk before the original proposals were withdrawn.[59]

After its introduction, the numbers of employees benefiting from the original Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme peaked at 4.4 million in England in July, before reducing to 2.4 million at the end of October (the last available statistics).[60] At the end of October, almost 60 per cent of the employees whose jobs were being supported by the scheme were fully furloughed. By the end of October, the scheme had supported almost 10 million (9.9 m) jobs at a cost of £46.4 billion.[61] The two tranches of the smaller Self Employment Income Support scheme assisted some 2.6 million individuals at a cost of £13.2 billion across the UK.[62]

These support schemes have clearly been very important in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on employment and incomes. They provided much more generous support than Universal Credit (UC) and helped to prevent UC being overwhelmed administratively. The initial furlough scheme was also, according to our LA survey, crucial in mitigating homelessness risks during the COVID-19 crisis: 80 per cent of respondents considered it 'very' or 'somewhat' important in this regard (see Appendix 2, Table 7).

Universal Credit

UC became the safety net for people who lost jobs during the initial lockdown but were not benefiting from the Government's furlough scheme. Claims surged in the months following the outbreak of the virus, and once lockdown began in March. In England, the numbers of households in receipt of UC increased by 1.46 million to 3.67 million between February and March.[63]
Initial responses to the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) herculean effort during the first few weeks of lockdown has largely been positive and congratulatory in tone (see, for example, the Institute for Government),[64] as the Department reprioritised to meet the influx of new claims and redeployed staff to front-line claim processing. However, there is evidence that not all claimants experience a smooth application process. In response to a survey of its National Welfare Reform Group, the National Housing Federation found that many people had experienced an increase in errors and difficulty contacting DWP, *"waiting in queues with tens of thousands of people ahead of them."*[65]

The DWP's statistics suggest that the upsurge in UC claims were dealt with efficiently, at least in April, the first month of lockdown. Whilst timeliness of payments had been improving over a long period, in the first three months of 2020 full payments were made on time in 88 per cent of cases. In April this rose to 95.9 per cent.

Those with English as a second language, those with no digital access and those with additional support needs may have found the closure of Jobcentres and libraries and the reduced access to welfare rights advice an additional barrier during this time.[66]

Adjustment of benefit rates and arrangements

The Government's decision to increase the standard allowance of UC and Working Tax Credits by £20 per week until April 2021 was widely welcomed. However, to put it in context, the benefits freeze and other reforms mean that working age benefits are still at the lowest level they have been in several decades, relative to average

59 Ibid.
60 Gov.UK (2020) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme Statistics, October 2020. Table 4. Online: Gov.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-october-2020
61 Gov.UK (2020) *HMRC Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics, last updated 17 December.* Online: Gov.UK https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-december-2020

62 Gov.UK (2020) *HMRC Self Employment Income Support Scheme Statistics, October 2020, Table 11 – Number and value of claims for first and second SEISS grants to 30 September 2020.* Online: Gov.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-october-2020/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-october-2020#comparing-claimants-of-seiss-first-and-second-grants
63 See Stat X-plore https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml
64 Timmins, N. (2020) *Credit Where it is Due: Universal Credit during the Coronavirus Lockdown.* Online: Institute for Government. https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/universal-credit-dwp-coronavirus
65 National Housing Federation (2020) *Coronavirus and Universal Credit – Challenges for Housing Associations.* Online: National Housing Federation. https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/coronavirus-and-universal-credit/
66 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020.* York: JRF https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020; Child Poverty Action Group (2020) *Mind the Gaps: Reporting on Families' Income During the Pandemic.* 16 April. Online: CPAG Early Warning System. https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/CPAG-mind-the-gaps-briefing-16-April.pdf

wages. New Economics Foundation estimates that the recent £7 billion increase in benefit rates amounts to only one fifth of the reductions made to the welfare budget since 2010,[67] and the replacement rates of working age benefits in the UK remain markedly lower than the equivalent rates in many other European countries.[68] In recognition of the inadequacy of even the uplifted benefit rates to meet household costs, JRF has called for the standard allowance to be raised to £150 per week for single adults (from £94.59 for those aged 25 or over) and £260 for couples (from £137.09 for those aged 25 and over) which would be roughly equal to the poverty line for these households, after housing costs.[69] A more immediate priority for JRF has been to call to retain the £20 uplift in UC and Working Tax Credits after April.[70]

No equivalent uplift has been made to legacy benefit rates including income related Job Seekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, and Income Support. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) estimates that two thirds of children in families claiming means-tested benefits are in receipt of legacy benefits rather than UC.[71]

Attention has now turned to whether the enhanced benefits rates will be extended beyond the end of March 2021. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates that 16 million people benefit from it, and should it be withdrawn 700,000 people, including 300,000 children, would fall below the poverty line, and a further 500,000 people who are already in poverty would fall into 'deep poverty' – i.e., their incomes would be less than 50 per cent of the poverty line.[72]

Another important change made in the initial COVID-19 lockdown was that benefit sanctions were suspended from 19 March until the end of June 2020. This meant that claimants were not required to attend face-to-face interviews at Jobcentre Plus offices. Further, DWP officials did not check conditionality compliance during this period, so that they could be freed up to help process the surge in claims.[73] These changes did not protect those benefit claimants who had already had their benefits sanctioned prior to the COVID-19 pandemic taking hold.

Likewise, whilst there was a brief suspension of direct deductions from April to 10 May to repay overpayment debts and third-party debts, no such suspension has been made for advance payments to cover the minimum five-week wait for first UC payment.

Local Housing Allowance and the Benefit Cap

In 2011 the maximum eligible rent for the LHA which is claimed by private tenants was reduced from 50 per cent to 30 per cent of the median in

67 Stirling, A. & Arnold, S. (2020) *A Minimum Income Guarantee for the UK*. Online: New Economics Foundation. https://neweconomics.org/2020/03/building-a-minimum-income-protection

68 Trade Union Congress (2020) *Fixing the Safety Net: Next Steps in the Economic Response to Coronavirus*. Online: TUC. https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/fixing-safety-net-next-steps-economic-response-coronavirus

69 Innes, D. (2020) *MPs' Coronavirus Briefing: We Need a Lifeline to Help People Keep Their Heads Above Water*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/coronavirus-we-need-lifeline-help-people-keep-their-heads-above-water

70 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020

71 Child Poverty Action Group (2020) *Supporting Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Online: CPAG. https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/supporting-families-during-covid-19-pandemic

72 BBC News (2020) 'Universal Credit: Plea not to Axe £20 Per Week Lifeline.' *BBC News*. September 29. Online: BBC News. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-54344099

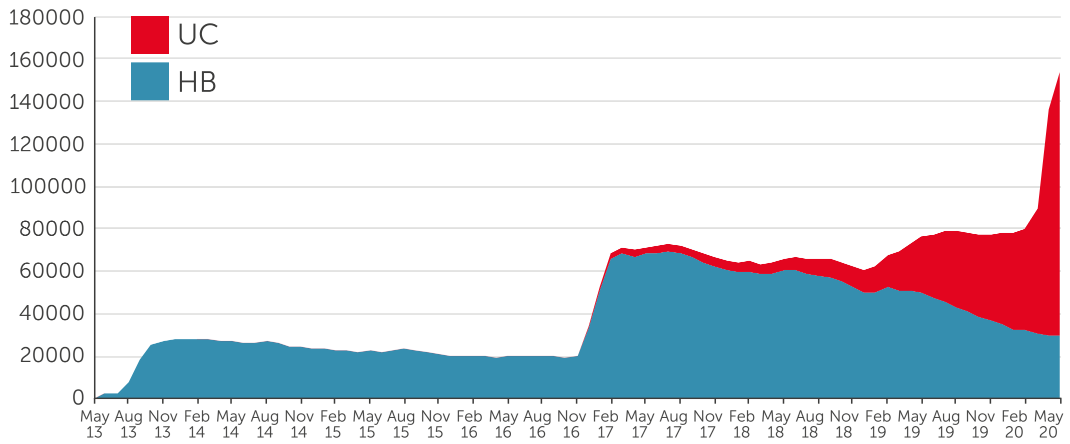
73 Department for Work and Pensions & Thérèse Coffey MP (2020) *Coronavirus update – benefit reviews and reassessments suspended*. 25 March. Online: Gov.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-update-benefit-reviews-and-reassessments-suspended

the Broad Rental Market Area. In the Summer Budget 2015, LHA rates were frozen for four years from 2016/17, following several years of only 1 per cent uprating, meaning there has been a growing gap between actual rents and the amount of rent that is covered by LHA. The changes to LHA rates introduced in response to the COVID-19 outbreak mean that support from the benefits system will again cover 30 per cent of rents in a Broad Rental Market Area. This change, which applies both to LHA and UC claimants, essentially lifts support to pay for private rents back to pre-2012 levels but does not reinstate the connection between LHA rates and median market rents that was previously in place. However, the Government has not made any commitment to retaining the LHA at 30 per cent of median rents going forward. If uprating is again based on Consumer Price Index instead of actual rents then there is a danger that the gap between incomes and rents will once again open up.

Nonetheless, the policy change has been widely welcomed; although many housing practitioners would like the Government to have gone further and reverted to the maximum eligible being based on 50 per cent of median rents. Other commentators have noted that the effects of the change will be felt unevenly across the country. In particular, the national LHA cap which affects five areas in central and inner London remains in place. From April 2020 this cap is set at the maximum Outer London LHA rate, plus an additional 20 per cent.

An even bigger concern is the offsetting effect of the total benefit cap, which particularly affects the support available to large families and single parents. In February 2020, near the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, 79,499 households had their benefits capped, of which 72 per cent were lone-parent families.[74] By May this had almost doubled to 153,659, although the proportion of lone parents fell to 62 per cent.[75] This is due to the

Figure 2.5: Households subject to Total Benefits Cap (Great Britain, May 2013-May 2020)



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2020) Benefit Cap Statistics: Households capped to May 2020, Table 3 and 11

74 Department for Work and Pensions (2020) *Benefit Cap Data to May 2020*. London: DWP. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/883676/benefit-cap-statistics-february-2020.pdf

75 Ibid.

increase in the UC standard allowance and LHA rates tipping households over the threshold, and due to the influx of new claims (Figure 2.5).[76]

The interaction of the LHA uplift and the total benefit cap was of major concern to key informants interviewed in 2020:

> "We were pleased about seeing the LHA increases and it did help... But... the amount of households now caught by the total benefits cap has just skyrocketed, and that's becoming the key limiting factor to securing accommodation for a lot of people."
> (Statutory sector key informant, Autumn 2020)

> "The LHA, going back to the thirtieth percentile, all very well and good in some parts of the country. [But] Particularly in London it's led to some real problems in terms of what that has done with private sector affordability...There are parts of London with the private sector leasing programmes where you can't do it because of the benefit cap affecting it."
> (Statutory sector key informant, Autumn 2020)

Moreover, while there was a fair amount of optimism on the part of key informants that the enhanced LHA rate would be retained post-pandemic (albeit it was noted that there was no commitment to review the rate so that it remained pegged to the 30th percentile), there seemed to be no appetite on the part of Government to amend the total Benefit Cap policy:

> "in some areas [the LHA increase] didn't make any difference because of the cap, but...we've had very little movement or noises that Government will back down on [total Benefit Cap]. We persevere but we're realistic, yes."
> (Voluntary sector key informant, Autumn 2020)

> "I think, the Conservative ministers are actually quite into the benefit cap. They see it as the one part of the welfare reform agenda, which polling evidence suggested was very popular, and I don't think there is any reason to believe that views have changed...Personally, I wouldn't expect the benefit cap to change..."
> (Statutory sector key informant, Spring 2020)

If private tenants experience a shortfall and struggle to meet their rental payments, the Government's *COVID-19 and Renting* guidance encourages landlords and tenants to work out repayment plans 'in partnership'. Buy-to-let landlords are eligible for mortgage 'holidays', which they are 'expected' but not required to pass on to tenants in the form of a rent holiday.[77] The Communities and Local Government Select Committee expressed concerns regarding *"the Government reliance on conversations between landlords and tenants which have little legal force,"* concluding that *"housing security for renters should not rest with individuals."*[78]

Council Tax hardship fund and Local Welfare Assistance

In 2013/14, central Government reduced its funding for Council Tax Benefit, and the national scheme was replaced in England by locally determined Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes. Over the years since devolution of the schemes there has been increasing divergence in the support available in different LA areas, with councils requiring claimants to make contributions of between 1 and 45 per cent towards council tax bills.[79]

In response to COVID-19, the Government announced a £500 million hardship fund to be allocated to Local Authorities intended to be used to reduce Council Tax bills by £150 for any household already in receipt of local CTS. Any remaining funding could be used to either further reduce Council Tax bills or to provide discretionary support through Local Welfare Schemes.[80]

There have been concerns about the adequacy of emergency welfare provision since the national Social Fund was abolished in 2013. LAs have since been able, but not required, to establish Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes. Two 2016 investigations of LWA by the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee[81] and the National Audit Office (NAO).[82] identified a range of issues, including restrictive 'local connection' and 'residency' criteria adopted in some LAs that were reportedly excluding vulnerable groups, in particular women fleeing domestic violence and people leaving care or prison (all groups at high risk of homelessness). Also, that 'in kind' rather than 'cash' forms of support dominated (only one in four councils offer cash support).

The last Homelessness Monitor England survey (conducted in 2018) found that 18 per cent of English LAs no longer operated any LWA scheme, rising to 38 per cent of LAs in the Midlands.[83] The complete absence of LWA schemes in many parts of England proved a significant barrier to the disbursement of the additional COVID-19 hardship funds via this route, reinforcing the emphasis instead on using these funds to enhance CTS schemes, of less immediate benefit to those at risk of homelessness.

In June, the Local Government Association (LGA) welcomed the Government's decision to provide £63 million to supplement LWA schemes during the pandemic. The money was paid as a grant and allocated on the basis of population weighted by the English Index of Multiple Deprivation as a proxy for need and was not ring-fenced. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) conducted a survey in October 2020 to identify how LAs had used the funds, but the results are not yet available.[84]

A further £171 million was announced in November 2020 by DWP as a COVID Winter Grant Scheme and, in contrast to the DEFRA scheme is ring fenced,

76 Child Poverty Action Group (2020) *Mind the Gaps: Reporting on Families' Income During the Pandemic*. 14 May. Online: CPAG Early Warning System. https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/CPAG-mind-the-gaps-briefing-14-May.pdf

77 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *COVID-19 and Renting: Guidance for Landlords, Tenants and Local Authorities*. Online: MHCLG https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities

78 House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee (2020) *Protecting Rough Sleepers and Renters: Interim Report*. London: House of Commons. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmcomloc/309/30907.htm#_idTextAnchor019

79 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S. & Watts, B. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2017*. London: Crisis.

80 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Government Confirms £500 Million Hardship Fund will Provide Council Tax Relief for Vulnerable Households*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-confirms-500-million-hardship-fund-will-provide-council-tax-relief-for-vulnerable-households

81 House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee (2016) *The Local Welfare Safety Net*. HC 924. Online: HCWPC. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmworpen/924/924.pdf

82 National Audit Office (2016) *Local Welfare Provision*. Online: NAO. https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Local-welfare-provision.pdf

83 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. London: Crisis

84 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2020) *Coronavirus (Covid-19): Local Authority Emergency Assistance Contribution for Food and Essential Supplies*. Online: Gov.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies

with 80 per cent of funds being tied to food and bills.[85]

Discretionary Housing Payments
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) were established by the UK Government as a vehicle to provide temporary assistance to people requiring extra support with their housing costs. After 2010, DHPs became the principal vehicle through which Housing Benefit (HB) cuts could be mitigated. In 2018/19 the allocation to LAs across England and Wales amounted to £154 million,[86] but this was reduced in the 2019/20 allocation to £139.5 million.[87] These sums consist of core funds and funds related to different aspects of welfare reform such as Bedroom Tax which amounts to £40.5 million of 19/20 allocation.

The DHP funding for England and Wales in 2020-21 has increased to £179.5 million, which includes £139.5 million rolled over funding from 2019-20 and an additional £40 million allocated at the Spending Round, (of which £40.5 million has been earmarked for Bedroom Tax mitigation).[88]

Although councils received £3.3 billion un-ringfenced funding to help with the immediate impacts of COVID-19, including housing rough sleepers and supporting clinically vulnerable people (see Chapter 3),[89] there has been no additional DHP funding per se.

Homelessness charities have recommended an increase of DHP allocations for the duration of the pandemic,[90] and London Councils have raised concerns around adequacy of DHPs during this period, arguing that: *"an increase in the Discretionary Housing Payments would enable councils to provide emergency hardship payments that provide additional support to any resident affected by the virus."*[91]

LA views on the COVID-19 related social security and other policy measures
Almost all the pandemic-triggered emergency social security benefits adjustments discussed above were supported by LAs responding to this year's national survey (see Appendix 2, Table 8).

In particular, the raising of the LHA maximum to cover the 30th percentile of private rents was considered 'very' or 'somewhat' important in mitigating homelessness risks by 82 per cent of LAs, while the corresponding percentage was almost as high (74%) with regard to the suspension of benefit sanctions. Around two-thirds of all LA respondents (66-68%) considered additional LWA funding, enhancement of UC standard allowances, and suspension of (most) debt-related benefit deductions, likewise to be important in preventing or minimising homelessness in their area. The pausing in the roll out of UC, on the other hand, was considered important by a somewhat smaller group of authorities (41%).

When LA respondents were asked to volunteer their own suggestions on welfare or policy changes considered 'most helpful in minimising homelessness levels ... post-pandemic' many called for recently or currently operating 'temporary measures' (e.g., evictions moratoria) to be extended well into the future. Others simply called for all the 2020 welfare benefits enhancements and relaxations to be made permanent:

> "If all the welfare changes continued this would be extremely helpful."
> (LA respondent, the Midlands, 2020)

Numerous other suggestions were made, including some that related to homelessness-specific policies and legal arrangements (see Chapter 3), to particular aspects of the social security system (e.g., a permanent end to benefit sanctions, halting the roll-out of UC), or to far-reaching changes to social housing (e.g., a major increase in new construction and an end to the Right to Buy.)

However, by far the most frequently cited demand concerned measures to enhance access to, and security in, the private rented sector. More than a fifth of all respondents called for the retention or further enhancement of 2020 LHA rates:

> "The raising of the LHA rates is a game changer, this is really helpful."
> (LA respondent, the South, 2020)

A related demand, advanced by around half this number, was the raising or abolition of the overall benefit cap, echoing the concerns emphasised above by key informants:

> "...the increase in LHA rates to the 30th percentile (while a very positive move) has significantly increased the shortfalls faced by those households who are benefit capped, and further reduced affordable housing options for those not in work. We now have significant numbers of individuals who due to the benefit cap have no money to live on after paying their rent. As... landlords... [have] increased their rates to the new 30% percentile rate... even more claimants have been pushed into the cap."
>
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)
> "With increases in LHA rates we now have single homeless people being benefit capped which is making it difficult to find accommodation locally. The cap needs to be increased in line with LHA."
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

Although most commonly articulated by London boroughs, this was also a concern for many authorities elsewhere:

> "We are one of the most expensive rental markets in the county, yet do not benefit from London weighting for the [overall benefit] cap. This means in practice anyone not working will still struggle to access the PRS, even with the increase in LHA, due to the cap limiting their benefit income."
> (LA respondent, the South, 2020)

Other widely-cited Private Rented Sector (PRS)-related reform asks

85 Department for Work and Pensions (2020) *New winter package to provide further support for children and families*. 8 November. Online: DWP. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-winter-package-to-provide-further-support-for-children-and-families
86 Department for Work and Pensions (2018) *Housing Benefit Circular HB S1/2018: 2018-19 Discretionary Housing Payments Government Contribution for English and Welsh Local Authorities*. London: DWP. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/677103/s1-2018.pdf
87 Department for Work and Pensions (2019) *Housing Benefit Circular HB S1/2019: 2019-20 Discretionary Housing Payments Government Contribution for English and Welsh Local Authorities (Revised)*. 27 November. London: DWP. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-circulars-2019/s12019-2019-20-discretionary-housing-payments-government-contribution-for-english-and-welsh-local-authorities
88 Department for Work and Pensions (2020) *Housing Benefit Circular HB S2/2020: 2020-21 Discretionary Housing Payments Government Contribution for English and Welsh Local Authorities*. London: DWP. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-circulars-2020/s22020-2020-21-discretionary-housing-payments-government-contribution-for-english-and-welsh-local-authorities
89 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Letter from Simon Clarke MP, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government to all Local Authority Leaders in England*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/880292/200420_Simon_Clarke_letter_to_all_LAs.pdf
90 Crisis (2020) *Open Letter to the Prime Minister on the Next Steps needed to Protect People Experiencing Homelessness in the Coronavirus Outbreak*. Online: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/latest-news/open-letter-to-the-prime-minister-on-the-next-steps-needed-to-protect-people-experiencing-homelessness-in-the-coronavirus-outbreak/
91 London Councils (2020) *Welfare Response to COVID-19*. Online: London Councils. https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/members-area/member-briefings/housing-and-planning/welfare-response-covid-19

included an end to 'no fault' eviction powers (see above), increased notice periods for PRS tenancy terminations, and an end to Single Room Rate restrictions for under 35s – or, at least, for those aged over 25.

2.5 Key points

- During the decade since the GFC earnings growth was weak, meaning that real earnings were lower going into the COVID-19 pandemic than they were before the GFC.

- Although poverty levels have been relatively stable for at least 15 years, they were falling up to 2012/13 and have risen since then. Further, housing costs increase the poverty rate by five per cent overall and by 10 per cent for children. Consequently, three in ten children lives in poverty.

- Destitution has risen in recent years and in 2019 some 2.4 million people including 550,000 children experienced this extreme form of poverty.

- COVID-19 has had a dramatic effect on the economy and the country's finances. The economy was eight per cent smaller in October than it had been in February, and Government borrowing exceeded the size of the entire economy.

- The Government intervened strongly to counter the anticipated downturn in the housing market and to protect tenants and mortgaged owner-occupiers from losing their properties.

- The moratorium was on evictions had a dramatic effect and were 'essential' in preventing widespread loss of homes, but there is much uncertainty about what will happen when it ends.

- The moratorium on possessions by mortgage lenders was also effective and the mortgage deferral scheme has been used widely, although a minority of borrowers will continue to require assistance once the deferral is over.

- Broader housing policy and market trends are a cause of concern. Any downturn in housebuilding will entail a reduction in affordable homes provided through planning agreements. The Government's First Homes policy risks shifting housing supplied under planning agreements away from affordable rental to owner occupied housing. Proposed planning reforms also give rise to doubts over the continued effectiveness of the planning system as a mechanism that delivers affordable housing.

- It is disappointing that the Government has postponed its commitment to end 'no fault' evictions in the PRS, since this would end a very common immediate cause of homelessness.

- The supply of new social rented housing is also threatened by changes to the Affordable Homes Programme which shifts the emphasis away from social rented housing and towards affordable homeownership. It is also disappointing that the Government has not established an enhanced affordable housing programme as a means to stimulate the economy.

- The Government has taken important measures to protect incomes during the pandemic. The furlough scheme alone has protected the jobs and incomes of almost 10 million workers since its introduction.

- The £20 weekly enhancement to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits has been widely welcomed, although it is disappointing that it does not apply to legacy benefits. It is also unfortunate that the total benefits cap was not adjusted to prevent some beneficiaries being capped as a result of the £20 enhancement. A big question mark lies over whether the enhancement is continued beyond April 2021.

- The restoration of the Local Housing Allowance to 30 per cent of Broad Market Area was widely welcomed, but again doubts remain about whether this will track rents or Consumer Price Index in future years. It also does not make up for the loss of tenant income arising from the earlier cut of the maximum eligible rent from 50 per cent to 30 per cent of area rents.

- Enhancements to local welfare assistance budgets have been welcomed.

- Overall, the pandemic and the Government's responses to it highlight the deficiencies of the housing market that leads to so many people struggling to afford and maintain housing. These are compounded by more than a decade of weak earnings growth and a social security system that the Government has implicitly accepted through its crisis interventions fails to provide an adequate safety net.

3. Homelessness policies

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the evolution and impact of homelessness-specific policies in 2020, covering: the COVID-19 crisis response; pre-COVID-19 policy developments that impacted on the pandemic response, especially the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI); and finally, future prospects for homelessness policy and service provision post-pandemic.

3.2 The COVID-19 crisis response

As was reported in the *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing,*[92] published in July 2020, the pandemic prompted a radical and rapid nation-wide shift in responses to some of the most extreme forms of homelessness with a remarkable degree of success and speed.[93]

On 26th March, a letter was sent by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to all LAs in England instructing them to move everyone sleeping rough and in communal shelters into a safe place, ideally in self-contained accommodation, over the following two days.[94] This 'Everyone In' initiative was preceded by £3.2 million targeted funding to LAs to support people sleeping rough and those at risk, alongside £4.6 billion un-ringfenced funds[95] to help councils cope with the overall financial pressures of the pandemic.[96] Government subsequently estimated that over 90 per cent of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of the crisis had been offered self-contained emergency accommodation in commercial hotels, B&Bs, and hostels.[97] By September 2020, while over 10,000 people continued to be accommodated under these Everyone In arrangements, almost 19,000 people were reported to have been *"moved into settled accommodation or a rough sleeping pathway outside of temporary accommodation",* indicating that around 33,000 people in total had been helped under Everyone In by autumn 2020.[98]

On 2nd May a new Taskforce, headed by Dame Louise Casey, was established to work with councils *"to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over – ensuring as few people as possible return to life on the streets".*[99] On 24th May the Government announced that it was to bring forward £161million out of an (increased) £433million four-year budget to provide 6,000 new supported housing units for ex-rough sleepers, with 3,300 of these units to become available over the next 12 months.[100] This 'Next Steps Accommodation' Programme mainly covers capital expenditure for housing acquisition or renovation, but a smaller revenue element (£31 million) has been committed to staffing and support costs. On 24th June, it was announced that £105 million would be made available for interim accommodation to ensure that those currently being assisted under Everyone In did not return to the streets in winter;[101] these funds were described by one statutory sector key informant as a *"a bridge before the main programme kicked in".*

A further £10million was made available to all LAs as part of the Government's annual Cold Weather Fund for rough sleepers, while £2million has been allocated to a Transformation Fund for faith and community groups to enable them to make night shelters safer for use this winter.[102] In November 2020, the Government launched the 'Protect Programme', providing an additional £15million to areas with larger numbers of rough sleepers, aimed at prioritising those currently sleeping rough who are clinically vulnerable. In the one-year Spending Review statement on 25th November, the Chancellor made available further new monies (£151 million) for LAs to spend on rough sleeping in 2021-22. Alongside these myriad COVID-related funds, pre-existing funding streams targeting homelessness and rough sleeping include the third year of the RSI programme, amounting to £112million in 2020/21.

As noted in Chapter 2, other important steps taken early in the crisis by Government included a moratorium on rental evictions, alongside a suspension of evictions from asylum accommodation across the UK, and significant enhancements of welfare protections, with LHA rates being realigned to cover the bottom third of rents, and a temporary increase of £20 per week in the UC standard allowance. Another key move in the context of homelessness policy specifically was that the Government extended the suspension of a European Union derogation relating to freedom of movement, to allow LAs to house European Economic Area (EEA) nationals not in employment.[103]

Key informants were united in praising the initial clarity and swiftness of the communication and actions from

92 https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/
93 See also: National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO.
94 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Letter from Minister Hall to Local Authorities on Plans to Protect Rough Sleepers*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-minister-hall-to-local-authorities
95 As at October 2020 National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO.
96 The NAO report that, as at August 2020, LAs had allocated 3% of this funding to rough sleeping, around £129million. See: National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO.
97 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020), *Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency accommodation survey data: May 2020,* Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-covid-19-rough-sleeper-accommodation-survey-data-may-2020
98 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Accommodation Survey Data: November 2020.* Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-emergency-accommodation-survey-data-november-2020
99 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Dame Louise Casey to Spearhead Government Taskforce on Rough Sleeping During Pandemic*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dame-louise-casey-to-spearhead-government-taskforce-on-rough-sleeping-during-pandemic. Louise Casey subsequently resigned as Chair of the Task Force in August 2020 after accepting a crossbench peerage.
100 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *6,000 New Supported Homes as Part of Landmark Commitment to End Rough Sleeping*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/6000-new-supported-homes-as-part-of-landmark-commitment-to-end-rough-sleeping
101 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *£105 million to Keep Rough Sleepers Safe and off the Streets during Coronavirus Pandemic*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/105-million-to-keep-rough-sleepers-safe-and-off-the-streets-during-coronavirus-pandemic
102 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *COVID-19: Provision of Night shelters*. 13 October. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters
103 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Letter from Minister for Rough Sleeping on Funding for Emergency Accommodation During the Pandemic, and Support for EEA Rough Sleepers*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-letter-from-minister-hall-to-local-authorities-on-funding-support-for-those-in-emergency-accommodation-and-eea-rough-sleepers

central Government as the COVID-19 outbreak took hold:[104]

"I think the fact that there was a clear directive was helpful in the first place, because at least it gave a very clear message to local authorities. Thinking about what was achieved in terms of accommodating people in a very short space of time, I think having that visible political leadership was important…"
(Voluntary sector stakeholder, Spring 2020)

MHCLG appears to have been the very 'hands-on' approach during the crisis, as highlighted by the recent NAO 'facts investigation' of help for people sleeping rough during the pandemic:[105]

"At a local level, advisers employed by the Department… changed focus from an advisory role to one in which they worked closely with local authorities and the voluntary sector to secure emergency accommodation quickly for all those rough sleepers and vulnerable people who needed it. This included negotiating directly with hotel chains to secure rooms…"
(p.18)

There was also praise for the remarkable effort made by LAs and the third sector to rise to a unique implementation challenge, with the number of people accommodated safely and quickly a source of justifiable pride:

"I think local authorities played a blinder…. most local authorities were phenomenal."
(Statutory sector stakeholder, Spring 2020)

"I didn't expect them to respond that quickly, I really didn't…Absolutely astonishing, and all credit to them. Usually it's very mixed, but pretty much every local authority rose to the challenge…that was amazing."
(Statutory sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

Some key informants were also keen to stress the role played by voluntary sector services, including hostel service providers:

"The fact that people didn't die in the hostels is to do with the way that staff behaved, and supported people to make sure they reduced the risk,[106] as well as the fact that they made some changes around the physical environment… they reduced their numbers… to make it as COVID safe as possible so they didn't have the same numbers of people, but they carried on working, and so some of the most complex people actually stayed in."
(Statutory sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

Crucially, these combined efforts on the part of Government, LAs and the third sector were successful in keeping COVID-19 infection rates very low amongst homeless people in England,[107] in stark contrast to the position in parts of the United States, for example, where it is reported that up to two-thirds of the shelter residents in some cities have been infected

104 National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO
105 Ibid
106 This point is also consistent with findings in the recent Destitution in the UK. See: Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020
107 Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M.T., White, P.J., Aldridge, R.W., Story, A. & Hayward, A.C. (2020) 'Covid amongst people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study', *The Lancet*, 8(12), 1181-1191. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70

during the pandemic.[108] There have also been relatively few fatalities among homeless people linked to COVID-19.[109]

Many of the qualitative comments made in this year's LA survey were consistent with this upbeat assessment of responses during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as regards their own performance, though it was clear that the resilience of both staff and resources had been severely tested:

"The [LA] has responded to the crisis in an extraordinary way… throughout the pandemic we have met the housing needs of the city, including temporarily housing rough sleepers and ensuring essential homeless services continue. However, this only has been possible due to the commitment and drive of our staff. Staff capacity has been pushed to the limit, almost non-stop for months, with particular strain in our rough sleeping and housing options teams."
(LA respondent, the South, 2020)

"I feel [name of authority] has responded superbly to this pandemic, although it has been extraordinarily difficult and some staff have had a much harder time than others. We utilised volunteering, temporary redeployment, stood down non-essential services, did not let lack of funding stop us housing people, quickly devised and revised and changed strategies to maximise the number of people housed."
(LA respondent, London, 2020)

Highly relevant here is that many LAs were surprised by the sheer scale of need that Everyone In uncovered,[110] going far beyond official rough sleeping estimates, to include not only those in communal shelters but also many 'hidden homeless' people 'squeezed out' of arrangements with friends, family or acquaintances no longer able or willing to accommodate during the crisis period:[111]

"Many people who would ordinarily sofa surf, were finding those that were allowing them to stay with them, were asking them to leave due to fear of transmission of COVID -19. This increased those seeking assistance."
(LA respondent, the South, 2020)

"Increase in the number of [applications from] people 'sofa surfing' after being asked to leave due to worries over COVID. Those with NRPF increased once they were advised we would accommodate."
(LA respondent, the South, 2020)

As discussed in Chapter 2, LAs identified access to long-term housing as the main capacity challenge posed

108 Mosites, E., Parker, E.M., Clarke, K.E.N., Gaeta, J.M., Baggett, T.P., Imbert, E., Sankaran, M., Scarborough, A., Huster, K., Hanson, M., Gonzales, E., Rauch, J., Page, L., McMichael, T.M., Keating, R., Marx, G.E., Andrews, T., Schmit, K., Morris, S.B., Dowling, N.F., Peacock, G.; COVID-19 Homelessness Team. (2020) 'Assessment of SARS-CoV-2 Infection Prevalence in Homeless Shelters — Four U.S. Cities, March 27–April 15, 2020', *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69(17), 521–522. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6917e1
109 Office for National Statistics (2020) *Coronavirus and Deaths of Homeless People, England and Wales: deaths registered up to 26 June 2020*. 10 July. Online: ONS. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/coronavirusanddeathsofhomelesspeopleenglandandwalesdeathsregisteredupto26june2020/2020-07-10. Deceased individuals were identified as having been homeless where the death registration described their place of residence as 'of no fixed abode', a night shelter, or a hotel or other emergency accommodation used to accommodate people under Everyone In.
110 See also: National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO; Boobis, S. & Albanese, F. (2020) *The Impact of COVID-19 on People Facing Homelessness and Service Provision Across Great Britain*. London: Crisis
111 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Sims, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/

(or emphasised) by the pandemic. More positively, though, the great majority of LA respondents reported that their council had been well, or at least adequately, equipped to deal with the crisis from the perspective of staffing capacity, expertise, remote working equipment, and guidance. Access to revenue funding, support services and self-contained emergency accommodation was considered more or less sufficient, at least in the early stages of the pandemic, by around two-thirds of responding councils. However, a sizeable minority admitted to finding themselves lacking on at least some of these fronts:

> **"We have struggled throughout the period and are under resourced across the board – we are currently looking at ways to make the team more resilient and carrying out more training, but it would be wrong to say we are currently up to the correct standard in terms of staffing, experience or expertise."**
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

Moreover, as early as Spring 2020, key informants were flagging what they viewed as 'mixed messages' from central Government as the crisis evolved. A letter from MHCLG on 28th May reminded LAs that they could only legally accommodate people who were ineligible for benefits following an individual assessment of risks to life,[112] and some interpreted this communication as encouragement to take a tougher line on accommodating No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) groups:

> **"...although there was that very decisive initial response from MHCLG around the 'Everyone In' message, it almost feels now that there's been a step back from national government and very much like, 'Over to your local areas to now do it'... local authorities left to work out what to do with people who ordinarily they wouldn't be accommodating, so largely people with no local connection, people with no recourse to public funds."**
> (Voluntary sector stakeholder, Spring 2020)

Many LAs were clearly unhappy with what they perceived to be this shifting of the goalposts by MHCLG, and felt misled on cost recovery issues in particular:

> **"Despite repeated assurances that all accommodation bills would be covered, local authorities have not been reimbursed for the considerable, unexpected, ongoing costs of this. Advice from MHCLG regarding Everyone In was erratic, changing from a request to accommodate everyone, to only accommodating rough sleepers known at the time of request. This advice was only ever given via online meetings, and never followed up in writing, leaving Councils in a very vulnerable position if challenged."**
> (LA respondent, the South, 2020)

However, one key informant defended the MHCLG position on the grounds that, ultimately, the legal responsibility in these matters rested with councils:

> **"...in the end a local authority is the one that has to bear the brunt of any legal action. There's only a certain level of direction that central government can give... Initially it had to be 'Everybody In', because it was an absolute public health crisis... [but] that could [not] persist... basically I think in the end local authorities needed to take their own call."**
> (Statutory sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

112 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Letter Sent on 28 May 2020 to Councils about Accommodating Rough Sleepers*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-letter-sent-on-28-may-2020-to-councils-about-accommodating-rough-sleepers

Whatever the merits of the MHCLG approach, what was clear was that it resulted in growing variation in LA practice across the country as the year progressed, notwithstanding a change in the Homelessness Code of Guidance advising LAs to respond sympathetically to those made vulnerable as a result of the pandemic:[113]

> **"So there are still some [LAs] who are accommodating on the basis of we're still in a public health emergency, but a lot of [councils] have gone back to ... accommodating only in the cases of statutory homelessness."**
> (Statutory sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

Concerns in this respect have tended to focus on vulnerable migrant groups, but this year's LA survey indicated that only relatively low proportions of councils expected a post-pandemic increase in EEA migrants lacking benefit entitlement (19%) or NRPF or other migrants without access to benefits (16%) seeking assistance from their homelessness services (see Appendix 2, Table 4). This likely reflects the geographically concentrated nature of these issues, with those ineligible for benefits constituting 52 per cent of people accommodated under Everyone In in London, as compared with only 12 per cent outside of London at end September 2020.[114]

Looking ahead, the apparently 'transitional' nature of the accommodation to be provided under the Next Steps programme, with maximum three-year tenancies being offered, prompted disappointment amongst some of those we spoke to.[115] The strong emphasis on capital rather than revenue funding within this programme was also considered problematic, as was the requirement to spend the capital budget within a highly restricted timeframe,[116] which was said to limit how strategic or innovative these investments could be:

> **"...the money has got to be spent really quickly, it has to be delivered really quickly... There's generally a very poor understanding still in government about capital projects... some things you...can't make happen in three months... I do think we feel it's a bit of a missed opportunity to do something a bit different... particularly with Housing First."**
> (Voluntary sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

> **"There's no way from getting around the fact that we need more supported housing and more revenue funding to go alongside those units... a lot of people who are in that higher needs group... people in need of supported, long-term accommodation that... You can't just send these people off to the PRS."**
> (Statutory sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

More generally, the proliferation of highly specified, short-term funding pots in the homelessness field, with overly rapid turnaround periods, and focused overwhelmingly on rough sleeping, was a concern flagged by a variety of study participants and in this

113 See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/updates
114 See also: National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO
115 Boobis, S. & Albanese, F. (2020) *The Impact of COVID-19 on People Facing Homelessness and Service Provision Across Great Britain*. London: Crisis
116 See also: National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO

and other recent research.[117] A link was also made with the austerity-era deep cuts in mainstream revenue funding for homelessness services, as reported on throughout the Homelessness Monitor England series:[118]

> "…but has also been a big frustration for us and for others, that there is still no link between your Everyone In cohort and the fact that money is being haemorrhaged from support services and, generally, local authority advice and prevention."
> (Voluntary sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

At the time of writing, in January 2021, the UK was in the grip of the second wave of COVID-19 infections and associated lockdowns. However, as the NAO has recently commented:[119]

> "The response to the resurgence of COVID-19 does not seem as comprehensive as the initial Everyone In in the spring. The Department will need to keep under close review whether it's more targeted approach will protect vulnerable individuals as decisively as the approach it took in the early stages of the pandemic."
> (p.10)

3.3 The impact of pre-COVID-19 homelessness policies: the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Tackling rough sleeping was already a very high-profile public policy priority pre-COVID-19. The Conservatives under Theresa May pledged to halve rough sleeping by 2022, and eliminate it altogether by 2027, while the 2019 Conservative Manifesto pledge to *"end the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament"* effectively brought forward the target date to 2024. A Rough Sleeping Strategy was published in August 2018, linked to a new RSI investment programme, as already noted above. Since 2010, official rough sleeping numbers had climbed consistently, but there was a slight (2%) fall between autumn 2017 and autumn 2018, with a range of key informants in the last Homelessness Monitor[120] attributing the arresting of this upward trend to the RSI. Moreover, an internal evaluation of this RSI programme by MHCLG also pointed to the success of the programme, demonstrating that the fall in rough sleeping numbers was disproportionately high in those areas which had received RSI funding, even after controlling for a range of other factors.[121]

The other major homelessness policy development in the immediate pre-COVID-19 era was the passage of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force in April 2018, introducing a universal homelessness 'prevention' duty for all eligible households threatened with homelessness within 56 days, as well as a 'relief' duty to take 'reasonable steps' to help to secure accommodation for eligible homeless applicants. The last Monitor survey, conducted in autumn 2018, when the HRA had been in force for around six months, painted a largely positive picture of its impacts from the LA perspective, emphasising the positive 'culture' change it had precipitated, with almost two-thirds of councils indicating that it had helped to enable a more 'person-centred approach'. Subsequent to this, the final report of the official evaluation of the HRA found that *"The ethos and principles behind the Act were strongly welcomed by local authorities", and that "the extended prevention duty that stands out as the clearest area of positive impact in terms of tackling homelessness"*[122] Local practice varied more with respect to the relief duty, strongly mediated by the local affordable housing supply. Areas where the evaluation found that more work was required needed to move from compliance to effective delivery included workforce development and engagement with other public authorities under the 'Duty to Refer' (DTR). LAs often reported struggling to effectively assist homeless people with complex needs under the Act.[123]

The retreat from the Coalition Government's 'localist' stance on homelessness,[124] signalled by the May Government by its support for the HRA and RSI, was felt by some key informants to have laid the foundation of a more effective response to the COVID-19 crisis than would otherwise have been the case:

> "…we're building on a really strong foundation here, because for a couple of years, MHCLG have been funding expert advisors, rough sleeping advisors, and advisors in the homelessness advice and support team, the team responsible for the implementation of the HRA. Across the country, there's these really strong relationships between… advisors and the local authorities… that was in place prior to all this happening…so that [all] really helped to make sure that the [COVID-19] emergency accommodation] hotels were set up quickly."
> (Statutory sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

> "…those singles, are much more in plain sight, than they ever would have been had there been no HRA. I think that that will have helped."
> (Voluntary sector stakeholder, Spring 2020)

Survey responses from LAs appeared to give a qualified approval for the HRA in terms of its impact on the effectiveness of responses to homelessness during the initial pandemic period. In all one quarter (26%) of respondent LAs felt that the HRA had enabled a more effective response to homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis that would otherwise have been the case, including almost half (47%) of London Boroughs, while only just over one in twenty respondents (6%) felt that the new regime had been singularly problematic in this respect, the others offering more neutral or mixed responses (see Appendix 2, Table 6).

Among respondents indicating that the HRA had facilitated a more effective

117 Boobis, S. & Albanese, F. (2020) *The Impact of COVID-19 on People Facing Homelessness and Service Provision Across Great Britain.* London: Crisis; See also Local Government Association (2020) *Fragmented Funding Report: Research into the Nature of Central Government Funding for Local Government, 2015/16-2017/18.* 22 September. Online: LGA. https://www.local.gov.uk/fragmented-funding-report; and, Watts, B. & Moorland, N. (2019) *Homelessness Prevention in England: What can central government do to help councils prevent homelessness?* Online: I-SPHERE & Neil Morland & Co Housing Consultants. https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LGA%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20report%20Draft%20Jan%202020%20FINAL.pdf

118 Thunder, J. & Rose, C.B. (2019) *Local Authority Spending on Homelessness: Understanding Recent Trends and their Impact.* St Mungo's and Homeless Link.

119 National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic.* London: NAO. See also Boobis, S. & Albanese, F. (2020) *The Impact of COVID-19 on People Facing Homelessness and Service Provision Across Great Britain.* London: Crisis.

120 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019.* London: Crisis

121 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) *Impact evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018.* Online: MHCLG. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831133/RSI_Impact_Evaluation.pdf

122 ICF Consulting (2020) *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report.* London: MHCLG. pp. iv; viii

123 See also Rich. H. & Garvie, D. (2020) *Caught in the Act: A Review of the New Homelessness Legislation.* London: Shelter; Boobis, S., Sutton-Hamilton, C. & Albanese, F. (2020) *'A foot in the door' Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act.* London: Crisis

124 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Watts, B. (2020) 'The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England', *Policy and Politics,* 48(4), 541-561. https://doi.org/10.1332/030557320X15857338944387

response, supportive comments focussed on the legislation's pivot towards more preventative, earlier interventions:

"Has taken the emphasis away from 'homeless presentation' towards prevention work."
(LA respondent, the Midlands, 2020)

"More effective because of the requirement to start assisting people earlier – i.e., 56 days rather than 28. The HRA encourages single people to be assisted through prevention and relief work the same as families."
(LA respondent, the South, 2020)

"We gather more information and this gives us a better understanding of the needs of those asking for assistance. Officers are used to applying the legislation so can look outside of the main duty criteria to try and help people."
(LA respondent, London, 2020)

Explanatory comments from those seeing the HRA as problematic tended to focus, as in previous Monitors,[125] and in the official evaluation,[126] on what was perceived as excessive paperwork and bureaucracy, particularly amid the emergency pressures of a pandemic:

"[In] rapidly accommodating in TA and then rapidly moving as soon as possible PHPs etc have been an unnecessary hurdle on occasion."
(LA respondent, the North, 2020)

"The Homeless Reduction Act has meant more time spent on the computers for staff, producing H-CLIC stats so less time meeting and supporting rough sleepers ... Given that we have always tried to reduce rough sleeping, this is ... an additional burden."
(LA respondent, the South, 2020).

Also as in previous Monitors,[127] though, even amongst those critical of the Act's impacts in their own areas, there was some acceptance of its 'levelling up' benefits:[128]

"... [we were] already committed to and highly successful at proper prevention, so the Act is of no benefit to us ... Quality Housing Advisers are now hamstrung by the need to gather and input, accurately huge amounts of data ... [which has] made us slower and less effective and efficient. We accept that the HRA may have ... improved the quality of homelessness services in other LAs and if so that would be to the benefit of the country."
(LA respondent, London, 2020)

There was general perception on the part of both LAs and key informants that the COVID-19 crisis imperative had drawn LAs and their partners away from their wider prevention activities under the HRA:

"The work has shifted a lot more into crisis management, especially around the rough sleepers and more complex cases as we have had to redeploy staff to assist with the management of the temporary accommodation we stepped up. This has reduced capacity for effective prevention and relief work."
(LA respondent, the North, 2020)

"The focus was to get people indoors and increased assessments for singles meant that detailed casework was impacted as a result."
(LA respondent, the North, 2020)
"Increased workloads for rough sleepers have meant less time for the 'usual' homeless applicants."
(LA respondent, the South, 2020)

These comments are supported by official statistics reviewed in Chapter 4 which also record a reduced level of LA prevention activity under the auspices of the HRA during the early stages of the pandemic (see Figure 4.16). However, it should also be noted that to at least some extent this reduced emphasis on prevention is associated with a decline in family homelessness cases as a result of the COVID-19 evictions moratorium (see Figure 4.17), and so is not entirely a negative development.

3.4 Post-pandemic homelessness services

As was discussed in the July 2020 Briefing,[129] the massive disruption occasioned by the COVID-19 crisis also provides a window to reflect on the shape of homelessness services in the future. There were hopes expressed that at least some of the positive developments precipitated by the crisis, such as enhanced partnership working with health colleagues, and more creative ways of working with the most complex needs groups, could be retained post-pandemic:

"...there's a sense in the sector that, yes, although everyone is really exhausted, frontline-wise, they're also really proud of what's been done. There's a huge amount of positive energy around... People are almost feeling quite optimistic, or were feeling quite optimistic about their ability to cope ... it's whether or not some of the positive changes – because there have been a lot in terms of working with the NHS, better partnership working locally, some of the flexibilities in the system... particularly...around the more entrenched group... people are just being a bit more creative and willing to take risks. If...some of that can be maintained, that would be great, but...how realistic is that if it all just turns into panic mode again?"
(Voluntary sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

At the same time, funding and workforce capacity and well-being issues loomed large, especially in the medium to longer term:

"...funding [is a concern]... not so much in the short term but kind of spring [2021] onwards. [Charities have] dipped into their reserves, they've exhausted a lot of means... there's still quite a lot of emergency money sloshing around the system, but it was beyond March [2021]... I think the sense of the sector's workforce, the effect it's had on them."
(Voluntary sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

One striking point that came to light during the Everyone In initiative was the extent to which dormitory-style homelessness accommodation is still used in at least some parts of England. Just over half of responding authorities (52%) reported at least some homelessness accommodation with shared bedroom/sleeping arrangements in their area – ranging from 38 per cent of Midlands respondents to 60 per cent in London. In many cases this provision involved night shelter or church hall space made available in winter only or severe weather conditions. Such accommodation was usually provided/managed by churches or other faith groups, or by national or local charities, though in a few cases it was directly facilitated by the LA. As noted in the July Briefing, a decisive

125 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. London: Crisis
126 ICF Consulting (2020) *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report*. London: MHCLG. pp. iv; viii
127 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. London: Crisis
128 See also: ICF Consulting (2020) *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report*. London: MHCLG. pp. iv; viii
129 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Sims, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/

shift away from these communal forms of sleeping provision was a positive outcome sought by some key informants, as well as more broadly a direction of travel that encompassed less emphasis on hostels with shared facilities:[130]

> "…is this an opportunity to push more for a Housing First model with really good support and look at shifting away from night shelter, too much overreliance on the hostel system as we know it?"
> (Statutory sector stakeholder, Spring 2020)

In the LA survey, only 13 respondents (9%) expected that facilities with shared bedroom/sleeping arrangements would be used in their area beyond the pandemic – a result which, on the face of it, appears to indicate an intention to make a large shift away from reliance on such accommodation. Those that intended to reopen such accommodation explained their decision in terms of financial and legal constraints:

> "Once Public Health England guidance allows for night shelters to operate safely there will be a need to have this resource for those with NRPF." (LA respondent, London, 2020)

> "Assuming that Public Health guidelines allow it, we would return to Winter Night Shelter model using shared sleeping arrangements, because we have no other alternatives available that are financially viable."
> (LA respondent, the South, 2020)

Public Health England has not approved the reopening of shelters with communal sleeping arrangements for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, because of the unacceptable level of transmission risk, but has agreed that they could be reopened if necessary if transformed to offer self-contained sleeping arrangements. MHCLG guidance makes clear that, even if reconfigured in this way, night shelters should only be used as a last resort, where more appropriate accommodation cannot be sourced.[131]

Respondents were also asked to reflect on the changes to homelessness working practices and service delivery prompted by the COVID-19 emergency, and the extent to which these might be retained beyond the pandemic. In most cases, a shift to remote/online working and interaction with service users was a largely or wholly new departure and many respondents acknowledged surprise that it had proved possible to achieve such a fundamental change in such short order. And, as many believed, without significant negative impacts:

> "We have realised that phone assessments rather than face to face assessments do not reduce the level of service the customer gets."
> (LA respondent, the North, 2020)

> "Homeless officers have been working from home since the pandemic and will continue to do so until further notice. This has worked well and customers have been happy with a telephone service. This will continue and we will look at ways of improving our remote service."
> (LA respondent, the North, 2020)

130 McMordie, L. (2020) *Why some homeless people prefer sleeping rough to hostels or hotels*. Online: The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/why-some-homeless-people-prefer-sleeping-rough-to-hostels-or-hotels-139414; McMordie, L. (2020) 'Avoidance strategies: stress, appraisal and coping in hostel accommodation', *Housing Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2020.1769036; Keenan, C., Miller, S., Hanratty, J., Pigott, T., Hamilton, J. and Coughlan, C. (2020) *Accommodation-based Programmes for Individuals Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness: A Systematic Review and Network Meta-analysis*. London: Centre for Homelessness Impact.

131 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *COVID-19: Provision of Night shelters*. 13 October. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters

Substantial retention of pandemic-era remote working was justified on efficiency grounds, as well as a response to widely (although not universally) held staff preferences for home working:

> "We are looking to keep an element of home working going forward, it has been very effective, sickness rates have fallen as have staff costs and travel times. It is an obvious one but Skype/Zoom etc have made meetings much more efficient especially as we are a large rural area and travel for meetings used to be quite time consuming."
> (LA respondent, the South, 2020)

> "For many individuals online advice appointments have worked much better – with greater attendance at appointments."
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

That said, a cautionary note was sounded on the need to maintain scope for face-to-face interaction with vulnerable applicants with complex support needs:[132]

> "We do not see staff returning to the office in the near future and expect to continue to deliver services online and via telephone for the majority of our customers going forward. Vulnerable customers will still be able to access F2F."
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

3.5 Key points

- Levels of infection and COVID-19-related deaths have been low amongst homeless people in England, indicating a successful public health strategy with regards to this vulnerable population.
- The speed and clarity of the early central Government response on rapidly accommodating people sleeping rough, eliminating the use of communal shelters, enhancing welfare benefits, and halting evictions, was widely welcomed, with LAs and homelessness charities also praised for rapidly rising to an unprecedented challenge.
- However, subsequent 'mixed messages' from central Government, particularly with regard to the accommodation non-UK nationals ineligible for benefits, became a matter of acute concern amongst LAs and their third sector partners as the crisis progressed.
- Many LAs offered an upbeat assessment of their own performance in response to the homelessness consequences of the early COVID-19 crisis, though it was clear that the resilience of both staff and resources had been severely tested, with many LAs surprised by the sheer scale of need that Everyone In uncovered
- While the large amount of emergency funding being made available by central Government to respond to homelessness during the pandemic was acknowledged, the proliferation of highly specified, short-term funding pots, focused overwhelmingly on rough sleeping, was criticised, as was the apparently 'transitional' nature of the accommodation to be provided under the Next Steps programme
- The balance of LA survey responses across the country indicate a qualified approval for the role played by the HRA legal framework on the effectiveness of council responses to homelessness during the early pandemic period. LAs more critical of the Act focussed on what is perceived to be the excessive paperwork and bureaucracy associated with it.

132 See also Boobis, S. & Albanese, F. (2020) The Impact of COVID-19 on People Facing Homelessness and Service Provision Across Great Britain. London: Crisis; Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) Destitution in the UK 2020. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020

- Pre-pandemic use of dormitory-style accommodation for homeless people was reported by just over half of responding English LAs in this year's survey (52%). It appears that some LAs intend to make a decisive shift away from these communal forms of sleeping provision post-pandemic, though some feel that financial and legal constraints make the use of night shelters unavoidable.

- Key changes to LA working practices prompted by the COVID-19 emergency included a shift to remote/online working with service users, which was viewed as having been largely successful, albeit a cautionary note was sounded on the need to maintain scope for face-to-face interaction with vulnerable applicants with complex support needs.

4. Statutory homelessness trends

4.1 Introduction

This is the first edition of the Homelessness Monitor England where our statutory homelessness analysis is substantially based on the operation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, in force from 1 April 2018.

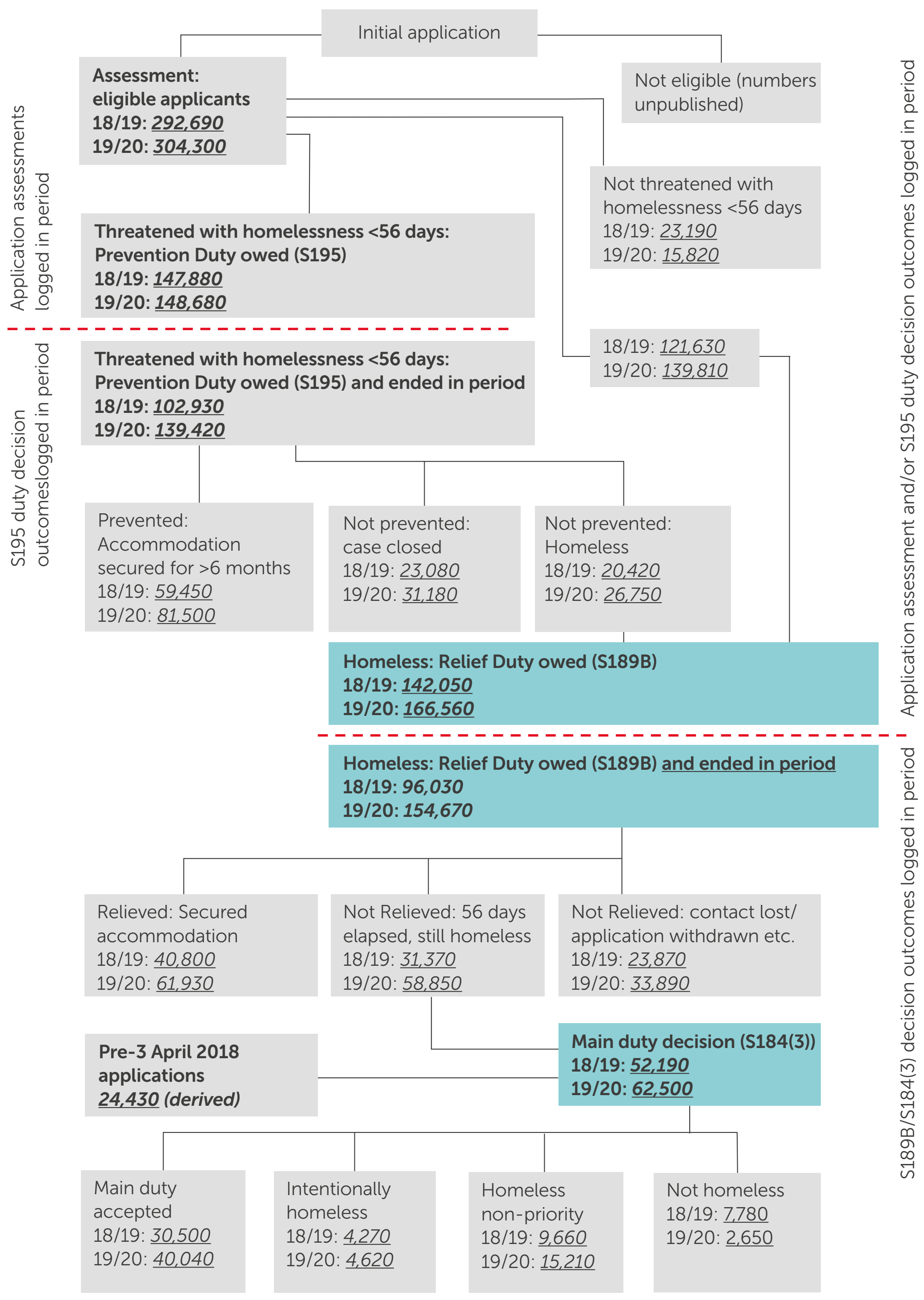
Part and parcel of the HRA framework is a novel set of legal and associated statistical concepts. However, given that the regime has been in place only since 2018 there is limited scope for trend over time analyses where these involve such new metrics. Beyond the fact that this is only a short run of years, it must also be recognised that the significant administrative upheaval involved in transitioning to HRA procedures will have likely resulted in transitional effects to be borne in mind when interpreting statistical differences between 2018/19 and 2019/20 – as the first two years of the new system.

Although bringing into existence a new set of procedures and metrics, the HRA builds on – rather than replaces – the Housing Act 1996 homelessness management framework. Thus, in a few cases it remains possible to retain trend over time analyses that encompass more extended periods, albeit sometimes requiring qualification. This is true with respect to Main Duty (MD) decisions and, especially, TA placements. In relation to such statistics, as in previous editions of the Homelessness Monitor England, our analysis takes as its starting point 2009/10 which represented the nadir of the previous housing market cycle.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, to introduce the analysis we present a flow chart diagram illustrating the structure of the HRA and, accordingly, presenting the raw national case processing statistics to give a sense of the relative incidence of the various case decisions logged by LAs in the first two years of the regime. Next, in Section 4.3 we analyse LA statistics on service user applications and decisions which shed light on the changing incidence of homelessness, focussing on the post-HRA period. We then, in Section 4.4, analyse the statistics in relation to the profile of homelessness applicants and the factors prompting them to seek assistance.

Section 4.5 then focuses on the use of TA, mainly in terms of its utility as a proxy for homelessness stress as this bears on LAs. Linking back to the flow chart, Section 4.6 analyses the distribution of outcomes that result from statutory decisions taken under each legal power as identified in Figure 4.1. Finally, in Section 4.7, and drawing on recently released data for Q1 2020/21, we analyse homelessness demand and LA homelessness actions during the initial 2020 national COVID-19 lockdown.

Figure 4.1 : Homelessness Reduction Act – statutory homelessness decisions 2018/19 and 2019/20



Source: Authors – based on MHCLG statistics and drawn with MHCLG assistance. Note: 1. Statistics cited in each box represent national published totals for 2018/19 and 2019/20. 2. Homelessness prevention and relief duties completed during each financial year denoted as such by the term 'and ended in period'.

4.2 Relating statutory homelessness statistics to the Homelessness Reduction Act framework

Figure 4.1 contextualises official statistics on LA statutory homelessness decisions under the new HRA regime in its first two years of operation. These have been collated from the H-CLIC system.[133] The flow chart is a substantially simplified representation of the multiple possible outcomes of HRA homelessness application and assessment processes.[134]

As depicted in Figure 4.1, there are four significant HRA LA decision-taking points. A few applications may ultimately pass through all four of these. This would be true where:

- The applicant is initially deemed eligible (primarily in relation to citizenship/immigration status)
- The eligible applicant is judged as threatened with homelessness – and thus subject to the Prevention Duty (S195)
- Efforts to prevent homelessness having been unsuccessful, the applicant is subject to the Relief Duty (S189B)
- The Relief Duty having been unsuccessful in relieving homelessness, the applicant is subject to the Full Duty assessment (S193(2)).

At each of these decision points various outcomes are possible. Our flow chart necessarily amalgamates some of these for intelligibility. For example, the box 'not prevented – case closed' under S195 includes applications deemed to have been withdrawn as well as those where an offer of accommodation has been refused or where there has been 'an

133 Accompanying HRA implementation as from April 2018, this 'individual case return' framework replaced the previous system of quarterly aggregate statistical returns. See MHCLG briefing on the new recording system at: https://bit.ly/2W47x2n

134 An elaborated flow chart, as produced for the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) is at: https://bit.ly/2F6NiKB

unreasonable refusal to co-operate'. A finer breakdown of case closure decisions can be found in officially published MHCLG statistics.[135]

The statutory outcomes that result from decisions at each stage of this process are examined later in this chapter at Section 4.6. First, in Sections 4.3 to 4.5 we analyse the scale and nature of homelessness that is revealed by the published figures.

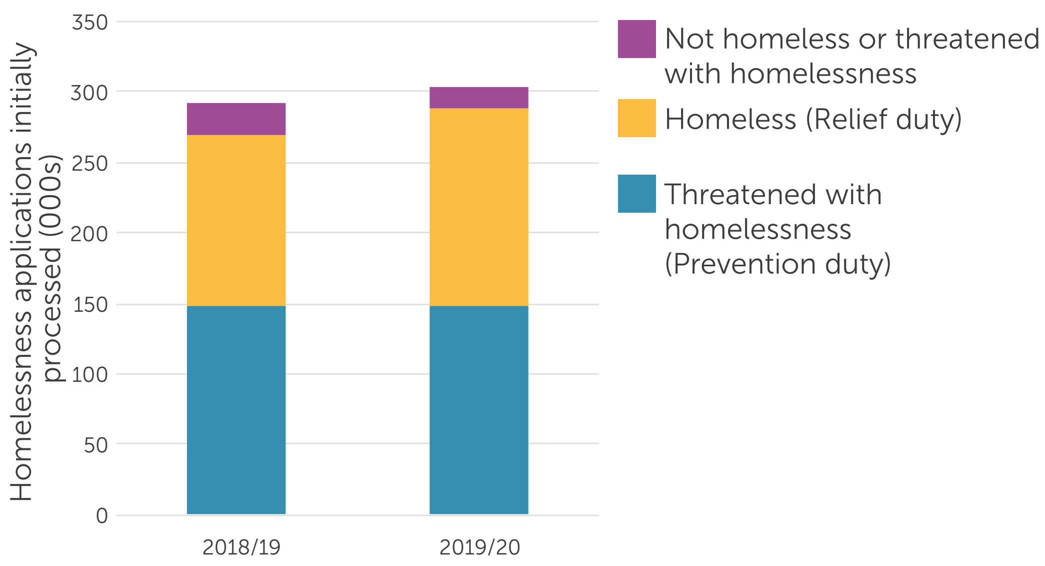
4.3 The changing incidence of homelessness demand: headline indicators and processes

Historically, the quarterly statistics routinely generated through the statutory homelessness system ('homelessness acceptances') were widely treated as the prime measure of homelessness and its changing rate. With the April 2018 introduction of the HRA regime, however, a new official prime measure of 'homelessness demand' was created, namely: 'initial decision of homelessness duty owed'. The decision here refers to whether, at first contact, an eligible applicant[136] is deemed by a LA as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Some 92 per cent of (292,690) eligible applicants assessed in the first year of the HRA regime were judged by LAs as homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days (see Figure 4.1). This involved some 270,000 applicants/households. This is very similar to the 272,000 'local authority case actions' as estimated for 2017/18, the last year of the 'old regime'.[137] 'Local authority case actions' in this context refers to the households subject to Housing 1996 main duty decisions plus those assisted by LAs via informal prevention or relief in that year (2017/18). In 2019/20, applicants initially deemed homeless or threatened with homelessness under HRA procedures grew to 289,000 – or 95 per cent of total eligible applications (see Figure 4.2).

As shown in Figure 4.2, initial homelessness applications logged

Figure 4.2: Eligible homelessness applications 2018/19 and 2019/20: breakdown by initial decision

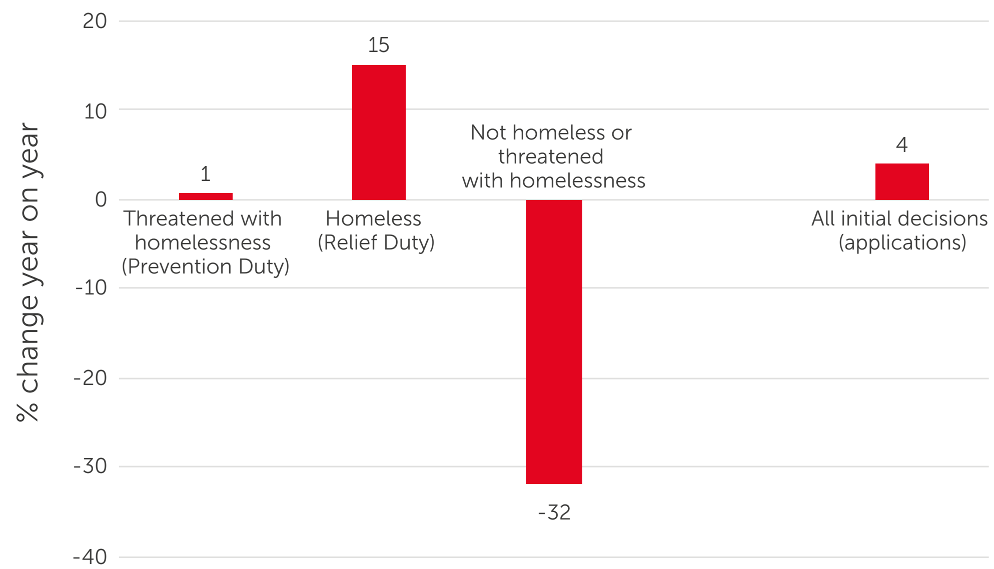


Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

135 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness
136 That is, a person whose citizenship and immigration status entitles them to assistance – e.g., unaffected by rules that exclude certain non-UK citizens from recourse to public funds.
137 See Figure 4.11 in: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. London: Crisis

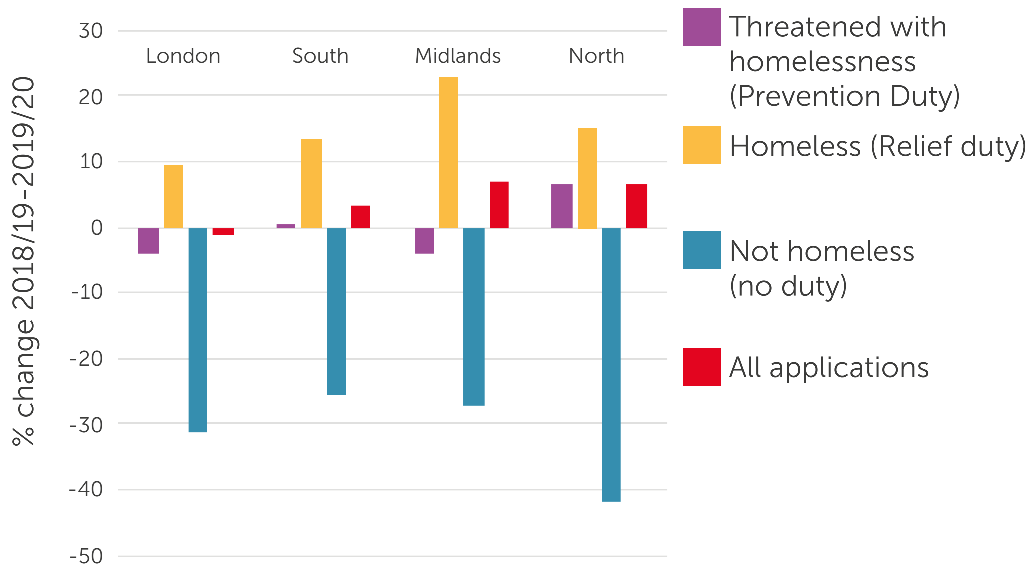
in 2019/20 were 5 per cent higher than in the previous year. Within this, however, applicants judged homeless and therefore subject to the relief duty, rose by 15 per cent whereas 'threatened with homelessness' decisions increased by only 1 per cent (see Figure 4.3). Overall, the combined total of homeless and threatened with homelessness decisions was up by 7 per cent in 2019/20. Cases assessed as 'not threatened with homelessness', meanwhile fell by almost a third. Year on year changes observed in 2019/20 bear resemblance to the bedding-down process observed in Wales

Figure 4.3: Initial application decision outcomes, 2019/20 – % change on 2018/19



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

Figure 4.4: Initial application decision outcomes, 2019/20 – % change on 2018/19 by region



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

following the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.[138]

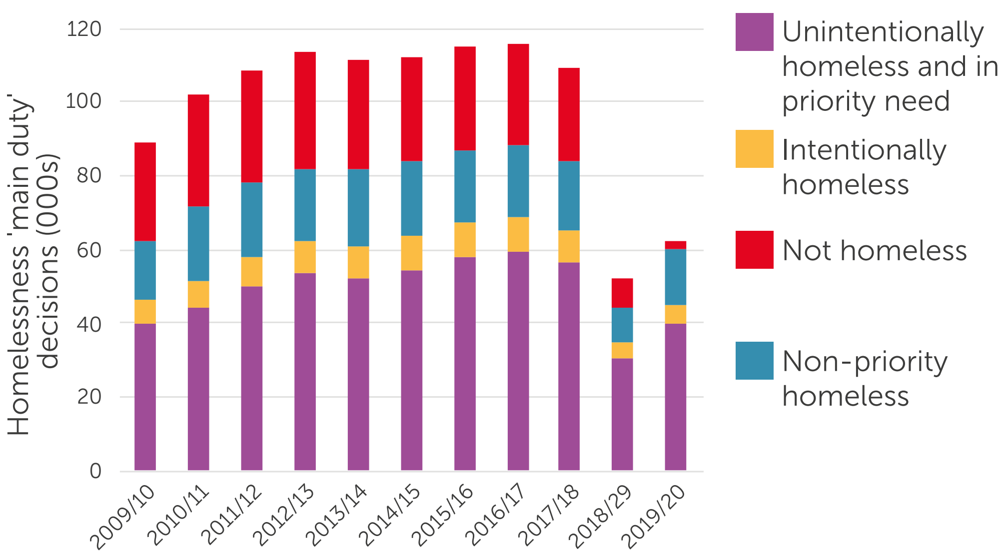
The tendency for significantly more numerous homelessness decisions was common across all regions in 2019/20, as was the trend towards substantial reductions in cases logged as not threatened with homelessness (see Figure 4.3). The combined total of homeless and threatened with homelessness decisions in 2019/20 rose most substantially in the North – where it was 11 per cent higher than in 2018/19, the first year of the new regime (see Figure 4.4).

By comparison with the Housing Act 1996 regime and its associated non-statutory prevention and relief activity, a much-increased proportion of those seeking help under the HRA are being formally assisted under prevention or relief duties, with the result that far fewer applicants/applications are 'progressing' through the system as far as a MD decision (see Figure 4.1). Thus, in Year 2 of the new system, for example, only 58,850 cases passed through those initial stages to be referred for a MD judgement – equating to only 20 per cent of the 289,000 initial applications judged homeless or threatened with homelessness at the initial stage.[139] One way of looking at this is to say that, by comparison with outcomes under Housing Act 1996 procedures, statutory prevention and relief activity (as intended) intercepts a large number of applications which would have been subject to a MD decision under the old framework.

As explained above, cases being determined under HRA MD provisions have been greatly reduced compared with historic norms. In 2019/20 this involved only 62,500 cases – less than half the comparable number in the final year of the old system – see Figure 4.5. Likewise, the number of households deemed unintentionally homeless and in priority need has

138 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor:*

Figure 4.5: Main Duty decisions, 2009/10-2019/20

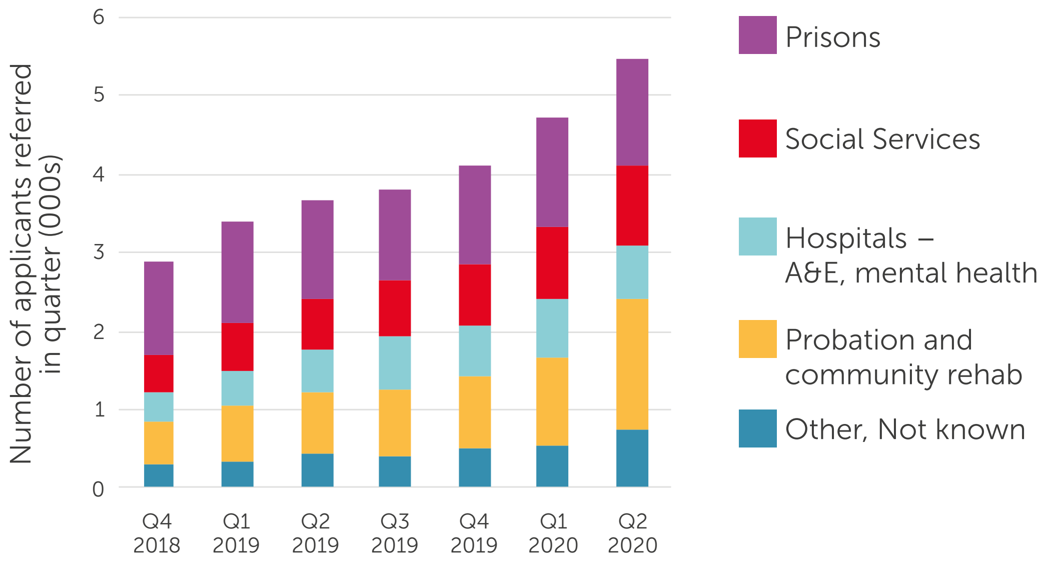


Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

Wales 2017. London: Crisis

139 By comparison, in 2017/18 109,000 households were assessed under the Main Duty, equating to some 40% of all Local Authority statutory and non-statutory case actions recorded that year. However, the extent to which such MD-assessed cases would have been already subject to prevention and/or relief efforts is difficult to know.

Figure 4.6: Referrals under 'Duty to Refer' 2018-2020



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics. Notes: 1. 'Prisons' includes Youth Secure Estate; 2. 'Other' category includes JobCentre Plus and Armed Forces

been substantially reduced. As shown in Figure 4.5, therefore, this traditional 'headline indicator' of homelessness demand – at 40,000 in 2019/20 – remained well below the 57,000 recorded in 2017/18 – albeit significantly higher than recorded in Year 1 of the HRA regime.

Notably, MD accepted decisions in 2019/20 represented 64 per cent of all MD decisions, well up on the 52 per cent recorded under the old regime in 2017/18. An important contributory factor here is that 'not homeless' MD decisions are hugely reduced under the new regime – accounting for only 4 per cent of the latter in 2019/20 (2,650 households) compared with 23 per cent in 2017/18 (25,720 households).[140]

Referrals for homelessness assessment

Among the important innovations brought in through the HRA, the Duty to Refer (DTR) is potentially one of the most significant. In the interests of a prevention-focused approach, this involves certain specified public agencies being mandated to notify the relevant LA where an agency service user is at risk of homelessness and therefore in need of housing assistance. The agencies concerned include prisons, youth offender institutions, social services and hospitals. The extent to which such referrals are, in fact, taking place is now usefully calibrated in MHCLG published statistics.

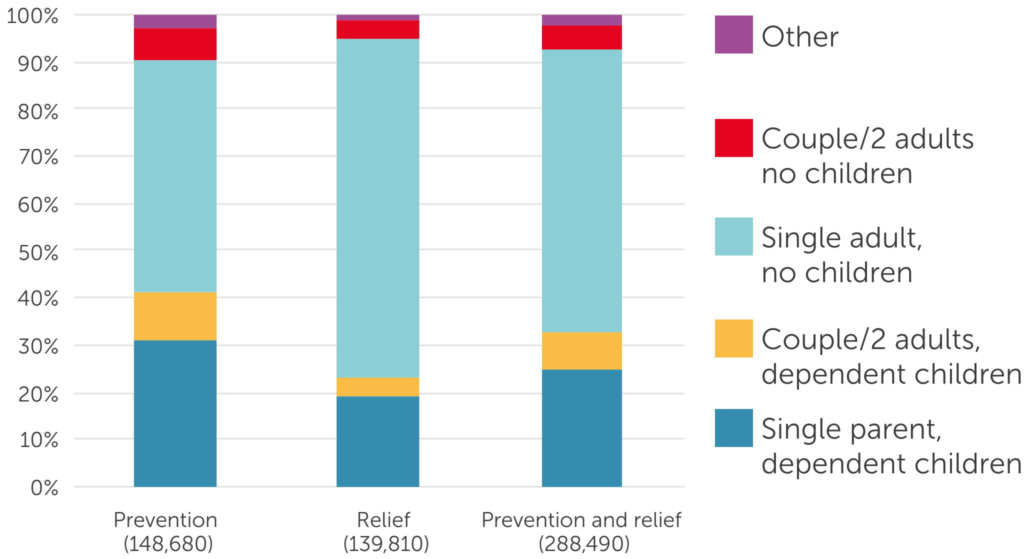
DTR referrals have been increasingly outnumbering referrals by other agencies (e.g., Non-profit Organisations) since the start of this statistical series 2018. Collectively, DTR and other referrals grew from 7 per cent to 13 per cent of all eligible applications over the period. In the most recent 12 months, DTR referrals totalled some 18,000, while other such notifications totalled 13,000.

Focusing on the most recent quarter (Q2 2020) the largest single TR referral source was probation and community rehabilitation services, followed by

140 Some or all of those classed as such under HRA procedures may be households whose housing situation has improved since their original application (when they will have been judged as owed the prevention or relief duty).

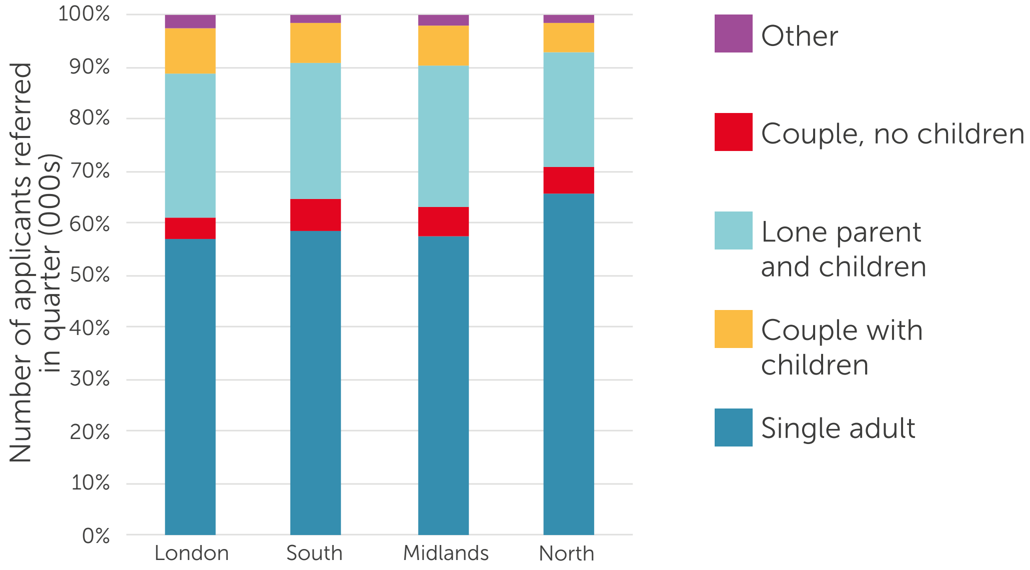
Figure 4.7: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties in 2019/20: household type profile

(a) Distinguishing 'prevention duty' applicants from 'relief duty' applicants



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

(b) All prevention and relief duty applicants: Breakdown by broad region



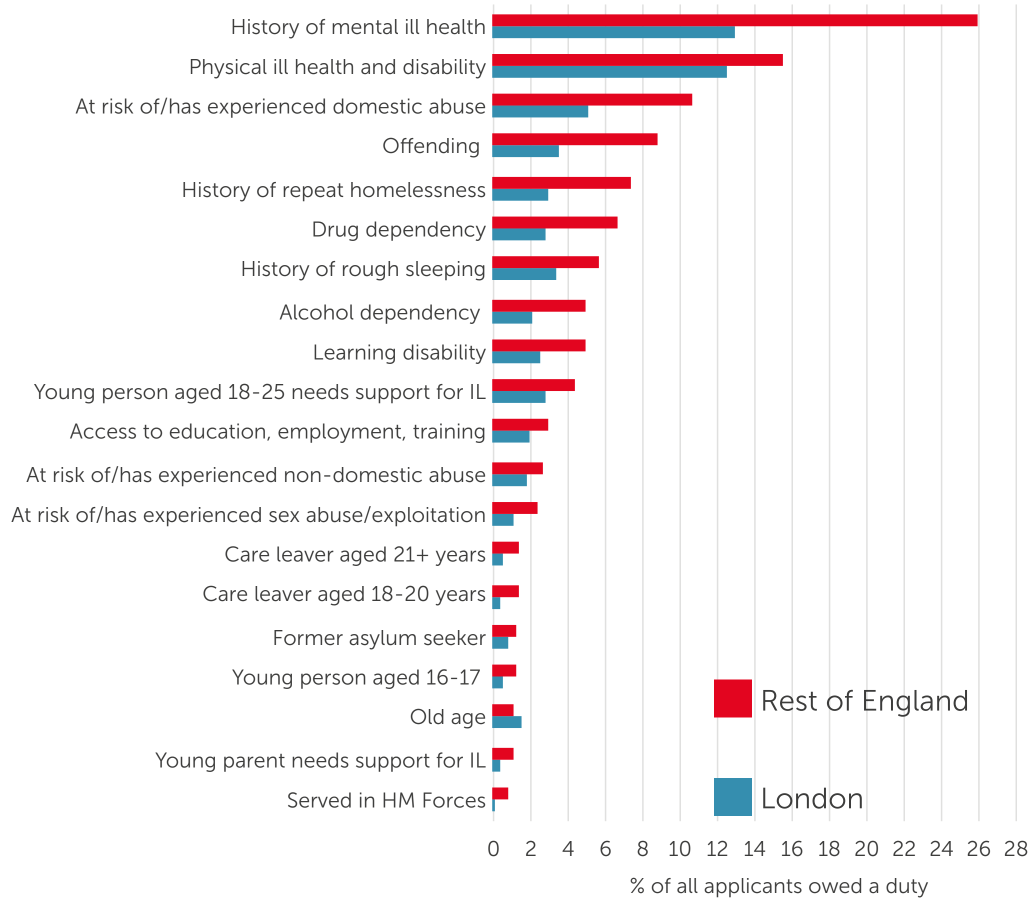
Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

Social Services departments (see Figure 4.6). However, in a substantial proportion of cases the referral agency was unrecorded. MHCLG advises that it is working with LAs to enhance record-keeping practice here.

4.4 Statutory homelessness: profile and causes

Historically, statistical data on the statutory homelessness caseload (i.e., profile data) was restricted to the cohort owed the main rehousing duty (i.e., assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need). Under the HRA H-CLIC framework, however, such data is collected and published for the much wider group of

Figure 4.8: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties in 2019/20: assessed support needs



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics. Notes: 1. 'IL' refers to 'independent living'. 2. Breakdown excludes 9,850 households for which support needs information was unrecorded – that is, percentage figures are calculated with respect to the total number of applicant households for which support needs information was known.

households deemed by LAs as owed a duty of homelessness prevention or relief (see Figure 4.1).

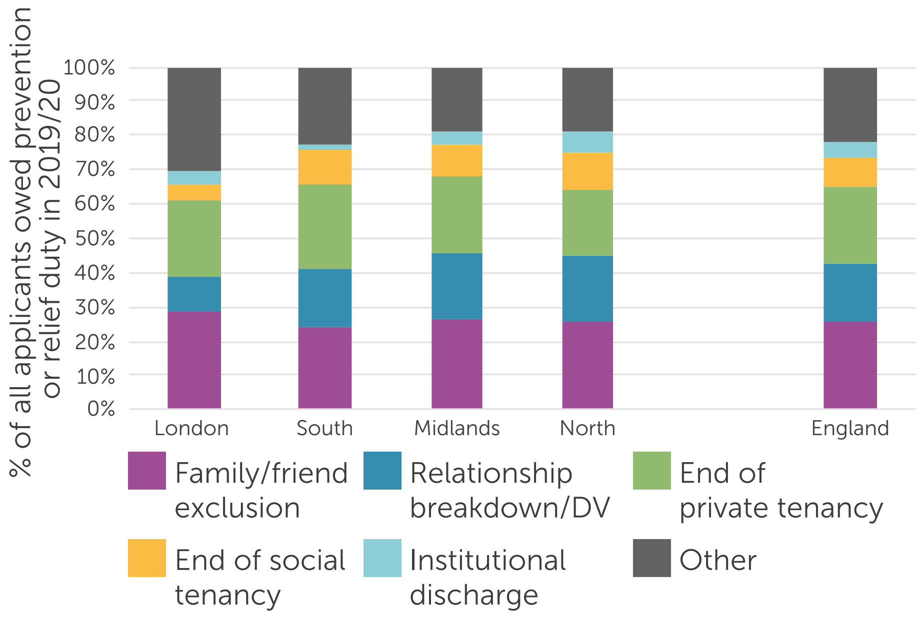
Household type

The bulk of those assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in 2019/20 – 60 per cent – were single adults (see Figure 4.7). Substantially more 'relief duty' applicants (judged homeless, rather than threatened with homelessness) were single adult households than in the 'prevention duty' (threatened with homelessness) cohort – 72 per cent compared with 49 per cent. The difference here is almost entirely accounted for by single men – the representation of single women was almost identical across the two groups.

Combining the two cohorts – prevention and relief duty cases – differences across regions were relatively modest – for example, families (i.e., households with children) ranged from 38 per cent of applicants in London to 29 per cent in the North.

These household-type profiles represent a very major departure from that depicted by the official statutory homelessness statistics in the pre-HRA era. The latter focused much more narrowly on the subset of applicants accepted as owed a MD,

Figure 4.9: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties in 2019/20: main reason for loss of last settled home



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics. Notes: 1. Relationship breakdown includes instances of domestic violence. 2. Institutional discharge includes people required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support. 3. End of social tenancy includes people evicted from supported housing.

only around a third of whom were single adults. This new prominence of single homeless people within the official homelessness statistics brings England more closely in line with the position in Scotland, where the priority need criterion has been abolished,[141] and realises one of the key hoped-for benefits of the HRA, in enhancing the quality and comprehensiveness of data on this group. It is also likely to have profound consequences for the nature and profile of the statutory homeless population in myriad other ways, including with respect to their support needs, as now discussed.

Support needs

A new, and potentially significant, statistic collected under the HRA framework reveals the extent and nature of support needs within the homelessness applicant cohort. Just under half (48%) of the 2019/20 cohort of those deemed as owed a duty of prevention or relief were judged as having at least one such support need, although in London the comparable figure was only 33 per cent. As revealed by the more detailed MHCLG statistics, 14 per cent of applicants owed a duty were assessed as having three or more support needs.
Of equal or perhaps greater significance is the associated published data on the nature of homelessness applicants' assessed support needs. Thus, 23 per cent of the 'owed a duty' 2019/20 cohort involved households judged as having support needs in relation to a household member's history of mental ill health. Similarly, 15 per cent of the cohort involved households with a support need associated with physical ill health or disability. A fuller breakdown is shown in Figure 4.8 where results are differentiated to illustrate the very substantially lower assessed rates of most support needs among London applicants. This probably attests to the effect of London's especially pressurised housing market in placing a wider cohort of the population at risk of homelessness than is true is most other parts of the country.
Another reason for the significance of the breakdown shown in Figure 4.8 is the wider point that 'support needs' associated with homelessness applicants are demonstrably highly diverse. Moreover, they are far from dominated by what are often termed 'complex support needs', linked in particular with drug and/or alcohol problems and offending histories.[142] This is an important consideration as regards the level and type of assistance that a homeless household might need to sustain a tenancy.

Immediate reason for homelessness

Not far short of half of all households owed a duty of prevention or relief in 2019/20 (43%) were people who had needed to exit accommodation of an existing household – those asked to leave by family or friends (25%) or having lost their home due to relationship breakdown (17%) (see Figure 4.9).

Nearly a third of applicants judged homeless or threatened with homelessness (31%) were in this position due the loss of an existing tenancy in either the private rented sector (22%)[143] or the social rented sector (9%) (see Figure 4.9). Within these cohorts (not shown in our graphics), approximately 27,000 households had been evicted or had otherwise lost their tenancy due to rent arrears, a figure equating to 9 per cent of all households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in 2019/20. Once again, inter-regional variations were relatively slight. It may be surmised that the 'reason for homelessness' profile of different household type cohorts will vary. For example, single adults would be expected to be more likely to have lost accommodation due to being asked to leave the home of a family member or friend, whereas a single parent with children might be more likely to have become homeless as a result of domestic violence or loss of a rental tenancy. It would be useful for such statistics to be included within the published suite.

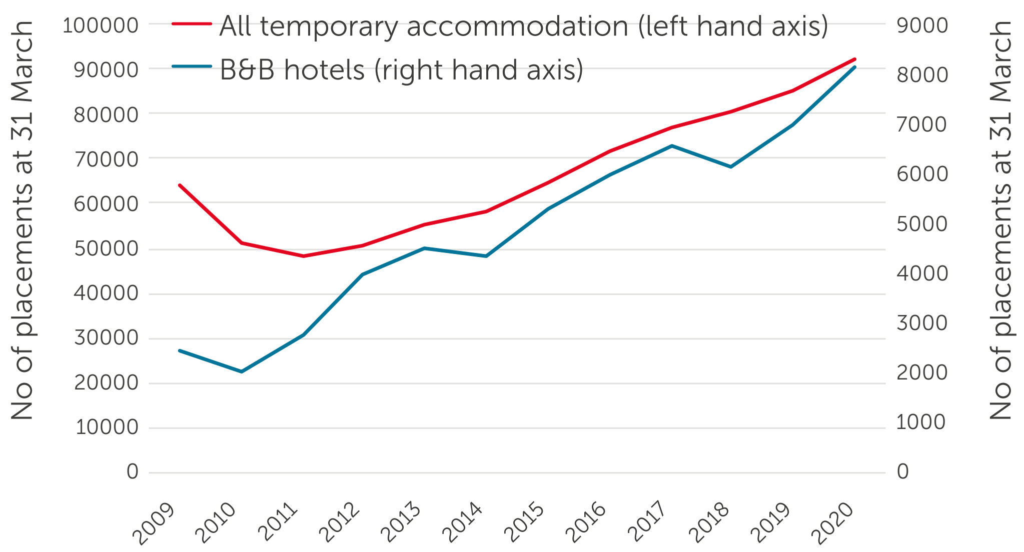
Another concern about the 'reason for homelessness' statistics as graphed in Figure 4.9 is the relatively large proportion (22%) classed as having lost accommodation for 'other' reasons. This raises the possibility that LA recording practice may be failing to properly log the cause concerned, according to the (quite detailed) MHCLG classification. This problem is far from new – 18 per cent of cases captured in the 'reason for homelessness' breakdown in 2017/18 (the last year of the pre-HRA system) were similarly classified. Nevertheless, especially given the crucial significance of this breakdown in informing LA homelessness strategies, it is important that efforts are made to manage it down.

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

142 Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Edwards, J., Ford, D., Johnsen, S., Sosenko, F., & Watkins, D. (2015) *Hard Edges: Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England.* Online: Lankelly Chase Foundation. http://www.lankellychase.org.uk/our_work/policy_research/hard_edges

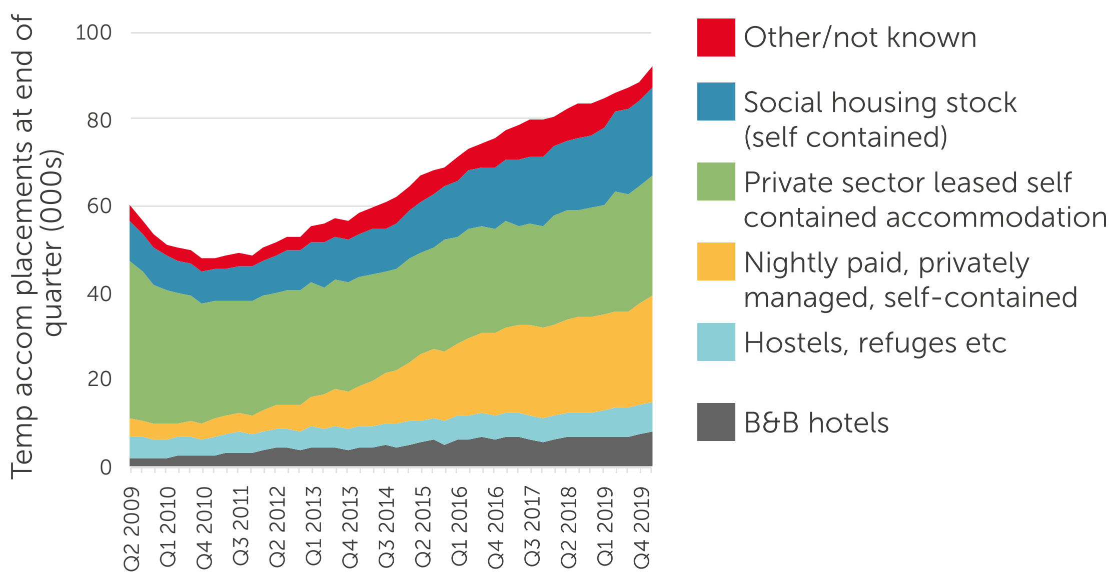
143 Note that this is a somewhat smaller proportion than the 'end of AST' as reason for homelessness statistic that readers might recall from earlier editions of the Homelessness Monitor. This reflects the fact that under the HRA regime the 'reason for homelessness' statistical breakdown relates to all households deemed as owed a prevention or relief duty, as opposed to the substantially narrower cohort analysed as such under pre-HRA arrangements – i.e., households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Figure 4.10: Local authorities' use of temporary accommodation for homeless households, Mar 2009-Mar 2020



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

Figure 4.11: Temporary accommodation placements, 2009-2020 (Q1): type of TA

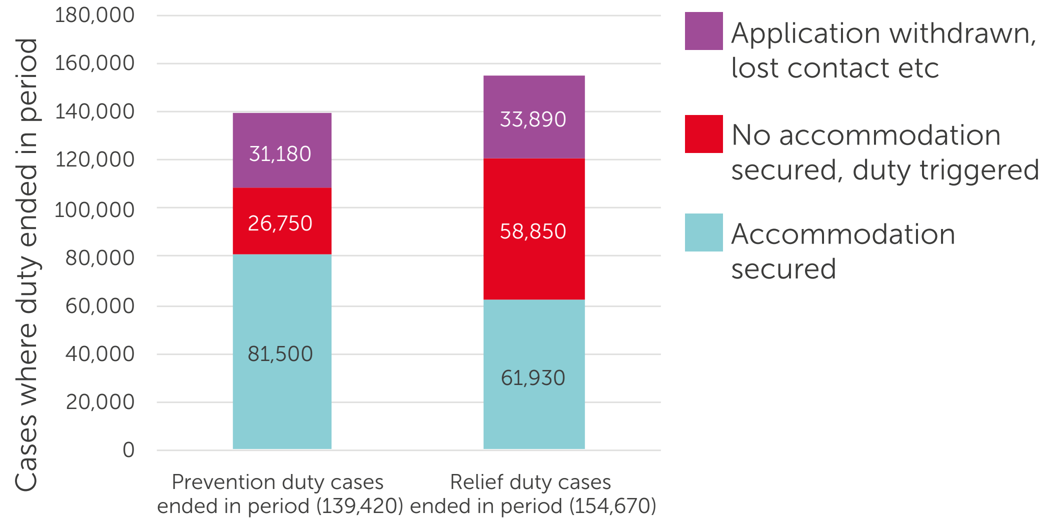


Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

4.5 Temporary accommodation placements

The number of households housed in TA is another valuable indicator of the changing scale of homelessness, especially in relation to LAs' capacity to discharge statutory rehousing duties to homeless people. This assertion rests on an understanding that most of the TA caseload normally involves households which have been assessed as owed the main rehousing duty and who are in the queue for a permanent tenancy offer (as opposed to those whose homelessness application is under assessment). Since rates of TA utilisation reflect the interaction of (homelessness) demand and (social/

Figure 4.12: Outcomes of Prevention and Relief activity in 2019/20 – cases where associated duties ended in period



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

affordable housing) supply, they are an acute proxy for changing rates of homelessness stress as these bear on LAs.

As a barometer of the changing rate of homelessness, TA placements have also recently acquired greater significance because their use has been largely unaffected by the introduction of new HRA procedures from 2018 (a change that complicates the interpretation of trends over time in traditional measures of homelessness – see Figure 4.5 and accompanying text).

Since bottoming out in 2010/11, total placements in TA have almost doubled, with the overall national total rising by 9 per cent in the year to 31 March 2020 (see Figure 4.10). Note here that the series shown in Figure 4.10 intentionally ends in March 2020 to (largely) screen out the impact of the extraordinary surge of TA placements taking place mainly in Q2 2020 in response to COVID-19 (although, since Everyone In was announced on 26 March, there is likely to have been a minor impact on the 31 March statistics). The impact of that latter activity is separately analysed in Section 4.7. Even before COVID-19, placements were already on track to top 100,000 by 2021. Historically, London has accounted for over two thirds of placements at any one point in time.[144]

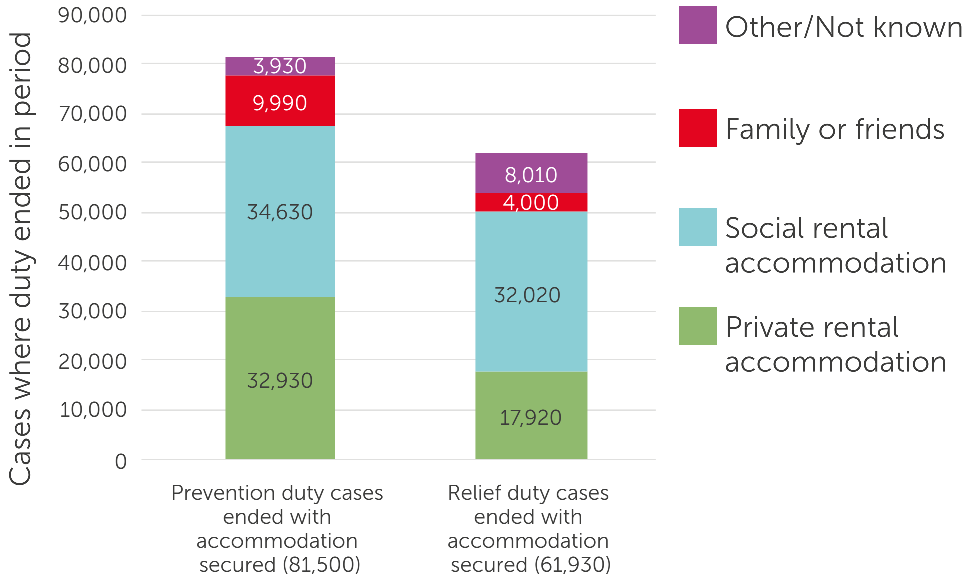
Since the published data also show that TA placements as at 31 March 2020 involved some 129,000 children, and at least 120,000 adults,[145] the number of people affected is likely to have exceeded 250,000,[146] albeit that the gross total will have been marginally affected by the Everyone In

144 While there is little reason to think that this might have changed in the recent past, the latest MHCLG homelessness statistical releases have not included any regional breakdown on temporary accommodation placements.

145 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Statutory homelessness live tables; April 2019 to March 2020, England; Table TA1*. Online: MHCLG

146 On the basis of the household type profile of TA placements, the 92,000 households will have involved at least 120,000 adults.

Figure 4.13: Outcomes of Prevention and Relief activity in 2019/20 – cases where associated duties ended in period with accommodation secured



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

initiative.[147]

The bulk of TA placements involve self-contained units (see Figure 4.11). Only 16 per cent of the total as at 31 March 2020 took the form B&B hotel or hostel rooms – accommodation in which units usually lack cooking facilities and where sanitary facilities may be shared. Notably, although accounting for only 9 per cent of the national TA total as at 31 March 2020, B&B placements have risen much faster than other forms of TA. Totalling 8,180 at that time, the number of placements was 17 per cent higher than a year previously and 299 per cent higher than in 2010. Although B&B hotels are predominantly used for childless households, the 31 March 2020 cohort included 1,530 households with children, 500 of which had been enduring this situation for more than six weeks. Also notable is the very substantial growth in the number and proportion of TA placements involving 'nightly paid, privately managed, self-contained' accommodation.[148]

Signs of stress are also evident in the substantial levels of out-of-borough TA. As at 31 March 2020 such placements numbered 25,540, most of these probably the responsibility of London boroughs. At 27 per cent of the national total this represented a slight reduction on the proportion a year earlier, but a large increase on the 11 per cent recorded in 2010/11.[149]

4.6 Analysing Homelessness Reduction Act duty decision outcomes

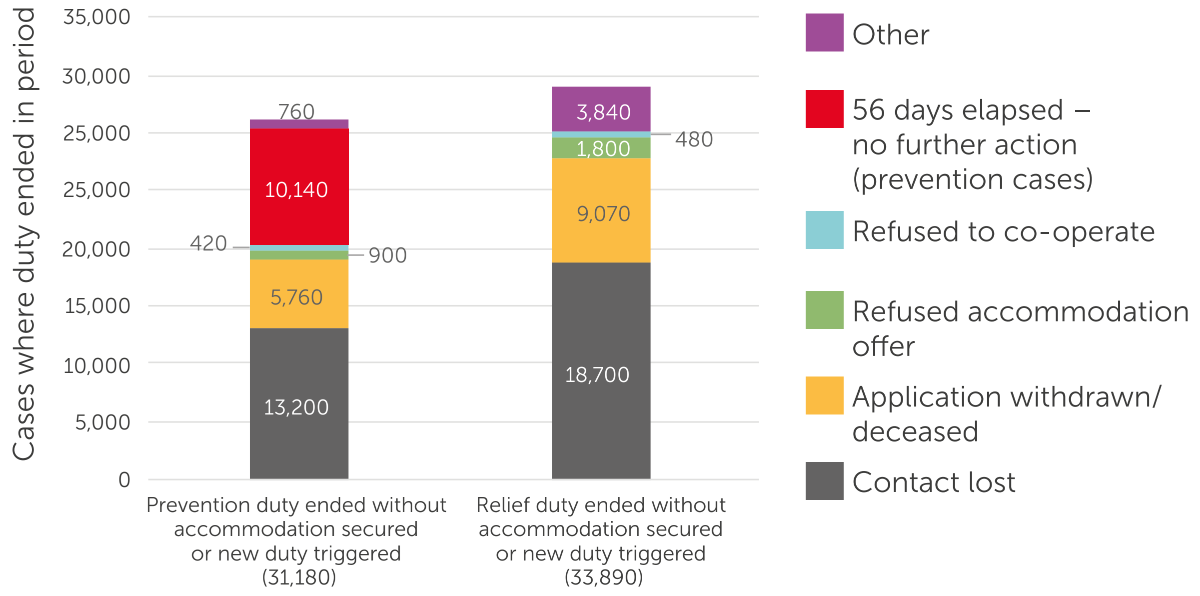
Graphically re-presenting statistics set out in Figure 4.1, Figure 4.12 demonstrates that a substantial proportion of 2019/20 prevention and relief actions ended with accommodation having been secured. Thus, households have been enabled to retain existing – or to obtain new – accommodation. This was the outcome for most prevention duty cases ended during the year (58%), with the equivalent figure for relief cases ended being 40 per cent. 2018/19 outcomes were similar. Assisting an applicant to obtain a new place to live (rather than to retain existing housing) was, by definition, the 'accommodation secured' result for all of the 2019/20 relief cases with this outcome, as well as for 51,490 (63%) of the 81,500 prevention cases logged as 'duty ended' during the year.

147 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Sims, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/

148 See an analysis of the implications and costs of this in Rugg, J. (2016) *Temporary Accommodation in London: Local authorities under pressure*. Research Report. London Councils

149 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Statutory homelessness live tables; April 2019 to March 2020, England; Table TA1*. Online: MHCLG

Figure 4.14: Outcomes of Prevention and Relief activity in 2019/20 – cases where associated duties ended in period without accommodation secured or new duty triggered



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

As also illustrated by Figure 4.12, the prevention or relief duty outcome often involves the triggering of a 'new duty' (see also Figure 4.1). For prevention cases the onset of actual (as opposed to threatened) homelessness can lead to a relief duty, whereas in relief cases the inability to secure accommodation within 56 days can lead to a MD decision.

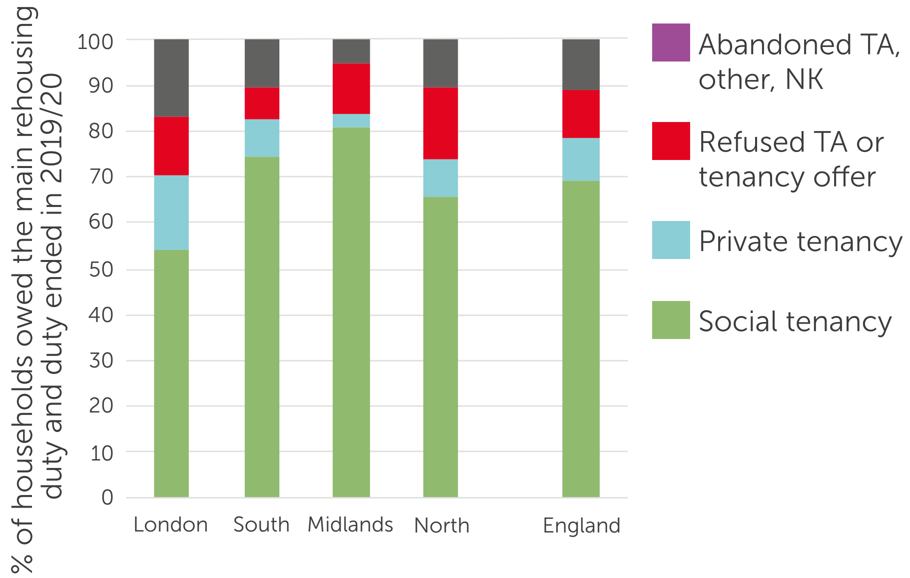
Drilling down further in relation to cases where accommodation was secured via prevention or relief activity during 2019/20, it can be seen from Figure 4.13 that a substantial proportion of these outcomes involved social rented housing. Given that 'relief' actions relate to households assessed as homeless (rather than at risk of homelessness) it can be deduced that the 32,020 cases resolved as such in 2019/20 will have involved new tenancies granted by LAs and housing associations (including a small number in supported housing).

A proportion of the 34,630 social rental 'prevention action closed' cases will likewise have involved new tenancies (along with instances where homelessness caseworker intervention will have enabled retention of an existing social rented tenancy).

It is instructive to consider the above figures within the context of the cohort of MD accepted cases where a social rental tenancy results. In 2019/20 only a relatively modest 20,900 applicants accepted social housing offers.[150] From a big picture

150 Under Housing Act 1996 Pt 6

Figure 4.15: Housing (and other) outcomes for households owed the Main Duty, where duty ended in 2019/20



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics.
Note: Abandoned TA includes 'became intentionally homeless from TA'.

perspective, therefore, it seems likely that the number of new social rental tenancies facilitated via prevention and relief activity in 2019/20 was far larger than the number enabled through MD decisions.

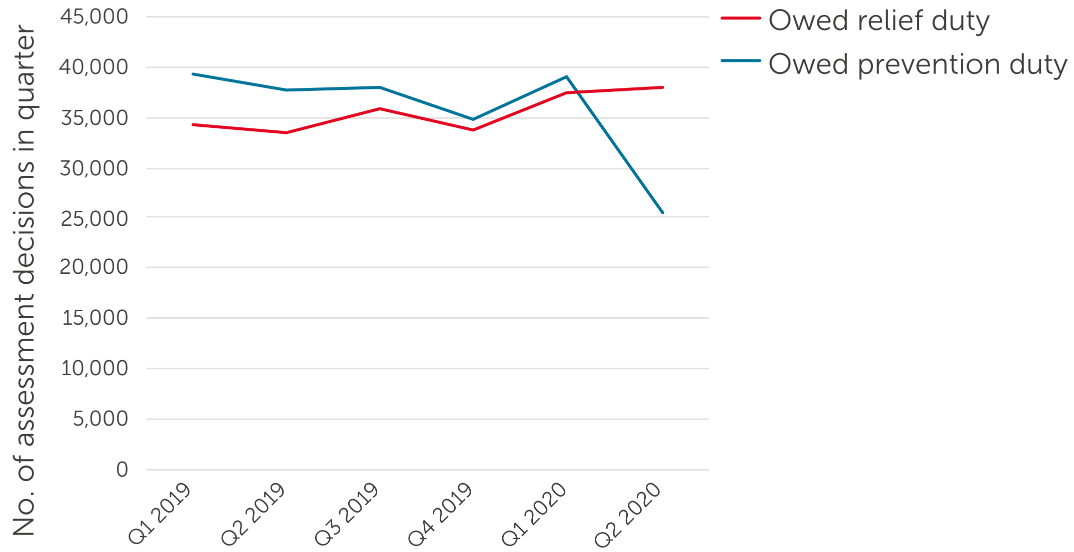
The third 'duty ended in 2019/20' housing outcome identified in Figure 4.12 (and Figure 4.1) involved the 31,180 prevention cases and the 33,890 relief cases labelled as 'application withdrawn, lost contact etc'. Such instances could be considered a form of 'leakage' from the system. For this reason, and particularly since the HRA empowers authorities to discharge prevention or relief duty on the grounds of applicant non-cooperation, they are of particular interest. With this in mind, Figure 4.14 presents a more detailed breakdown. However, as shown here, only a relatively small number of cases were recorded as having been ended in this way in 2019/20. Far more common was the scenario where contact with the applicant was lost or the application was withdrawn.[151]

Prevention duty cases ended in the category '56 days elapsed – no further action' (see Figure 4.14) probably involved instances where, an applicant initially judged as threatened with homelessness within 56 days had not, in fact, experienced this outcome within the specified timescale. Where, in the case of households owed a relief duty (i.e., already homeless), 56 days elapses without a resolution, the MD is triggered (see Figure 4.1). The bigger point here – probably made most clearly by Figure 4.12 – is that a significant proportion of relief cases are ended without being assisted into new accommodation or being referred for a MD assessment. Some proportion of this cohort will likely re-enter the system, logged as new applicants.

Main duty decision outcomes

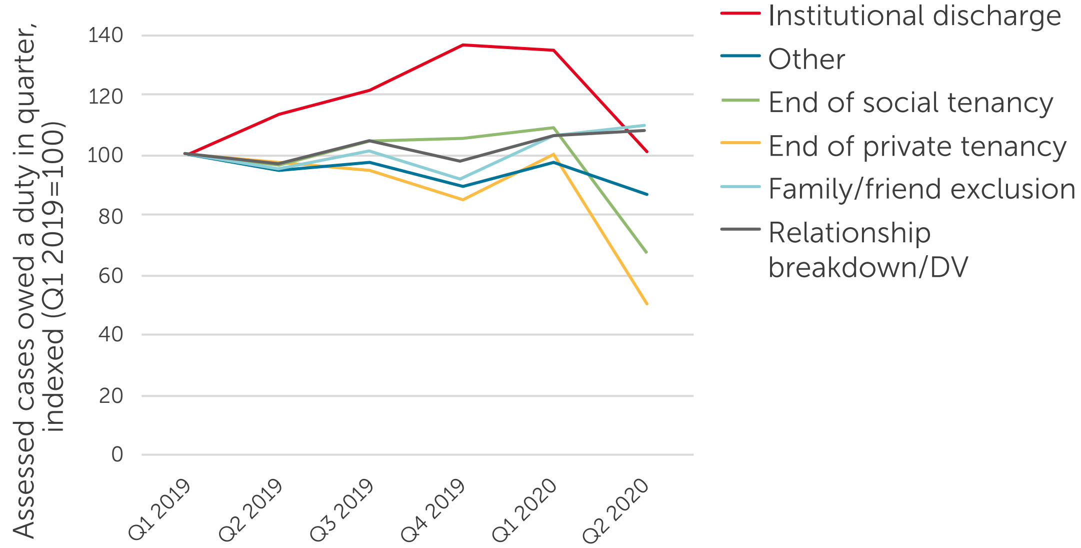
151 It is also worth noting that 'leakage' from the statutory homelessness system was also significant under the pre-HRA framework. For example, in 2017/18 only 75% of the 40,040 households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need subsequently accepted a social or private rental tenancy offer. The most common scenario for disappearance from the process was the abandonment of temporary accommodation.

Figure 4.16: Recent trends in households owed prevention or relief duties, Q1 2019-Q2 2020



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

Figure 4.17: Households owed a prevention or relief duty: Recent trends on main immediate reason for homelessness, 2019-20

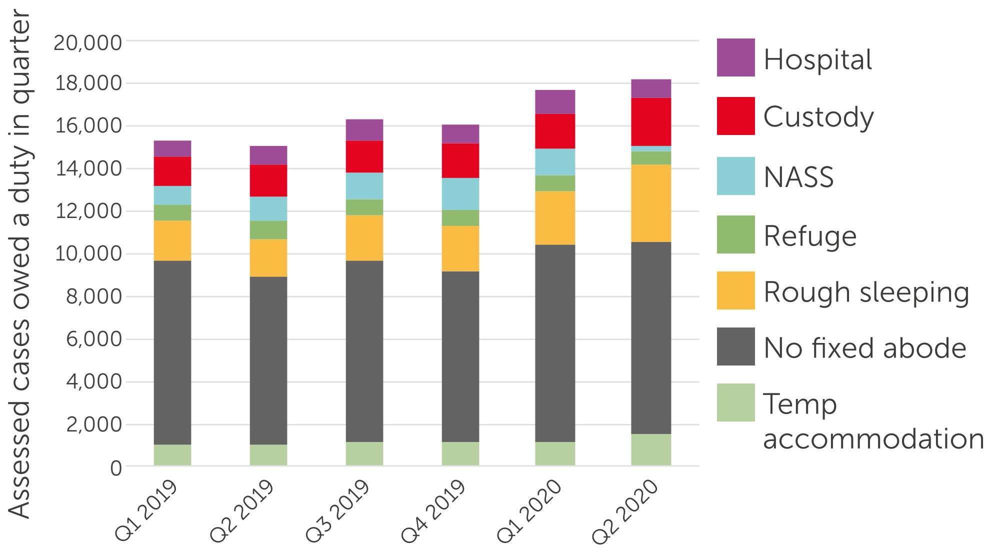


Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

Some 30,200 applications with a 'Main Duty owed' decision were ended in 2019/20. Nationally, in nearly 80 per cent of cases the outcome was a tenancy offer accepted – see Figure 4.15. Private tenancy outcomes were somewhat more common in London (16%) than in other regions. Likewise, probably reflecting the typically longer stays in TA in London, the incidence of TA abandonment was substantially higher in the Capital than elsewhere.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants still reach the end of the post-HRA system without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them. In 2019/20, around 20,000 homeless households were deemed either not to be in priority need or to be intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.18: Households becoming homeless from non-tenure accommodation: recent trends in current/former accommodation types 2019-20



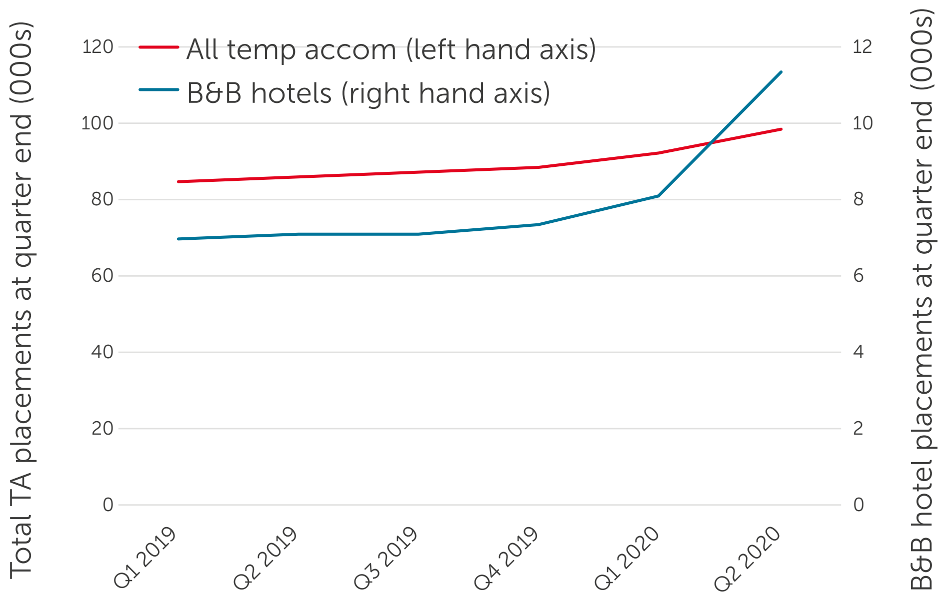
Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

4.7 Homelessness demand and local authority homelessness actions in the initial national 2020 COVID-19 lockdown.

Finally, in this chapter, mainly based on an analysis of the Q1 2020/21 statutory homelessness statistics, we investigate homelessness impacts of COVID-19. While prompting extraordinary LA action on rough sleeping under the Everyone In programme (see below), the initial national COVID-19 lockdown period saw a marked drop in expressed demand. Quarter 1 2020/21 witnessed a 17 per cent reduction in total (eligible applicant) initial assessment decisions, with a similar drop in the number of assessments triggering a prevention or relief duty.

As shown in Figure 4.16, however, the overall reduction in 'duty cases' recorded during the initial 2020 national lockdown period was entirely due to a sharp reduction in those owed a prevention duty – i.e., those threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This is, in turn, largely explicable in relation to the apparent contraction in landlord eviction activity – likely resulting, in large part, from the national evictions moratorium, which has been reported as especially important in stemming the flow of families into homelessness during the pandemic (see Chapters 2 and 3). Notably, while the number of family/friend exclusions and relationship breakdown/domestic violence cases remained largely steady, homelessness resulting from all other causes declined in the April-June 2020 quarter (see Figure 4.17).
Despite the overall downward trend in logged applications and 'duty accepted' cases (see Figure 4.17), LA action to assist people applying for help from 'non-tenure' accommodation rose in Q2 2020. As shown in Figure 4.18, much of this increase was attributable to rough sleepers, TA residents and people referred by – or otherwise under the responsibility of – custodial services. Statistics specific to the Everyone In emergency housing programme are presented further below.

Figure 4.19: Temporary accommodation placements, 2019-20



Source: MHCLG homelessness statistics

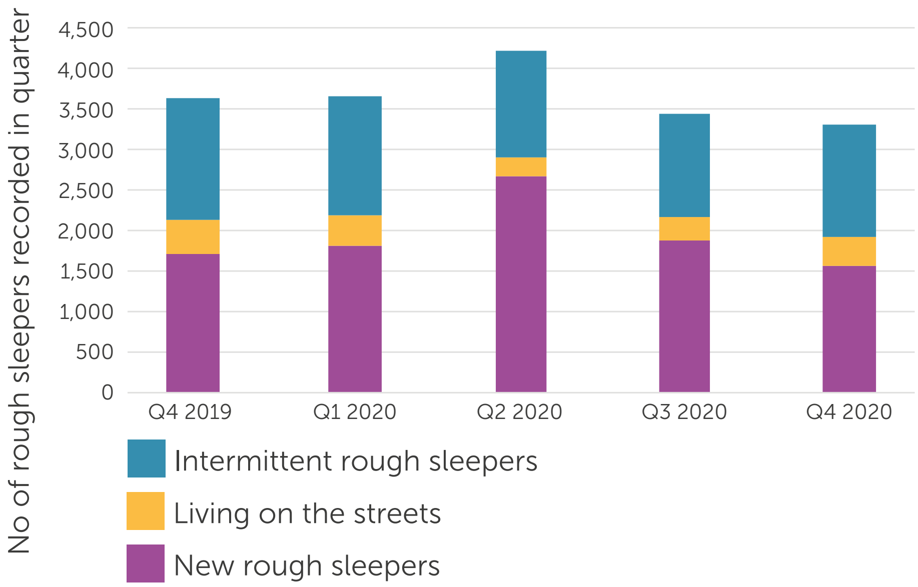
Temporary accommodation placements surged in Q2 2020 (see Figure 4.19). By quarter end, the overall national total was more than 6,000 higher than at the start, with an additional B&B hotel placement accounting for half of this change. The latter, therefore, rose from some 8,000 to some 11,000 over the period – a 40 per cent increase. Significantly, virtually all of this increase resulted from growth in single adult placements (especially single men) – most probably associated with the Everyone In emergency rough sleeper temporary housing initiative launched in March 2020.

The traditional 'end of quarter snapshot' format of the homelessness TA statistics will not have enabled them to fully capture the scale of the Everyone In initiative – the emergency rehousing program launched in March 2020 in the course of the initial COVID-19 national lockdown. A separate official survey showed that this exercise had, by May 2020, provided emergency accommodation to 14,610 'people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough' (4,450 in London and 10,160 in the rest of England).[152]

A follow-up Government survey[153] showed that by November 2020, 9,866 people continued to be accommodated under Everyone In arrangements – 68 per cent of the May total. The September survey also showed that 23,273 people had *"moved into settled accommodation or a rough sleeping pathway outside of temporary accommodation since the COVID-19 response began"* (3,871

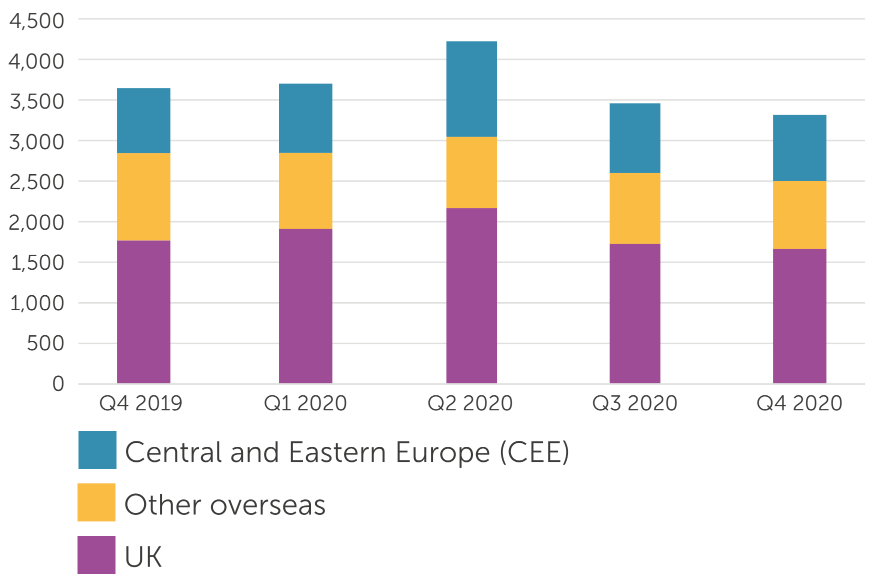
152 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Accommodation Survey Data: May 2020*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-rough-sleeper-accommodation-survey-data-may-2020
153 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Accommodation Survey Data: November 2020*. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-emergency-accommodation-survey-data-november-2020

Figure 4.20: Greater London rough sleepers enumerated in each quarter, 2019-20: breakdown by CHAIN-designated rough sleeper status



Source: Greater London Authority/CHAIN 'Street to Home' monitoring reports http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports. Note: In any quarter a small number of new rough sleepers are also assigned to the 'living on the streets' category. Where this takes place, to avoid double counting, they are enumerated only in the 'new rough sleepers' category as shown in this graph.

Figure 4.21: Greater London rough sleepers enumerated 2019-20: breakdown by nationality



Source: Greater London Authority/CHAIN 'Street to Home' monitoring reports (http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports) Note: Individuals unclassified according to nationality have been distributed pro rata to those whose nationality was recorded.

in London and 19,402 elsewhere). However, while these numbers are very substantial, it should be borne in mind that they may include an element of 'business as usual' activity – since, even in 'normal' times, LA homelessness management activity involves a certain amount of rough sleeper rehousing.

Finally, focusing specifically on London, rough sleeping statistics generated through the Greater London Authority's CHAIN system (managed by St Mungo's) are also instructive with respect to the changing incidence of homelessness during the pandemic. CHAIN statistics represent the most robust and comprehensive rough sleeper direct monitoring (as opposed to survey-informed modelling) data in the UK. It should be emphasized that the CHAIN metrics are different from, and not directly comparable with, the annually published MHCLG rough sleeping statistics. Nor are they comparable with the rough sleeper component of core homelessness measure (see Chapter 5). Unlike these latter sources, CHAIN statistics reflect the number of people enumerated as exposed to rough sleeping over a time period, not at a single point in time. They draw on contacts with individuals by outreach teams who engage directly with rough sleepers nightly on the street.

Other than the spike in numbers in Q2 2020 (April-June), the CHAIN rough sleeper numbers remained relatively unchanged during 2020. Perhaps significantly, the Q2 spike was entirely accounted for by a sharp increase in new rough sleepers during this period (46% up on the preceding quarter), a surge apparently triggered by the initial COVID-19 lockdown. In the second half of the year, however, new rough sleepers trended steeply down, with the Q4 flow 9% below the equivalent cohort in Q4 2019. At the same time, however, after a mid-year nadir, the last two quarters of 2020 saw the 'living on the streets' component expand by 56% to 412. While this general trend is apparent from Figure 4.20, the full extent of it is slightly understated by the graph for reasons explained in the Figure footnote. Nevertheless, even in Q4 2020 the Living on the Streets group remained somewhat smaller than it had been in the corresponding quarter of 2019. It is striking that, despite the scale and apparent success of the Everyone In initiative, enumerated levels of rough sleeping in London, as captured in the CHAIN dataset, did not alter much during 2020, with new rough sleepers even spiking during the most active phase of Everyone In (April-June 2020). However, the extent to which these statistics reflect 'real' patterns in levels of rough sleeping over the course of this extraordinary year, as opposed to variations in the intensity of outreach activity and data capture, is difficult to judge

As shown in Figure 4.21, the representation of the broad nationality categories used here remained very steady during 2020. Reducing overall numbers during the second half of the year saw very similar proportionate changes for each of these three groups.

Future prospects
Taking stock of all of the observed trends discussed in this section, it should be emphasized that these largely reflect developments occurring only during the initial phase of the pandemic, at a time when the economy was substantially shut down, temporary income protection measures (in particular, the furlough scheme) remained fully in force, and the rental housing market was largely frozen under the national eviction moratorium. Under these circumstances the observed reduction in new homelessness demand (see Figure 4.17) is entirely explicable. However, the likely withdrawal of special income and tenancy protection in 2021, in the midst of a deep recession, seems highly likely to generate a new homelessness surge of large proportions (see Chapter 2).

4.8 Key points

- Some 305,000 single people, couples and families registered homelessness applications with LAs in 2019/20 – a 5 per cent increase on 2018/19. Of these, 289,000 (95%) were judged as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- Fundamental changes to the legal framework for homelessness application assessment under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 have made 'new homelessness' trend over time comparisons more difficult.

- However, TA placements, which can be legitimately graphed over a long time series, show a 91 per cent increase since 2011 (and 9 per cent in the 12 months to March 2020). B&B hotel placements have continued to increase at a rate exceeding that of all TA – up by 17 per cent in the 12 months to March 2020, and by 299 per cent since 2010.

- The 'Duty to Refer' component of the HRA appears to be gaining traction over time, with such referrals nearly doubling from Q4 2018 to Q2 2020 to 13 per cent of all applications. Prisons, probation, and community rehabilitation account for nearly half of these.

- Some 60 per cent of 2019/20 applicant households judged as homeless or threatened with homelessness ('owed a duty' households) were single people.

- Single parents account for another 25 per cent of the total.

- Amongst those threatened with homelessness and entitled to a 'prevention' duty half (49%) are single adults but amongst those actually homeless and entitled to a relief duty almost three-quarters (72%) are single people. This is in stark contrast to the pre-HRA era when the key headline statistic – households 'accepted' by LAs as in 'priority need' – comprised only around one-third single people.

- Some 48 per cent of all 2019/20 'owed a duty' applicants were judged as having some form of support need, and in 23 per cent of (all 'owed a duty') cases, this was linked to a history of mental ill-health. Only a small proportion of applicants are subject to 'complex support needs' (e.g., 3 per cent of 'owed a duty' applicant in London had support needs associated with drug dependency; 7 per cent in rest of England).

- Some 43 per cent of 2019/20 'owed a duty' applicants had been made homeless through needing to leave an existing household – e.g., in cases of family/friend exclusion or relationship breakdown.

- It is important to note that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants still reach the end of the post-HRA system without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them (around 20,000 households in 2019/20).

- Thanks to various temporary protective measures (especially eviction moratoria), the COVID-19 pandemic triggered no immediate overall increase in homelessness applications. Indeed, the number judged as threatened with homelessness fell back significantly in Q2 2020 (down 35 per cent on Q1).

- Partly reflecting the Government's Everyone In program, B&B hotel placements increased in Q2 2020. By May, LAs had provided emergency accommodation to 14,610 people previously 'sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough' across England. By November 2020, 9,866 people continued to be housed in hotels and other premises on this basis.

5. Core homelessness numbers and trends

5.1 Introduction

Having examined the statutory homelessness trends in Chapter 4, we now move on to examine homelessness from a different angle. This chapter presents new estimates of the level and composition of core homelessness in England[154] in 2018-19, preceding the onset of the COVID-19 emergency. It also assesses the core homelessness impact of COVID-19 and policy responses to it, particularly 'Everyone In'.

The chapter is structured in the following way. First, in this section we define the elements of core homelessness and discuss the reasons why, working with Crisis, we have developed this concept, based on limitations of the existing official statistics. Then in section 5.2 we go on to present estimates of the main elements of core homelessness in the base period (2018-19) from a range of sources, some existing and some new or enhanced. In section 5.3 we present evidence on recent trends in these numbers up to 2019, as well as evidence on the profile of people affected. The chapter ends with a brief summary of the initial impact of COVID-19 and immediate responses ('Everyone In') on numbers in 2020.

What is core homelessness and why is this concept needed?

The core homelessness concept was introduced in research undertaken with Crisis in 2017 and updated in 2018,[155] with this Monitor representing a further major update. Its components and their definitions as applied in this study are shown in Table 5.1.

The development of the core homelessness concept derives from a quest for a robust measurement framework that overcomes limitations in traditional approaches to homelessness calibration used in the UK. We refer here to the customary reliance on administratively generated statistics on people seeking LA housing assistance due to (actual or potential) homelessness, and to the periodically undertaken counts or estimates of rough sleeping. While both of these approaches are informative and important, they are also subject to shortcomings that limit their value for

154 Indicative estimates are also made for Great Britain, but fully detailed projections and scenarios have yet to be developed for Wales and Scotland.

155 Bramley, G. (2017) Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf; and, Bramley, G. (2019) Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for Low-Income Households and Homeless People: Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation; Main Technical Report. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/bramley.2019.04

Category	Description
Rough Sleeping	Sleeping in the open e.g. in streets, parks, carparks, doorways
Unconventional Accommodation	Sleeping in places/spaces not intended as normal residential accommodation, e.g. cars, vans, lorries, caravans/motor home, tents, boats, sheds, garages, industrial/commercial premises
Night shelters and refuges	Communal emergency and temporary accommodation primarily targeted at homeless people including hostels, refuges and shelters
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	Homeless households placed in temporary accommodation of certain types, viz B&B, Private Non-self-contained Licensed/Nightly Let, and Out of Area Placements (half in London, all elsewhere)
Sofa Surfing	Individuals or family groups staying temporarily (expecting or wanting to move) with another household, excluding nondependent children of host household and students, who are also overcrowded on the bedroom standard

analytical purposes – including cross-country comparison (even within UK), trend over time analysis and serving as a basis for projections on the possible future scale of homelessness.[156]

Statistics derived from statutory homelessness activity may be regarded as measures of 'expressed demand', but they omit people whose circumstances may equate to 'homelessness' in an objective sense, but who have not (or have not yet) made an application. This is, of course, partly a reflection of the powers and duties of LAs which have until 2017 de-prioritised most single adults, and even today a reflection of the limited options which authorities may be able offer applicants, especially in the most pressured areas. Two of our key data sources indicated that in the period 2018-20 it was still only a minority of core homeless households who had applied to their local authority.

On the other side of the coin, it needs to be recognised that many of those enumerated as seeking LA help are households who are not – at the time of that interaction – actually homeless in terms of our core homeless definition. This is because either they have not yet left their previous accommodation, even though they are deemed to at risk of losing it, or because they have been subsequently placed in 'suitable' TA and again are no longer core homeless in the strict terms of our definition. From a legal standpoint they clearly remain 'homeless', in the sense of being at risk of losing or not yet having access to accommodation they have a right to occupy on an ongoing basis, and therefore appropriately included in routinely published TA statistics.[157] We would classify these groups as 'other statutory homeless', and in this Monitor we have devoted much attention to trends and profiles of this group (most of Chapter 4, and in part of Section 5.3 below).

Rough sleeping statistics, as traditionally collated in the UK (e.g., under MHCLG's annual enumeration), have tended to involve figures derived from periodic counts or from count-informed estimates – in the English instance, as provided by LAs. Without denying the usefulness of such methods and the importance of maintaining the associated official series, they are open to criticism.[158] Issues intrinsic to all street counts include their inherent and inevitable tendency to understate the overall scale of rough sleeping. Except, perhaps where implemented on a small-scale experimental basis or restricted to a very small geographical area, the level of enumeration resources required to achieve 100% coverage of any spatial unit would be considered excessive. This is a particular issue because of the fact that, strictly speaking, rough sleeper counts must take place in the hours of darkness. Moreover, rough sleepers themselves necessarily tend to seek forms of shelter from the elements and from the risk of criminal victimhood (e.g., theft or violent attack) and counts do not normally cover private premises. Because of their particular vulnerability to such risk, female rough sleepers are especially liable to seek hidden sites – and, by the same token, especially likely to be undercounted.[159] Additional motivations for rough sleepers to try to avoid notice and contact with enumerators may include shame at their situation, involvement in addictions or offending, and/or uncertain citizenship status.[160]

In highlighting the potential for general under-enumeration in traditional rough sleeper counts we can look to evidence from American cities which have gone to considerable lengths to establish and test the rigour of count procedures. In New York, for example, the use of 'plant-recapture' techniques in studies done decades apart found that point in time estimates understated the rate of unsheltered

156 Such issues are officially recognised. Efforts to address them are proceeding in the guise of the ONS/GSS data harmonisation project, as launched in 2019 https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/government-statistical-service-gss-harmonisation-strategy/

157 Such as an appropriately sized and located existing self-contained social rented or private rental dwelling let on license.

158 Key recent papers which review these critiques include O'Flaherty, B. (2019) 'Homelessness research: a guide for economists (and friends)', *Journal of Housing Economics*, 44, 1-25. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1051137718302109, pp.7 & 19; Evans, W., Philips, D. & Ruffini, C. (2019) Reducing and Preventing Homelessness: A review of the evidence and charting a research agenda. Working Paper 26232. Online: National Bureau of Economic Research. http://www.nber.org/papers/w26232, pp.9-10; Rukmana, D. (2020) 'The causes of homelessness and the characteristics associated with high risk of homelessness: a review of intercity and intracity homelessness data,' *Housing Policy Debate*, 30(2), 291-308. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2019.1684334, pp.299; Flaming, D. & Burns, P. (2017) *Who Counts? Assessing the Accuracy of the Homeless Count*. Online: Economic Roundtable. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3083255.

159 Reeve, K. (2007) *Homeless Women: Homelessness Careers, Homelessness Landscapes*. London: Crisis

160 None of this is to deny that important efforts have been made to enhance the quality of standard (annual) local authority rough sleeper counts in recent years (as specified by MHCLG). Under current guidance local authorities are expected to decide, jointly with local agencies, which of several permitted approach to use for this purpose. They are advised to use their judgement as to which approach will most accurately reflect the number of people sleeping rough in the local context.
As set out in official guidance, the menu of permitted approaches that can be used includes:
- A count-based estimate which is the number of people seen sleeping rough in the local authority on a 'typical night' – a single date chosen by the local authority between 1st October and 30th November.
- An evidence-based estimate by local agencies representing the number of people thought to be sleeping rough in the local authority on a 'typical night' – a single date chosen by the local authority between 1st October and 30th November.
- An evidence-based estimate drawing on a spotlight count which is the same as above, but with the one of the evidence sources also including a street count, which might not be as extensive as the count-based estimate but has taken place after midnight on the 'typical night'.

In 2019, 239 local authorities (75 %) used an evidence-based estimate meeting or an evidence-based estimate meeting including spotlight count for their rough sleeping snapshot and 78 local authorities (25%) used a count-based estimate. It should be noted that the timing may lead to underestimation of average annual numbers given the operation of winter shelter schemes.
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Official Statistics: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2019*. 27 February. Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2019/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2019

homelessness by about 40-50%, even within defined locations.[161]

Potentially superior to simple rough sleeper counts are enumeration methods drawing on 'by name list' (BNL) frameworks where many support services share access to a common database of street homeless people within a given geographical area, and in which each identified service user has a unique record. This concept and terminology has been quite widely adopted in the United States[162] and has recently spread to Australia.[163] Closer to home, London's CHAIN database is a fairly long-established BNL-type system – statistically valuable because of its facility to record both stocks (numbers at a point in time) and flows (people entering and leaving a state of rough sleeping) over time. Beyond their utility for numerical monitoring, frameworks of this kind can play a vital role in informing the appropriate targeting of assistance to individuals – on the basis of personal details entered on their record by service provider organisations. However, such frameworks are also resource-intensive and difficult to apply at large (e.g. citywide, regional or national) scales.

In some other countries (e.g., Australia) rough sleeping (and other forms of homelessness) are enumerated in a nationally consistent way through period population censuses.[164] In the absence of such an approach in the UK, however, reliance on periodic rough sleeper counts and count-informed estimates is likely to continue. For the reasons discussed above, these will always tend to understate the extent of street homelessness – even as represented at a point in time, let alone in relation to the numbers of people affected over a time period.

As well as enabling us to overcome certain shortcomings of familiar enumeration methods as outlined above, we would argue that core homelessness is also more consistent than statutory homelessness with international approaches to defining homelessness.[165] More practically, it also avoids significant technical problems of double-counting and conceptual problems of mixing 'stock' (e.g. traditional rough sleeper counts) and 'flow' (e.g. statutory homelessness applications) measures. This is because it is a snapshot measure of the situation on a particular day/night, and people cannot be in more than one place at a time.[166]

The original core homelessness and projections work was partly

161 Evans, W., Philips, D. & Ruffini, C. (2019) *Reducing and Preventing Homelessness: A review of the evidence and charting a research agenda*. Working Paper 26232. Online: National Bureau of Economic Research. http://www.nber.org/papers/w26232., pp.9-10.

162 https://homelessdata.com/knowledge-base/how-can-i-use-the-by-name-list-in-homelessdata-for-housing-prioritization/

163 Pawson, H., Parsell, C., Liu, E., Hartley, C. & Thompson, S. (2020) *Australian Homelessness Monitor 2020*. Melbourne: Launch Housing https://cityfutures.be.unsw.edu.au/documents/619/Australian_Homelessness_Monitor_2020.pdf

164 It is arguable that simply asking ONS to add a PIT street count to the Census would not deal adequately with the issue, but that what would really be needed would also include surveys of people in communal establishments, surveys of users of crisis services, retrospective questions in large scale household surveys, and inclusion of 'not usually resident' persons present in households in appropriate surveys – see Bramley, G., Sosenko, F., Wood, J. with Williams, J. & Matthews, P. (2018) *Scoping Project to Investigate the Alternatives for Including Non-household Populations in Estimates of Personal Well-being and Destitution, Interim Research Report to Joseph Rowntree Foundation and ONS*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/scoping-project-to-investigate-the-alternatives-for-including-non

165 See in particular Busch-Geertsema, V., Culhane, D. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2016) 'Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness', *Habitat International*, 55, 124-132. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197397515300023?via=ihub

166 However, some data sources cover flows or experiences over periods of time, and when using these we have to apply assumptions about the durations of homelessness experiences to get to a snapshot stock figure.

motivated by a dissatisfaction with the conventional published statistics on homelessness, which was also reflected in interventions from the UK Statistics Authority, NAO and parliamentary committees over recent years, some of which had been stimulated by Government responses to the Homelessness Monitor series. The most recent example is the NAO report of 14 January 2021;[167] introducing this report in the press release the head of the NAO said, *"For the first time, the scale of the rough sleeping population in England has been made clear, and it far exceeds the government's previous estimates."*[168]

In this round of analysis we have the benefit of being able to use a range of new or enhanced datasets, including the administrative data from H-CLIC but also from DWP, the latest Destitution in the UK Survey, a specially commissioned new representative panel survey (Public Voice) conducted by Kantar Public, a new suite of questions on 'Housing Difficulties', included in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) S*urvey of Living Conditions* in 2018, and several significant new questions and analyses in the *English Housing Survey* from 2018. Further information on these sources is given in Appendix 3 and in the separate Technical Report. We believe these estimates are based on the best currently available data and reasoned assumptions, and are a significant advance on the previous estimates, while aiming to make further improvements in future years.

In this chapter we refer mainly to core homelessness, but complement this by comparing the profiles of core homelessness and 'other statutory homelessness' cohorts (i.e., people who are in the statutory homelessness system having applied to a LA but who are not core homeless at the time).

5.2 Baseline estimates of core homelessness

In this section we present evidence on the level of core homelessness in England in the period just preceding the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2018-19. The estimates of core homelessness presented below draw on a total of ten data sources overall, with each component being based on at least four data sources. Our approach thus entails a high degree of 'triangulation'. As will be clear from the review of sources in Appendix 3,[169] the sources used vary in statistical robustness in terms of coverage, definitions used and sample sizes. We have used judgement of all of these aspects taken together to apply a weighting to each source in respect of each component of core homelessness, when combining the estimates. So, where a data source provides good coverage of a given type of core homelessness, uses appropriate definitions, has a larger and more representative sample it will be given a higher weight when calculating the composite estimate. This process is shown in Table 1 in Appendix 3, while the resulting numbers are summarised in Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

Data sources used

The sources used to estimate numbers in each category of core homelessness are summarised in Table 5.2. More details on the datasets are provided in Appendix 3.

167 National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers During the Pandemic*. London: NAO

168 Government Business (2021) 'Scale of rough sleeping exceeds government estimates.' *Government Business*. 14th January. Online: Government Business. https://governmentbusiness.co.uk/news/14012021/scale-rough-sleeping-exceeds-government-estimates

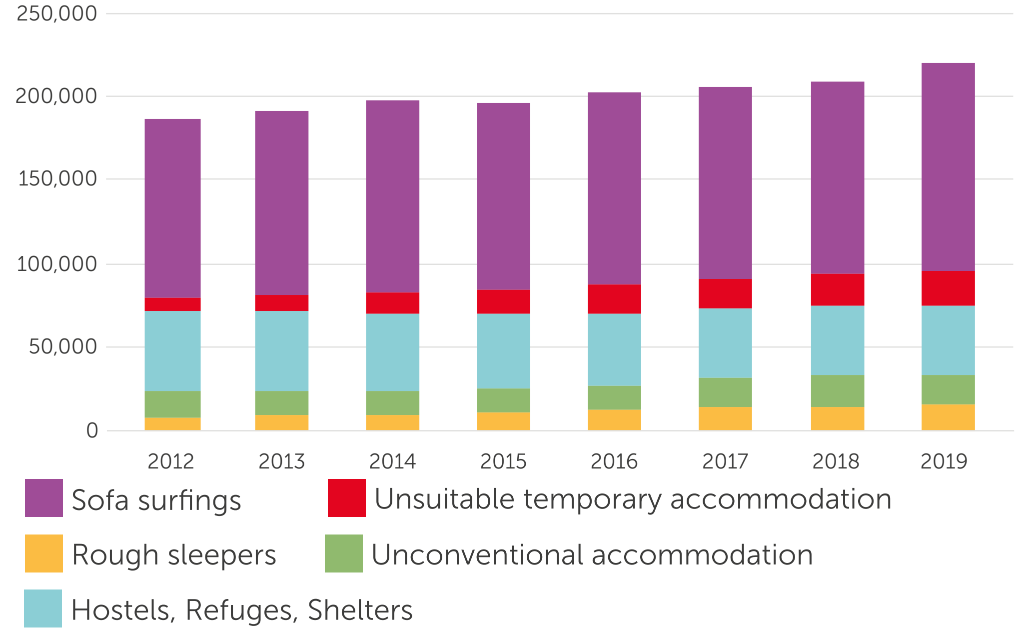
169 Further detail and commentary on these sources is contained in Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University.

Table 5.2: Data sources used to estimate base period numbers in each category of core homelessness.

Category	Data sources
Rough Sleeping	• Destitution in the UK 2019 survey of users of crisis services; • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences. 2020; • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties; • H-CLIC administrative data on prior accommodation of homeless applicants, 2018-20; • LA Rough Sleeper Counts/estimates, augmented in London by CHAIN, 2019, and with some imputation
Unconventional Accommodation	• Destitution in the UK 2019 survey of users of crisis services; • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020; • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties; • H-CLIC administrative data on prior accommodation of homeless applicants, 2018-20
Hostels, night shelters and refuges	• Destitution in the UK 2019 survey of users of crisis services; • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020; • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties; • H-CLIC administrative data on prior accommodation of homeless applicants, 2018-20; • Homeless Link Survey of services for single homeless, 2019 • DWP Freedom of Information dataset on Housing Benefit cases in short term, emergency or transitional[170] accommodation, 2020
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	• Destitution in the UK 2019 survey of users of crisis services; • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020; • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties; • H-CLIC administrative data on homeless households placed in selected categories of TA, 2020; • DWP Freedom of Information dataset on Housing Benefit cases in selected categories of TA, 2020
Sofa Surfing	• Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020; • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties; • English Housing Survey data on concealed households meeting definition and temporary household members avoiding homelessness, 2017-18 • UK Household Longitudinal Survey on concealed households meeting definition, 2017-18.

170 Adjusted to exclude estimated numbers in certain transitional rehab-type facilities, based on Blood, I., Copeman, I. & Finlay, S. (2016) *Supported Accommodation Review: The Scale, Scope and Cost of the Supported Housing Sector.* DWP Research Report No. 927. Online: Department for Work and Pensions. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572454/rr927-supported-accommodation-review.pdf

Figure 5.1: Core homelessness estimates by category and year, England 2012-2019



Source: Authors estimates of core homelessness elements from sources listed in Table 5.2 and described more fully in Appendix 3.

In combining the different sources to arrive at a central estimate of each component of core homelessness, we apply a 'weight' to each source reflecting our judgement as to the robustness of the data source and the particular assumptions needed to translate it into a consistent measure of core homelessness at a point in time, including average durations of episodes. These judgements reflect intrinsic measurement problems, of the kind rehearsed above in relation to rough sleeping, sample size, representativeness and coverage limitations of surveys, likely problems of non-response and attrition in surveys, and the scope and coverage of administrative sources. More details are given in Appendix 3.

A further key argument to support our judgements in this matter is that these other sources generally concur with estimates of the scale of hostel etc. accommodation, which are known with more certainty from the regular surveys by Homeless Link and confirmed by other sources such as the new DWP Single Housing Benefit Extract data.[171]

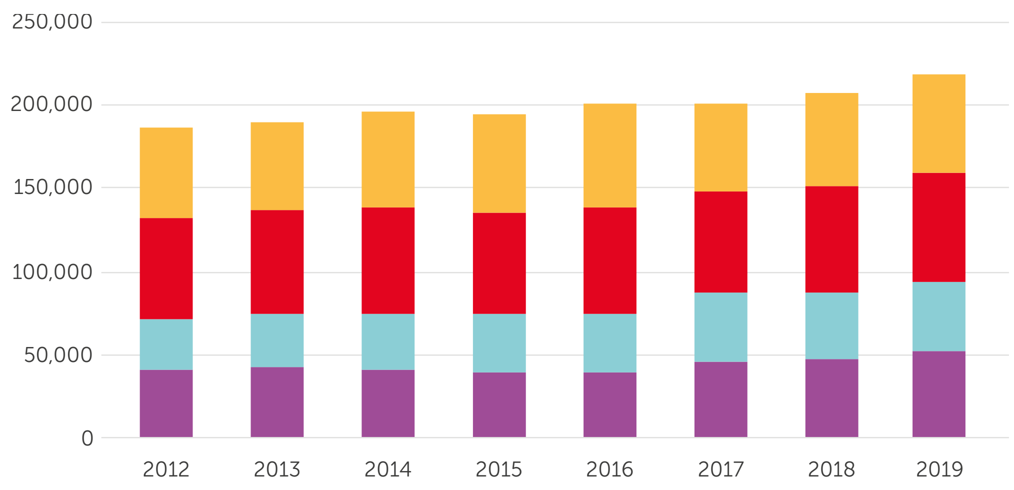
5.3 Core homelessness, trends and profiles

Figure 5.1 above shows our central estimates of core homeless in England and its composition in terms of the five main categories in the period up to 2019. In that year the number of core homeless households in England was about 219,000.

The general trend picture is that core homelessness numbers (pre-COVID-19) were up compared with the previous base estimates, which were made for 2015 and 2017, even after allowing for the effects of enhanced data (see Appendix 3). The overall numbers rose by 17% between 2012 and 2019, with an 8% increase from 2017 to 2019. There were rises in each component between 2012 and 2019, apart from hostels etc., with the largest absolute contributor to the increase being sofa surfing (up 17,000). However, in percentage terms the increase between 2012 and 2019 was

171 Ibid.

Figure 5.2: Core homelessness estimates by broad region and year, England 2012-2019



Source: Authors estimates of core homelessness elements from sources listed in Table 5.2 and described more fully in Appendix 3.

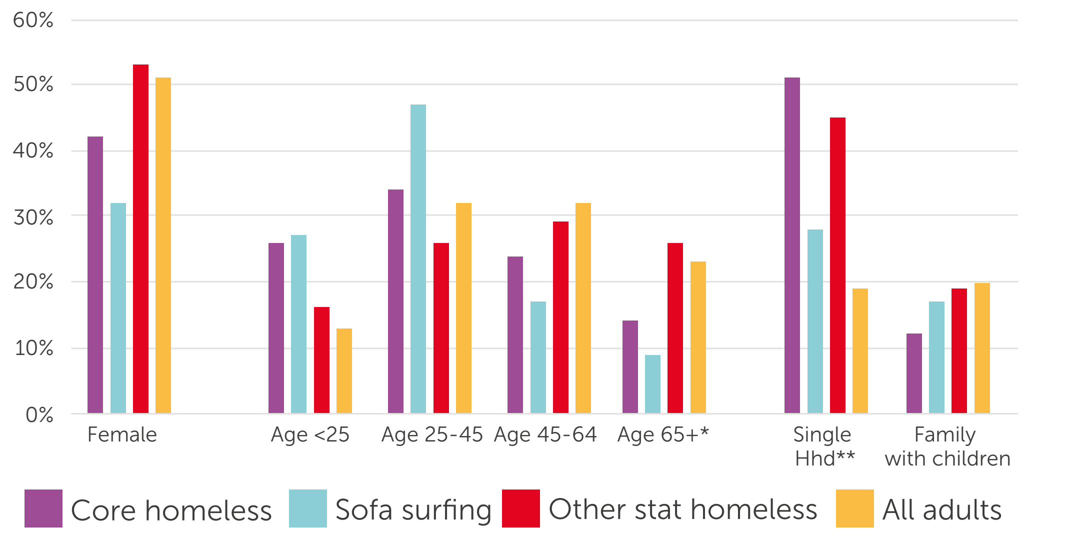
greatest for unsuitable TA (171%) and rough sleeping (99%). The modelling work also tends to indicate that these elements are more sensitive to a range of variables, as is shown clearly in the projections reported in Chapter 6.

The order of magnitude of the overall increase (32,000 or 17% for England between 2012 and 2019, as noted above) is in line with what we would expect from the evidence in Chapter 4 and some other recent work.[172] When updating the previous study, we noted some tendency to levelling-off of the previous rising trend around 2016-17, which was attributed partly to the post-Brexit cooling of the London housing market and EEA migration, but which can also be seen to have paralleled the fall in destitution found in this period in JRF studies.[173] It seems clear from the overall picture and from some of the specific data sources (including H-CLIC) that homelessness numbers have been generally on the rise again, pre-COVID-19. For example, in Chapter 4 we reported an increase of 8% in TA placements in 2019/20 compared with the previous year. Over the longer period, overall TA use rose by 92% between 2011 and 2019. A similar analysis by broad region of England is shown in Figure 5.2. Traditionally London and the South East have been seen as dominating statutory homelessness which, until 2018 and the coming into force of the HRA, in the main referred to homeless families with children. However, core homelessness has a much higher proportion of single people, quite a high proportion of whom have complex needs, while others are primarily economically disadvantaged. The geography of these groups differs somewhat, with more emphasis on the midlands and north, particularly

172 Rather stronger recent (but pre-Covid) rises in measures of severe poverty are recorded in Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020; and in Weekes, T., Spoor, E., Weal, R. & Moffett, G. (2020) *Lockdown, Loneliness and the Long Haul Ahead: The Impact of Covid-19 on Food Banks in the Trussell Trust Network*. Online: Trussell Trust. https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-food-banks-report.pdf

173 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020

Figure 5.3: Gender, age and household type of core homeless, sofa surfers and other statutory homeless compared with adult population



Source: authors' analysis of Destitution in UK Survey (2019) and Public Voice Survey (2020 retrospective) data

the more economically disadvantaged urban areas there.[174] This is reflected in Figure 5.2, and also in the fact that the growth seems to have been greater since 2012 in those regions (up 34% in the North and 47% in the Midlands, compared with 8% in the South and 4% in London).

Demographic and social profile of core vs statutory homelessness

In this section we present the demographic, socio-economic and geographical profile of core homelessness, in contrast with other (i.e., non-core) statutory homeless households, based on the two most useful recent surveys available, Destitution in the UK and Public Voice. The former presents current attributes of crisis service users identified as core homeless in autumn 2019,[175] while the latter presents current attributes (in 2020) of a representative sample of the adult household population for those who reported experiences of homelessness in the last two years or ever.[176] Both surveys identify people who had applied to the Council as homeless, enabling us to identify the 'other statutory homeless' category as well. Sofa surfer characteristics are shown separately, based on Public Voice only, because they are the largest and to some extent a distinct group within core homeless, and because they are under-represented within the Destitution Survey.

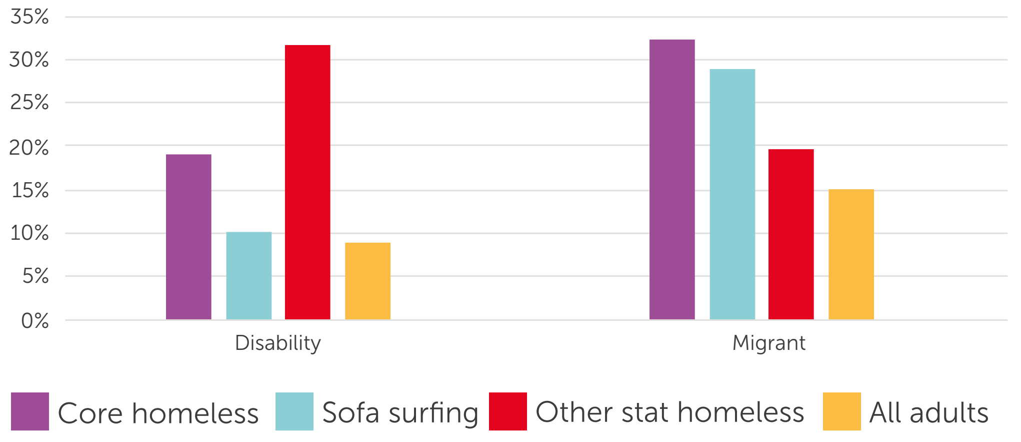
Women account for more than two-fifths of all core homeless and nearly half of other statutory homeless cases (Table 5.3). This is consistent with other evidence, from administrative data and from the ONS survey of Living Conditions, which show similar shares of women to men in most categories except rough sleeping. Just over a quarter of core homeless including sofa surfers are under 25, a

174 For some confirmatory evidence from initial H-CLIC returns see Fitzpatrick, S. & Bramley, G. (forthcoming) *Homelessness and Complex Needs: Policies, Expenditure and Outcomes 2015-2020*, Social Policy and Distributional Outcomes in a Changing Britain Research Paper 7, Figure 2.

175 In the Destitution survey we also include people reporting sleeping rough in the last month, as well as at the date of survey, and anyone reporting time stayed in a hostel or similar emergency accommodation in the last year.

176 When using Public Voice for this purpose we use a 50/50 blend of experiences reported in the last 2 years and those reported 'ever', in order to have a more robust sample size. This means that, in certain instances (particularly age) there is some bias compared with the profile for recent core homeless, in that case somewhat increasing the proportion of older ages.

Figure 5.4: Disability and migrant status by core homeless, sofa surfers and other statutory homeless compared with adult population.



Source: authors' analysis of Destitution In UK Survey (2019) and Public Voice Survey (2020 retrospective) data

higher proportion than in the other statutory category or the general adult population. Over a third of core homeless, rising to nearly half of sofa surfers, are in the 25-45 age range, compared with a quarter of other statutory. The proportion of over-65s in core homelessness (and especially sofa surfers) is markedly lower than for other statutory homeless or the general adult population.[177]

Single person households are the most common type, accounting for half or more of core homeless, and nearly half of other statutory homeless as well, reflecting their significantly greater presence in the statutory system following the HRA. Families with children, by contrast, represent a relatively smaller share of core homeless, and also a minority of the other statutory group as well.[178]

The level of seriously limiting disability among core homeless people is significant but not exceptional, at about one-in-five, with a lower incidence among sofa surfers, but the incidence is significantly higher among other statutory homeless (Figure 5.4). Core homeless households are substantially more likely to be migrants to the UK than the general adult population. This is also true for sofa surfers, and to a much lesser extent for other statutory homeless households.

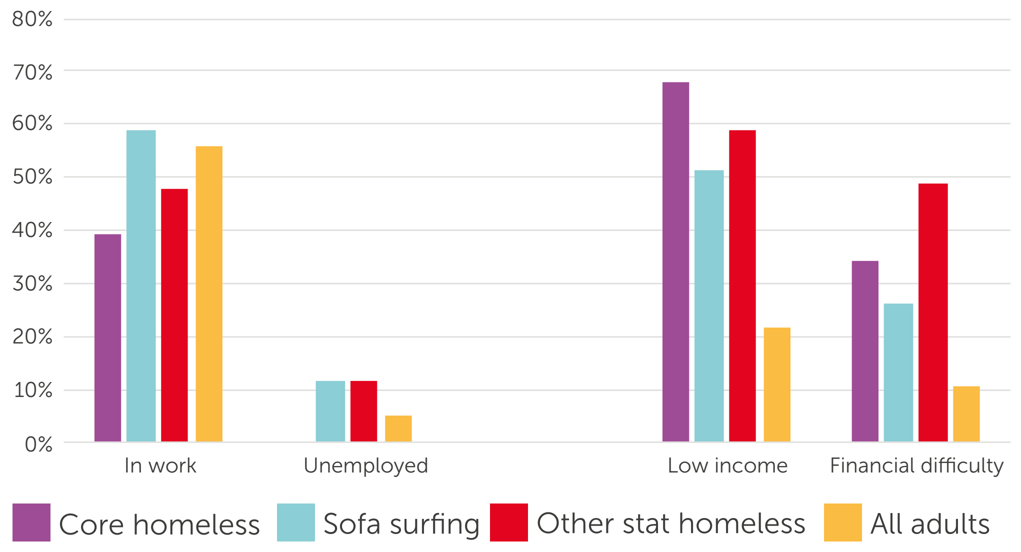
A minority of core homeless have been in work within the last year and barely half of other statutory homeless are in this position, although sofa surfers are somewhat more likely to be in work (Figure 5.5).[179] Low income (bottom 20%, roughly equivalent to standard relative low income poverty measures) strongly characterises all of these group, who are two-and-half to three times more likely than the general population to be poor. All homeless groups have a very high share (two-and-a-half to three times) in the lowest income quintile, and high proportions (a third of core, nearly half of other statutory homeless) are in financial difficulty with debts and/or arrears on essential household bills.

177 Shares of sofa surfers in older age groups and family households are somewhat overstated owing to the use of retrospective data in Public Voice

178 The data refer mainly to the period 2018-19, post the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which has greatly increased the number of single homeless people going through the statutory system.

179 These figures understate the prevalence of unemployment or non-employment at the actual point of homelessness; in the Destitution survey weekly-weighted 'spot' figures only 14% of core homeless users of crisis services had received money from work in the last month while 27% had had some work experience in the last year.

Figure 5.5: Work status, low income, and financial difficulty by core homeless, sofa surfers and other statutory homeless compared with adult population.



Source: authors' analysis of Destitution In UK Survey (2019) and Public Voice Survey (2020 retrospective) data

The regional distribution of these groups also varies, as shown in Figure 5.6, which is based on the detailed core homelessness estimates by local area and H-CLIC. Core homelessness has a higher presence than its share of all households in London, a similar share in the Midlands, and lower shares in both North and South. Sofa surfing is even higher in London, with a lower share in Midlands and North, but a rather similar share to core homelessness in the South. Other (non-core) statutory homelessness has only a slightly higher than population share in London, a similar share in the South and Midlands as core homelessness, but a higher share in the North (although still proportional to adult population).

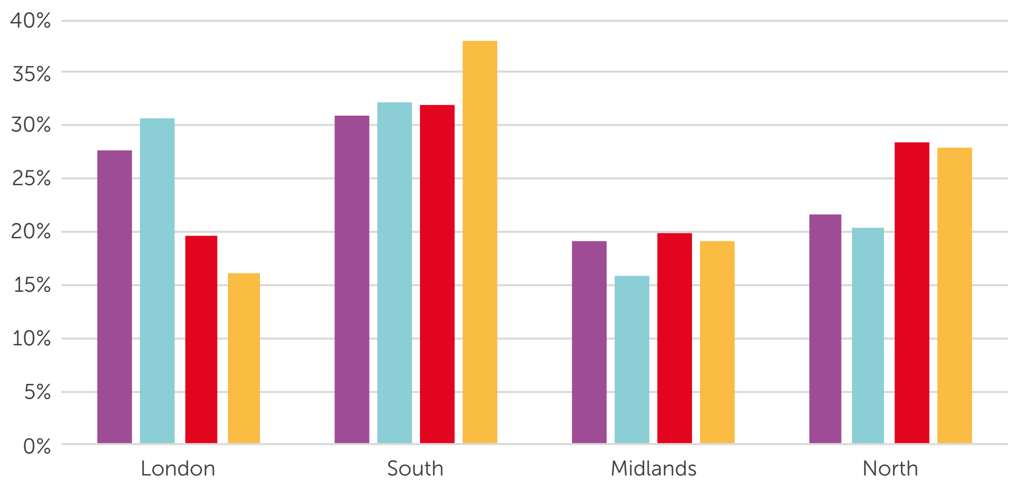
The short-term impact of COVID-19

The 2020 (post Covid) figures show a slight decrease in overall levels of core homelessness apart from hostels and other emergency accommodation. As described in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown instituted in late March 2020 had an immediate and significant impact on the homelessness sector. This is predominantly due to government action in response to the pandemic, to support people sleeping rough or living in accommodation where they could not self-isolate to move into emergency accommodation including hotels. The notable drop in rough sleeping (-33%) is a direct consequence of people being moved into emergency accommodation to self-isolate and is reflected in the 12% increase in hostels, night shelters and refuges which includes COVID emergency accommodation between 2019 and 2020.

Using data published by MHCLG in autumn 2020 relating to the national and local numbers of households helped through Everyone In, we estimated the impact on numbers rough sleeping, sofa surfing and in hostels, etc. (allowing for both closures and the use of hotels, treated as being within this category) for each local area[180] and nationally. We estimate

180 Data at LA level are aggregated to the level of 102 Housing Market Areas in England within the modelling framework used for projections of core homelessness.

Figure 5.6 Broad regional distribution of core homeless, sofa surfers and other statutory homeless.



Source: Authors' estimates of core homelessness and sofa surfing in 2018 by housing market area; H-CLIC based estimates of other statutory homelessness by LA 2019; Labour Force Survey adult population Q4 2019.

that in net terms this programme led to a 7,000 reduction in rough sleeping compared with our estimate for 2019, or 3,000 less than our estimate for 2018, but a 10,700 net increase in hostel etc. provision (including hotels used for the scheme).

There is also a notable decrease (11%) in the past year of people sofa surfing from 124,200 to 111,100. Other research published by Crisis has highlighted at the beginning of the pandemic voluntary sector and local authority services reported a large increase in people sofa surfing coming forward for help and many of these households have been rehoused during 2020.
Taken together it can be seen that this represents a net reduction in core homelessness overall, of the order of 7,300 households compared with 2019. These figures are stock estimates a point in time, essentially the middle of 2020: the overall number of households passing through or into the Everyone In scheme is now around 33,000 at the time of writing.

The implications of COVID-19 and ongoing lockdowns for the coming years are covered further in the forward projections reported in Chapter 6.

5.4 Key points

- Core homelessness in England is estimated to have totalled nearly 220,000 in 2019, having risen from about 187,000 in 2012.
- During 2020 these numbers dropped somewhat to around 200,000, mainly due to the effects of the Government's special 'Everyone In' programme in response to the COVID-19 emergency.
- The largest element of core homelessness in 2018-19 was its least visible manifestation, sofa surfing, accounting for more than half (110,000 households or individuals). Next in numerical importance was hostel and similar accommodation (42,000), followed by unsuitable TA and other unconventional accommodation, at around 19.000 each. The least numerous group were those actually sleeping rough at a point in time, which we estimate (from five sources) at 13,600.
- The gradual increase in overall numbers from 2012 to 2019 concealed wide differences between different categories, with hostels declining by 13%, and sofa surfers and other unconventional increasing by 16% and 13%, while rough sleeping virtually doubled (99%) and unsuitable TA rose by 171%.
- Core homeless households are distinct from other statutory homeless by being younger, less likely to have a disability, more likely to be a migrant, and more likely to be in London.
- Sofa surfers are distinct from other core or statutory homeless by being even younger, more likely to be from EEA, more likely to be in work and somewhat more often living in London or the South.
- All homeless groups are characterised by a much higher incidence of poverty, financial difficulty and unemployment than the general population.

6. Projections of core homelessness

6.1 Introduction

An integral part of the original 2017 report on core homelessness[181] was the development and deployment of a forecasting model to examine future scenarios for the evolution of core homelessness and the potential impact of different policy options. This chapter presents an updated and further developed set of future scenarios looking at both the shorter and the longer term. These scenarios mainly differ in respect of policies and provisions made by government, but there is also a major distinction between 'Business as Usual' (BAU) and 'with COVID-19' scenarios. The model can test different economic scenarios but in this application we mainly follow a central set of assumptions, except in relation to one scenario focused on regional 'levelling up'.

The purpose of these projections is in part to inform the planning and resourcing of services for homeless people, in part to alert the public, Government and other parties to the challenges which may lie ahead in addressing homelessness, but most important of all to explore alternative future scenarios to highlight the likely efficacy of different policies aimed at homelessness reduction.

This research builds on an existing modelling framework which has been used in a number of other research studies, referred to as the Sub-Regional Housing Market Model (SRHMM).[182] More information on this model is given in Appendix 3 and a longer Technical Report.[183] The model predicts levels of housing need and key homelessness numbers, for subregional areas in England, with a major focus on time horizons of 2026, 2031 and 2041. Many components of the forecasting model have been updated and refined, making use of more recent data to recalibrate the statistical models.

As this research was progressing, the COVID-19 emergency overtook the UK and the world. The lockdown(s) led to unprecedented economic contraction accompanied by a raft of measures from Government (notably the furlough Job Retention Scheme) to try to mitigate the economic impacts, although this did not and perhaps could not fully insulate all sections of the population from loss of work and income. As has already been documented,[184] this crisis has led to a spike in destitution and associated consequences, such as a big increase in the use of food banks, both established networks and additional 'pop-up' provision. As already described in Chapter 4, unprecedented special homelessness provision was made through the Everyone In initiative.

Therefore, it has been necessary to adapt the modelling to factor in COVID-19, and potentially varying assumptions about both the depth/pattern of its impact and the duration of its effects. Although we did develop a 'business as usual' scenario without COVID-19, we also developed a 'with-COVID-19' scenario; specific future policy options are now mainly contrasted with the 'with COVID-19' baseline. A further nine variant policy packages where then tested by running the projection model forward over 20 years with each policy in place. These are all listed in Table 6.1.

The main ***policy options*** modelled on this basis are set out in the following table:

Table 6.1: Policy scenarios tested through projections model over period 2021-41

Shorthand Name	Description	Included in 'with-COVID-19' baseline?
Business as Usual	'Business as usual' baseline – No COVID-19 pandemic or lockdown measures, neutral/ cautious economic assumptions	
With-COVID-19 Baseline	Includes effects of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown and associated economic recession with heightened unemployment and destitution, but assuming continuance of 'Everyone In' and some other measures for 4 more years	
Everyone In	Continuation of hotel provision for rough sleepers/at risk group for 20,000 households in 2021 dropping to 15,000 from 2023 to 2025	Yes (to 2025)
Prevention	More effective prevention, raising proportion of prevention cases found accommodation to the level of better performing authorities	Yes (to 2025)
Rehousing Quotas	Allocating up to 20% of net social lettings to core homeless, while raising the general share of lettings to all homeless by 30%	Yes (to 2025)
Raise LHA	Raise Local Housing Allowance to median level in all LA areas and maintain relative level in real terms through indexing	
Limit Evictions	Legal & administrative measures to limit and delay evictions from private renting, to reduce such presentations by half	

181 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf

182 See in particular: Bramley, G. & Watkins, D. (2016) 'Housebuilding, demographic change and affordability as outcomes of local planning decisions: exploring interactions using a sub-regional model of housing markets in England', *Progress in Planning*, 104, 1-35; Bramley, G., with Leishman, C., Cosgrove, P. & Watkins, D. (2016) *What Would Make a Difference? Modelling policy scenarios for tackling poverty in the UK*. Online: I-SPHERE https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/10844984/Bramley_WhatWouldMakeaDifference_Report.pdf; and, Bramley, G. (2018) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for Low-Income Households and Homeless People: Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation; Main Technical Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/housing-supply-requirements-across-great-britain-for-low-income-h

183 See Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University.

184 See in particular: The Trussell Trust (2020) *Summary Findings on the Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on Food Banks*. Online: Trussell Trust. https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/APRIL-Data-briefing_external.pdf; and, Weekes, T., Spoor, E., Weal, R. & Moffett, G. (2020) *Lockdown, Loneliness and the Long Haul Ahead: The Impact of Covid-19 on Food Banks in the Trussell Trust Network*. Online: Trussell Trust. https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-food-banks-report.pdf

UC & destitution measures	Maintain £20 per week enhancement to UC personal allowance, end 5-week wait for first UC payment, curb debt deductions from benefits, reduce Personal Independence Payment 'fails', improve Local Welfare Support
Housing First & SMD reduction	Increase by 3x the level of Housing First provision, with associated increase in rehabilitation services for addictions & offending, leading to progressive reduction in hostel etc accommodation and crime rates
Housing Supply	Increase in total and social rented housing supply in line with recommendations of 2018 Crisis/National Housing Federation 'Housing Requirements' report i.e. 340,000 pa total, 90,000 pa.social rented
Levelling Up	Raising economic growth rates in regions beyond London & SE to reduce growth gap by 70%

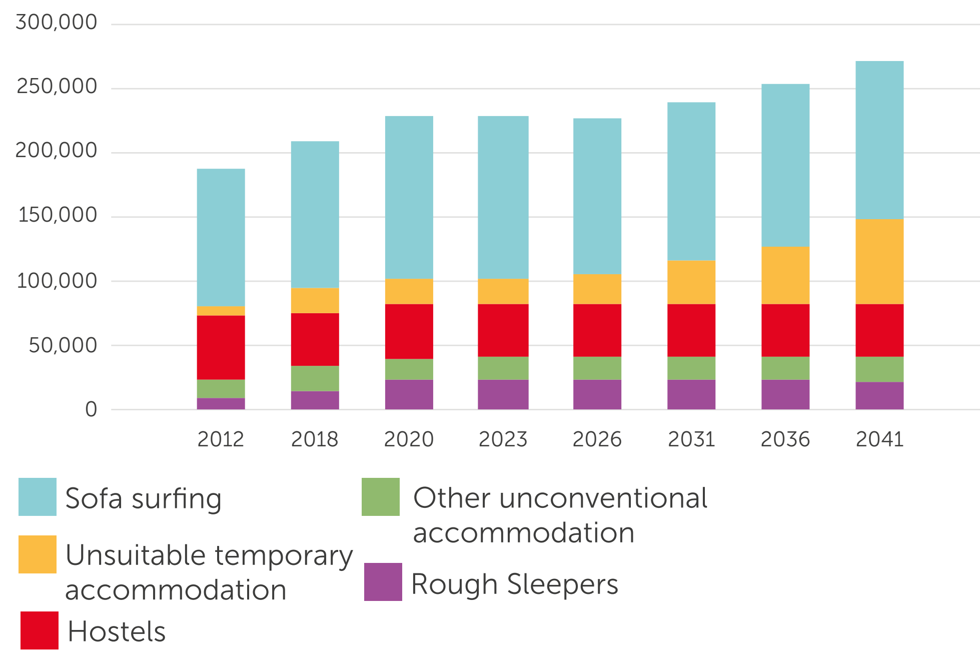
Appendix 3 provides some more detailed discussion of each policy scenario. Each was tested individually, but then also in combination with other scenarios, with each being added in a logical sequence. We discuss the findings in three parts. Firstly section 6.2 looks at the 'Business as usual' (no COVID-19) baseline, before discussing the short term impact of COVID-19 and initial responses in 2020. Section 6.3 looks at the effects of immediate response measures and early priorities in the short to medium term (1-5 years) as we recover from the COVID-19 crisis. Section 6.4 looks at longer term policy options and impacts on the time horizon of 5-20 years.

6.2 The baseline projections and COVID-19

It is useful to start by setting out what we judge as a realistic scenario for core homelessness in England had the COVID-19 pandemic not occurred, and assuming a continuance of recent trends and policies over the coming period. We refer to this by the shorthand of 'Business as usual' (BAU). The economic assumptions reflected independent forecasts published before COVID-19, the expectation of a (limited) Brexit trade deal, a subdued rate of economic and productivity growth, with the economic fortunes of the north/midlands vs London/south continuing to diverge somewhat. The demographic scenario assumed somewhat lower international migration than in the last 15 years, and a continuance of the recent slowdown in rising life expectancy. Housing supply would continue at recent levels rather than increasing to the aspirational levels which governments have targeted.

Figure 6.1 shows the results of this scenario in terms of estimated and then predicted levels of core homelessness, by category of core homelessness. The overall total is shown to have increased significantly from 186,0000 to 208,000 between 2012 and 2018, rising a bit further to 226,0000 by 2020, levelling off in the mid-2020s before rising gradually to a level of 239,000 by 2031 and then accelerating gradually to 269,000 by 2041. Over nearly three decades core homelessness would have grown by 44%. The dominant elements of this growth would have been rough sleeping (nearly tripling) and unsuitable TA (increasing by over eight times), with modest growth in other unconventional accommodation and sofa surfing. These trends reflect demographics plus real rises in prices and rents impacting on affordability, particularly in London. The only

Figure 6.1 'Business as usual' (non-COVID-19) baseline projection of core homelessness by category, England 2012-41



category to have declined would have been hostels, and that decline has effectively nearly all happened already, mainly driven by funding limitations.

It may be noted that one element, unsuitable TA, rises increasingly steeply in this scenario. This sensitivity of this indicator reflects its role as a bellwether of pressures in the homelessness system; when driving factors are leading to an increased inflow at the same time that the opportunities for outflow are diminishing, LAs have to resort increasingly to forms of TA that we classify as unsuitable, and households remain stuck in these for longer.

The same scenario is played out across the four broad regions of England. Here the overall story is the familiar one, in relation to homelessness, of London seeing the largest increase (91%) over the whole period 2012-41. The North and South would experience a below-average rate of increase (20-22%), with the Midlands seeing an increase closer to the average at 40%.

Key informant and local authority expectations of COVID-19 impacts

Before discussing the evidence and assumptions used when adapting our forecast scenarios to COVID-19 and its aftermath, it is worth briefly highlighting perspectives from our key informants interviewed in Spring 2020 and LA survey respondents. The former group raised the prospect of not only increased homelessness as a result of the pandemic, but also potentially a different profile of people affected as well:

> **"People worried about the knock-on on people who have not been homeless before, so the knock-on on employment, general poverty, the new wave of people as it's described."**
> (Voluntary sector stakeholder, Autumn 2020)

Likewise, LA respondents surveyed over summer/early autumn 2020 generally took a pessimistic view on the scale of homelessness demand likely to be seen in the post-pandemic period (see Appendix 2, Table 4). There was particularly widespread concern about the prospect of large scale private rental evictions and people becoming homeless due to job loss – such concerns were shared by more than 90% of authorities:

> "Furloughing, redundancy, reduced salaried hours will lead to more PRS renters being in arrears and being evicted. This will be spread out by the MHCLG's winter and other special measures but it is hard to envisage there not being an increase…COVID19 will impact people who previously would never have been at risk of homelessness… or at risk of needing statutory support – i.e. those on median to higher incomes".
> (LA respondent, London, 2020)

While the course of the pandemic has fluctuated and some government alleviation measures have been extended, these widespread concerns still appear justified at the time of writing.

Just over half of respondents (55%) anticipated rising applications from sofa surfers, and this is broadly supported by our model predictions. Challenging this perception, however, one authority reasoned that:

> "Sofa surfers/people being asked to leave the family home made up the biggest proportion of those accommodated already under "Everyone in" i.e. "at risk" of rough sleeping. So in theory this should now decrease or plateau."
> (LA respondent, the North, 2020)

However, this respondent may not have been aware of the very much greater total numbers of people involved in sofa surfing, and the sensitivity of these numbers of economic conditions, which our modelling reveals.

Interestingly, relatively few respondents (25%) anticipated a surge in re-approaches from people assisted under the 'Everyone In' initiative (see also Appendix 2, Table 12):

> "People placed under "Everyone In" have a plan for next steps so will be unlikely to re-present to homeless services unless the plan breaks down or they left the provision in the interim."
> (LA respondent, the North, 2020)

> "The Everyone In number is decreasing with most rehoused into more permanent housing."
> (LA respondent, the North, 2020)

There was widespread anxiety about rising numbers of women being made homeless due to domestic violence post-pandemic (reported by 78% of LAs), possibly reflecting an expectation that lockdown restrictions will have enhanced abusers' power and narrowed the options for victims.

COVID-19 and core homelessness numbers

In modelling the impacts of COVID-19 on homelessness there are essentially three elements.

Firstly, the impact of the initial and subsequent lockdowns and selective impacts on different sectors of the economy are shown and predicted to have impacts of a significant magnitude on economic variables through GDP changes in 2020 and gradually unwinding through 2021 and 2022. Judgements on the magnitude of these impacts draw on Treasury-compiled independent forecasts, National Institute of Economic and Social Research 'National Institute of Global Econometric Model' economic forecasts, and background work undertaken in our study of impacts for Trussell Trust.[185] The unprecedented reduction in GDP in 2020 (over 10% on an annual basis) and its likely persistence through early 2021 has a strong effect on unemployment in 2021 and several later years, with further effects on income, poverty, debt, etc.

Secondly, COVID-19 and the lockdown has led to significant increases in the incidence of destitution, with some broadening of its geographical and socio-demographic footprint. In our Trussell Trust research[186] we have estimated these impacts and this work informs our assumptions about the magnitude of change in destitution in 2020 and in the following year or so. In simple terms, our estimate suggested a 50% rise in destitution for the year 2020 as a whole, persisting through 2021 (averaging 30% above base level) and into 2022 to a smaller extent (10%). This is net of the offsetting effect of welfare easements like the 1 year raising of the UC personal allowance by £20pw.

Thirdly, there have been the impacts of the special homelessness initiative 'Everyone In'. For the immediately following years we have made assumptions about the continuance[187] of this special provision, targeted at rough sleeping and others at risk thereof. We have also assumed in our 'with-COVID-19' baseline that some other government-led measures will be applied to help offset what would otherwise be a substantial spike in rough sleeping and core homelessness more widely. These measures include raising the effectiveness of prevention in securing accommodation for households presenting as at risk of homelessness significantly,[188] and requiring authorities to use a quota of up to 20% of net social lettings to house core homeless households.[189] The continuance of Everyone In provision and the latter quota measure are run forward over the five years to 2025/2026.

Figure 6.2 shows our resulting new 'with-COVID-19' baseline estimates and projections by category for key years. It is obviously of particular interest to focus on 2020, the first year of the crisis and special measures. For the following period we show 2023 as a representative year, then 2026 and five-yearly intervals thereafter.

The Government's key economic measures in 2020 (the Job Retention (furlough) scheme, self-employment and business support schemes) served to insulate many workers and households from the worst effects of lockdown and the large reduction in GDP resulting. Taken in conjunction with Everyone In, this meant that in 2020 core homelessness in general and rough sleeping specifically were reduced somewhat compared with 2018-2019. At the end of Chapter 5 we presented our estimates of gross and net changes in core homelessness elements which indicated a net reduction of c.7,000 resulting from Everyone In, notwithstanding the increase in TA represented by the hotel accommodation. As shown in Section 4.7, this is consistent with pandemic immediate impacts on statutory homelessness applications.

The adverse economic and social impacts of COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns and economic disruptions are particularly focused on 2021, and the model predicts quite a spike in some elements in that year, even with the range of counter-measures assumed to be put in place. By 2023 things have settled down to some degree, but three elements of core homelessness and the total are still significantly above 2020 levels and

185 See Bramley, G. (2020) *Potential destitution and food bank demand resulting from the Covid-19 crisis in the UK: rapid research for Trussell Trust: modelling individual/household-level impacts and eligibility for mainstream welfare support: final report*. Online: The Trussell Trust. https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Heriot-Watt-technical-report-FINAL.pdf

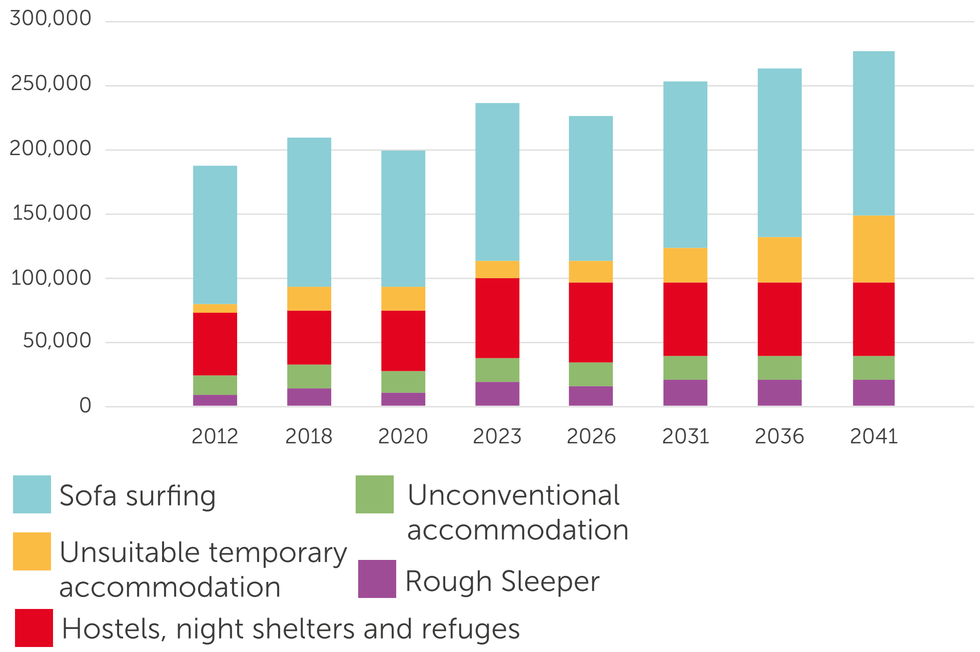
186 Ibid.

187 Hotel type accommodation for 20,000 households in 2021 dropping to 15,000 from 2023 to 2025.

188 Raising all local authorities to the level of the 2018 average plus one standard deviation.

189 The 'up to' part depends on whether there are enough core homeless in an area to justify that level of allocation, and partly also on the share of hostel residents in the total of core homeless.

Figure 6.2: New with-COVID-19 baseline projection of core homelessness by category, England 2012-41



somewhat above pre-COVID-19 levels. This applies to rough sleeping, hostels (deliberately, given the inclusion of special hotel-based provision here), and sofa surfing. Overall core homelessness in 2023 would be 4% above the BAU scenario or 14% above 2018 levels.

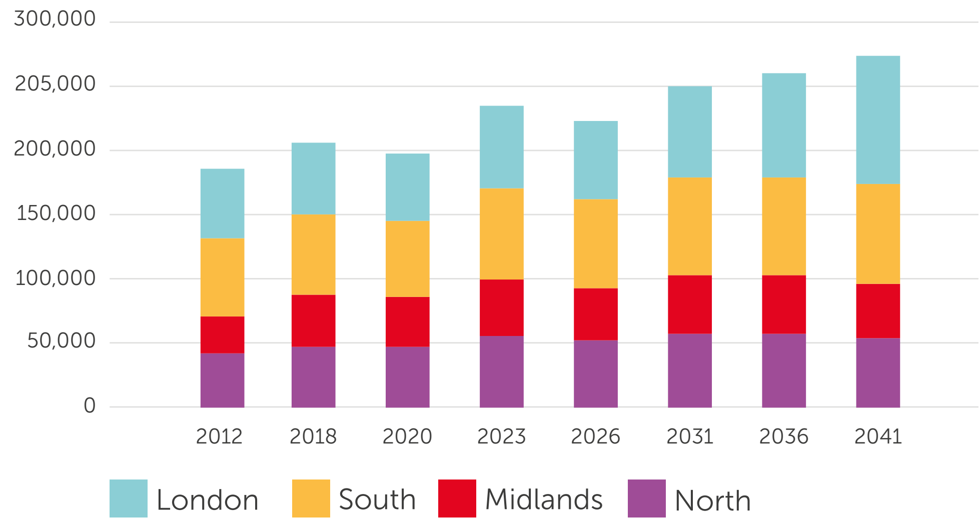
The medium term impacts of COVID-19 on core homelessness appear to be noticeable but moderate, given the counter measures we have assumed and modelled. In 2031, with those measures having stopped after 2026, core homeless could be 5% above the BAU level (21% above 2018 level). Later in the projection period the COVID-19 baseline scenario appears to show a marginally higher level of core homelessness than in the BAU baseline, 2% higher in 2041, although this would then be 38% above 2020. The largest increases would be in unsuitable TA and rough sleeping.

The regional impacts shown in Figure 6.3 suggest that the core homelessness impacts of COVID-19 (despite counter measures) would be substantial in all regions in 2023. Later in the projection period, the worsening of homelessness prospects appears to be more pronounced in London, and least in the Midlands, re-establishing the traditional pattern.

6.3 Direct measures and early priorities in immediate post-COVID-19 period

At the time of writing concern focuses on the immediate priorities for policy in the next period as the pandemic (hopefully) subsides. As reported in Chapter 2, in this period of aftermath, more of the impacts on the economy, labour market, employment and households will emerge and evolve, and these are likely to be initially as or more serious than those experienced in the early lockdown, because (a) the furlough and other emergency schemes will be wound down, while (b) some sectors will not fully return to previous levels of activity and (c) significant numbers of businesses will not be able to sustain continued operation on borrowed money. This means that there is likely to a substantial spike in redundancies and unemployment, and delayed recovery to a new normal in economic terms, as is confirmed by the consensus of economic forecasts now.

Figure 6.3 New with-COVID-19 baseline projection of core homelessness by broad region, England 2012-41



Our forecasting model (the SRHMM) reflects these assumptions and forecasts in annual steps. Although in the preceding section the main emphasis was on medium to longer term prospects, reflected in five yearly snapshots, in this section we look at the annual figures for the period 2019 to 2024. On that basis, we go on to suggest policy measures which could and should be activated in this immediate post-COVID-19 period, to avert or mitigate a threatened spike in rough sleeping and some other forms of core homelessness.

We have identified the best candidate policy measures to alleviate core homelessness in general, and rough sleeping in particular, in the short run (next 2-3 years), as summarised in the top part of Table 6.1 above. These include extending a slightly enhanced version of 'Everyone In' for several years, but tapering the scale of it down during this period. The other measures considered most immediately relevant and falling within the housing sphere are more effective prevention and direct rehousing quotas for people experiencing core homelessness. We have therefore included these in our 'with COVID-19 baseline'. Other measures found to give significant impacts in this short run period, from those examined above, include raising the LHA, reducing evictions and the combination of maintaining the £20 pw higher UC rate and the package of welfare measures aimed at reducing destitution.

Figure 6.4 shows the impact of COVID-19 and then applying these measures in sequence, for each of the four years 2021 through 2024. The incremental impacts are shown expressed as a percentage of the Business as Usual (BAU, non-COVID-19) baseline.

This analysis shows firstly the serious impact of COVID-19 in pushing up rough sleeping dramatically in 2021-22 without any counter measures in place. Extending the Everyone In initiative, initially on a somewhat larger scale and then tapering down a bit, achieves quite a substantial reduction, particularly in 2022 but is not enough to fully offset this adverse COVID-19 impact. More effective prevention would make a useful early, but smaller and tapering contribution. Applying rehousing quotas of up to 20% of net lettings to be reserved for people experiencing Core Homelessness

Figure 6.4 Impacts on rough sleeping of COVID-19 and successive additional policy measures in years 2021-2024 (percent of Business as Usual increment for each element)

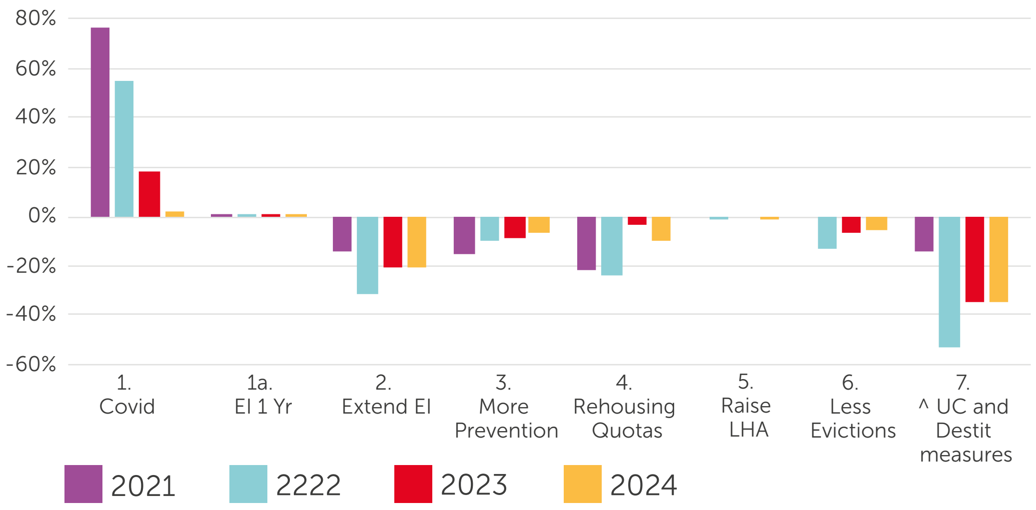
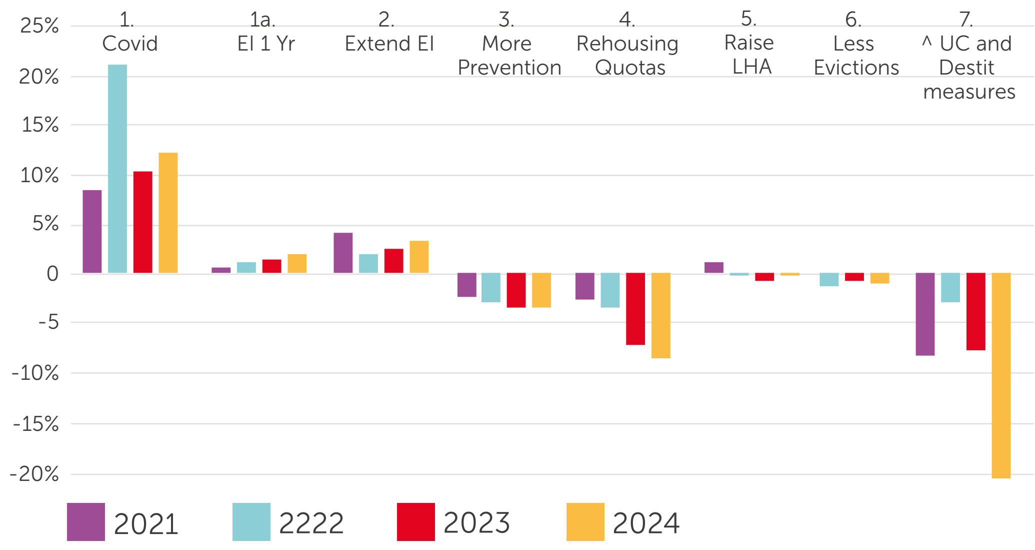


Figure 6.5: Impacts on core homelessness of successive additional policy measures in years 2021-24 (percent of Business as Usual increment for each policy package)



would have quite a large impact in 2021 and 2022 when the problem is most acute. That explains why we recommend these approaches highly as an immediate priority and have included them in our post-COVID-19 baseline.

Three further desirable policies are then added beyond this. Raising the LHA is desirable from an overall core homelessness point of view, especially in the medium to longer term but it would not have much short term impact on rough sleeping. Reducing evictions would make a useful contribution in 2022 and rather less thereafter. Last but clearly not least, maintaining the £20 uplift in UC and applying the package of other welfare measures geared to reducing destitution would have a very large effect in 2022 and pretty large in the following two years.

Figure 6.5 presents a similar analysis for core homelessness as a whole.

COVID-19 itself is predicted to increase core homelessness throughout this period, with a particularly large effect shown in 2022. The model may slightly exaggerate this timing effect given its heavy reliance on one-year lags, but at the same time a large spike in unemployment from 2021 may be expected to have progressive impacts on severe poverty and destitution and general scarring effects which take time to be overcome. The Everyone In initiative and its suggested extension both increase core homelessness because they increase the numbers in hostels (Everyone In provision is counted in that category). Better prevention has useful if moderate impacts which this time increase somewhat over time. Rehousing quotas would have the largest beneficial impacts, particularly after 2023. Raising the LHA would have modest net additional impacts in this period. Reduced evictions would have only a small impact on overall core homelessness. The UC and welfare measures would again have relatively large effects, from 2021 onwards with a particularly large effect shown for 2024.

6.4 Variant policy and contextual scenarios in the medium term

In this section we briefly outline the findings of a number of scenarios where we have tested the impact of a number of scenarios, over the medium to longer term time horizon. We first look at individual scenarios and some variants, before comparing them as individual stand-alones and then as part of a structured build-up.

Summary of impacts of individual policies

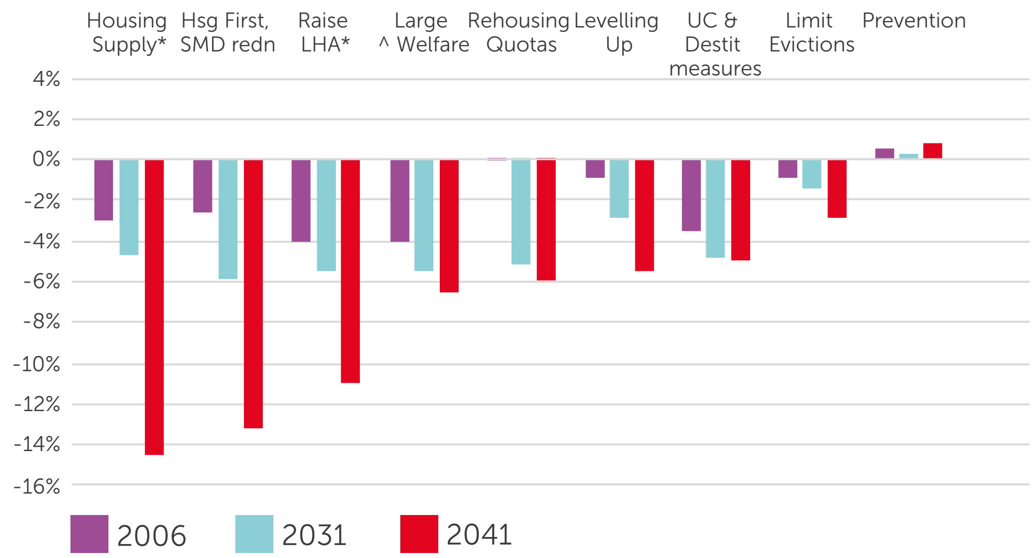
It is useful at this point to summarise the impacts of the policies considered in this analysis, as summarised in Table 6.1 above, by showing the percentage reductions in core homelessness, relative to the with-COVID-19 baseline, at key points in time for each policy considered in isolation. Figure 6.6 shows this summary, with the policies shown in descending order of the size of their impact at the end of the projection period, 2041.

It is noteworthy but expected that the policies which come top on this reckoning are those which have an impact which progressively builds up over time: deploying Housing First and other measures to reduce Severe and Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) homelessness and associated hostel use; raising LHA to median rent levels in all localities; and increasing housing supply; and to a more moderate extent 'levelling up'. Conversely, policies mainly geared to short term alleviation, such as prevention and limiting evictions, have small longer term impact. The measures included within the shorter term COVID-19 package embodied in the baseline (as marked in Table 6.1) included prevention measures which reduced core homelessness by 3.3% in 2023-2031 and 4.4% in 2041.

Time horizon has a bearing on the ranking of policies. If the main focus is on the five year horizon of 2026, the most impactful policies would be the large or moderate rise in welfare rates and the package to counter destitution,[190] as well as raising the LHA, with housing supply and levelling up less prominent.
It is important to understand that the overall impact described above is composed of differential impacts on the five different components of core homelessness, as represented

190 Based on the findings of Fitzpatrick et al (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020* (JRF), these include ending the 5-week wait for UC, ending the taking of debt repayments from basic benefit payments, and ending the unjustified rejection of many Personal Independence Payment claims, as well a retaining he £20pw enhancement to personal allowances beyond April 2021.

Figure 6.6: Summary of Impact of Policies considered individually by selected year, ranked by size of impact by 2041 (percent of with-COVID-19 baseline core homeless forecast)



in the current version of the core homelessness projection model. Table 6.2 looks at these effects on the longer-term time horizon of 2041. It can be seen that a majority of policies have effects in the desirable direction of reducing rough sleeping in the longer run, and that quite a few of these impacts are substantial (approaching or exceeding 10% reduction). The biggest impacts are associated with the welfare benefits measures including measures aimed specifically at reducing destitution. Next in importance is the strategy of using Housing First and improved support and (where appropriate) rehabilitation services to reduce complex need homelessness (often involving substance misuse and/ or mental health issues) and in the process reduce hostel spaces gradually.

The *unconventional accommodation* category, as represented in the current version of the model, shows relative limited changes in response to the different policy strategies. This is the category of core homelessness on which we have least robust evidence and hence limited capability of modelling drivers, although it is apparent that it is in part linked to other elements of core homelessness. The hostels category is essentially supply-determined in our modelling approach; thus the main opportunity to reduce hostel numbers is seen to lie in the Housing First related strategy.

Unsuitable TA is the category of core homelessness which is most likely to be affected by any and indeed all of the policies tested. This reflects the way our modelling structure channels a wide range of influences through the overall level of homeless applications to LAs, movements in the total level of TA placements and, from the dynamics of that, the proportion of 'unsuitable' placements. This category is very strongly influenced by (total and social) housing supply, and by raising of LHA limits, while being quite significantly influenced by prevention, Housing First and limitations on evictions, as well as large increases in welfare benefit rates, and moderately affected by the remaining policies.

Sofa surfing presents a mixed picture. While for three policies, rehousing quotas, housing supply and levelling up, the impacts on this type of core homelessness are substantial

Table 6.2: Longer term impact of policies considered individually on main components of core homelessness (% of with-COVID-19 baseline at 2041)

Policy package	Rough	Unconventional Acc	Hostels etc	Unsuitable	Sofa
Raise LHA+	0.5%	-1.7%	-1.7%	-55.8%	-3.5%
Limit Evictions	-6.8%	-0.5%	0.0%	-12.4%	-0.2%
Prevention*	-9.8%	0.9%	18.5%	-15.3%	18.7%
Rehousing Quotas	-8.5%	-1.1%	0.0%	-7.5%	-8.5%
UC & Destitution measures	-53.1%	-1.3%	0.0%	-5.1%	-0.3%
Housing First, SMD red'n	-15.9%	-1.8%	-43.9%	-14.8%	-0.2%
Housing Supply+	1.8%	**-1.7%**	**0.0%**	**-61.0%**	**-8.8%**
Levelling Up	-1.2%	**-1.1%**	**0.0%**	**-5.3%**	**-9.4%**
Large Benefits increase	-50.0%	**-1.5%**	**0.0%**	**-13.8%**	**-0.6%**

Note: * 'Prevention' effect simulated by the negative of the effect of not applying the prevention element specified in the 'with-COVID-19' baseline. + Raise LHA and Housing Supply utilise slightly modified model in relation to sofa surfing predictive formula.

(especially in absolute numerical terms) and in the direction expected, for several other policies the effects are rather small in percentage terms (or in one case perverse). As noted in Appendix 6 and the Technical Report, some adjustments were made to the sofa surfing predictive formulae that were used for the final version of the scenario projections.

Stacking up the impacts

Important policy questions concern what can be achieved by implementing combinations of policy options, or indeed (if core homelessness were given a very high priority) all feasible and effective policies. So far we have looked at policy options individually, enabling us to compare their individual effectiveness, short or longer term. While that gives some initial guide to 'what works', it is not necessarily the same as what the effect would be of adding that one to others already in place. Sometimes, adding a fresh policy approach may work in a synergistic way to increase the impact so that it is greater than the sum of its parts. However, more commonly, the more policies you add, the less they may appear to add, relative to what might have been expected from looking at them in isolation. That may be because the different policies are to varying degrees helping the same people, and the pool of remaining 'at risk' people may be getting smaller the more policies are in place.

It follows that, in this 'stacking up' approach, it does matter in which order policies are added to the package. We would argue that the most logical order would relate to immediacy of implementation and impact, and after that work through more directly housing-related policies, perhaps taking the simpler before the more complex. Policies further back in the hierarchy would then be ones which would take longer to impact, be more complex to implement, involve a wider range of sectors, and cost most. Following those principles we have created a sequence of ten scenarios building on our With-COVID-19 Baseline, and run the model with each element added in turn. The results are shown in Figure 6.7, where numbers represent number of core homeless households at a point in time over a 29 year period.

This analysis shows a number of things very clearly.

Firstly, past and current growth tendencies in core homelessness are likely to be reinforced given even higher numbers in the future without further policy intervention. Secondly, however, it is possible to reduce core homelessness by substantial margins, given time and determination. Future increases are far from inevitable. Implementing all policies discussed in the previous section would see core homelessness drop by 44% compared with the baseline by 2041 (28% lower in 2031). In 2041 core homelessness would be 17% below 2018 levels and 6% below 2012 levels.[191] These are absolute numbers: as a percentage of households the reductions would be 26% below 2018 and 20% below 2012. It is also worth noting that this calibrates reductions against our COVID baseline which includes measures intended to reduce or alleviate homelessness in the immediate period.

Thirdly, some policies have a bigger impact than others. The biggest wins would come from raising the LHA, from a strategy of reducing SMD homelessness through larger scale use of Housing First, with associated measures such as better provision for substance misuse issues and corresponding reduction of hostel spaces, and with increased housing supply with a strong focus on social housing. Also quite useful measures would include implementing rehousing quotas for core homeless to access social housing, raising social security benefit rates and addressing the destitution-inducing features of the welfare system, and an economic strategy of 'levelling up' economic performance across regions.

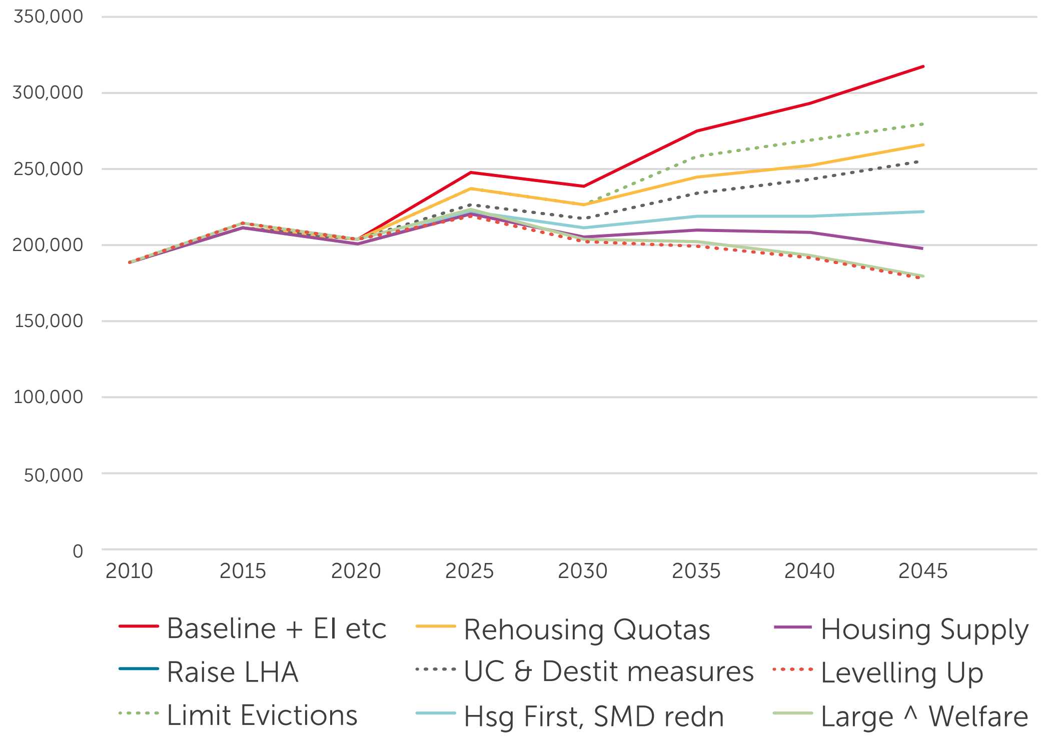
Fourthly some policies have larger effects earlier on, including (as already shown in previous section) the 'Everyone In' initiative, rehousing quotas, and the measures to reduce destitution. Other strategies including the Housing First/SMD one, housing supply, and levelling up would clearly be more gradual and progressive in their effects.

We showed above that housing supply could have quite large effects in the longer run, and appeared to have some synergy/complementarity with social housing allocation quotas. It's shorter run impact is somewhat affected by the tendency for improved housing supply and affordability to release a lot of extra pent-up household formation from concealed households, but in the longer run this seems to reach the most disadvantaged concealed households, sofa surfers. New social sector supply is also needed (practically or politically) to support the implementation and sustainment of other measures, particularly rehousing quotas, Housing First, or indeed successful prevention.

There is currently much policy concern about the need for welfare to tackle severe poverty and destitution during and following the Covid-19 pandemic, and our analysis in the previous section suggested these

191 Readers should note that this final sequential analysis uses a slightly modified model, in that slight amendments were made to the predictive functions for sofa surfing, as explained in Appendix 3 and the Technical Report. Baseline totals in this sequential analysis are somewhat higher in 2041 than in the projections reported above.

Figure 6.7: Total core homelessness in England with the sequential addition of ten policy scenarios to reduce core homelessness in the period to 2041



measures could be very significant in the shorter term, and would help to prevent homelessness for the people whom new supply would also help in the longer term. This overlap becomes clearer from the finding from the sequential analysis that the higher levels of welfare benefit improvement would not give so much additional benefit in terms of core homelessness reduction in the longer term, given the implementation of other measures including supply, Housing First and LHA which will have already helped an overlapping population.

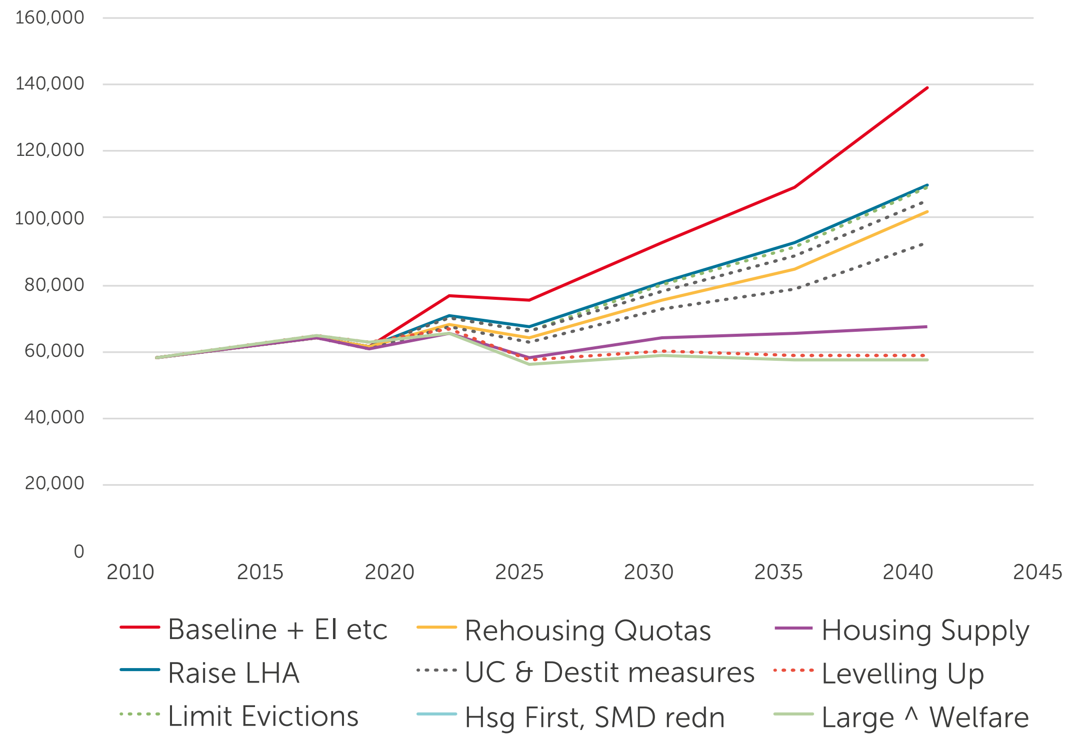
It has been clear throughout this exercise that the more volatile elements of core homelessness are particularly associated with London. As a consequence, concerted measures to reduce core homelessness are likely to have a more dramatic impact in London. This is illustrated by Figure 6.8 below, which shows the impacts of the same set of sequentially added strategies for London. The main story is that, without further measures, core homelessness would be likely to grow much more steeply than was apparent from the national picture, but again concerted measures would bring it back down below the base level.

6.5 Key points

- If COVID-19 had not happened and economic and demographic trends had continued in a similar fashion to the recent past, projected future core homelessness numbers would have risen significantly in the 2020s and 2030s. Allowing for COVID-19 our main projection shows numbers rising from 200,000 in 2020 to 225,000 in 2026 to over 250,000 in 2031 and 275,000 by 2041. This increase would have been largely accounted for by unsuitable TA. A variant forecast suggests that higher sofa surfing could drive total numbers above 315,000 by 2041

- It is predicted that the economic aftermath of COVID-19 risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping, and the Government is urged to take a range of shorter-term measures to alleviate that. These should include continuance of the special provision

Figure 6.8: Total core homelessness in London with the sequential addition of ten policy scenarios to reduce core homelessness in the period to 2041



of hotel-type accommodation on a substantial scale, effective prevention, social rehousing quotas, limits on evictions and some welfare changes. With such measures in place the impacts would be moderated by 2023, but core homelessness would remain somewhat higher in the medium term than it would have been without COVID-19.

- Around a dozen different policy mechanisms or changes were tested, individually and in combination, using the projection model, looking at short, medium and longer time horizons. In the medium term, the most effective policies for reducing core homelessness would be large increases in welfare benefit levels and associated measures to reduce destitution, and raising the level of Local Housing Allowance to the level of median actual rents (and maintaining that level).

- In the longer term, the largest projected impact on reducing core homelessness would result from the raising of total and social housing supply, consistent large-scale application of Housing First accompanied by appropriate support provision and a reduction of traditional hostel accommodation, and the raising of the LHA as already mentioned. The effectiveness of the former would be greatly increased by the maintenance of social housing quotas for core homeless households. A successful levelling up of economic performance across the English regions would also contribute to the reduction of core homelessness.

- A steady rise in core homelessness is not inevitable. A comprehensive programme of the recommended measures is shown to be capable of reducing core homelessness numbers by 28% in 2031 and 47% in 2041, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies. This scenario would see core homeless rates 26% below the level of 2018 and 20% below the level of 2012. Furthermore, rough sleeping would be reduced by 64%, hostels by 44%, and unsuitable TA would be largely eliminated (down 90%).

7. Conclusions

2020 was a year like none other in living memory, with the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic lockdown(s) having profound impacts on homelessness and homelessness policy. At the onset of the outbreak, there were widespread fears that people experiencing homelessness, particularly those sleeping rough or staying in night shelters, would be at heightened risk of infection and, potentially, death. Beyond this, there was the sudden realisation that high susceptibility to the virus for these groups could magnify infection risk for the wider population. For the first time, therefore, rough sleeping became widely understood as a public health emergency – triggering an inclusive and progressive response on an unprecedented scale.

Subsequent ambiguity in central Government communications should take nothing away from what was achieved by LAs, third sector partners and civil servants working closely in concert, particularly in the early stage of the pandemic. With astonishing speed, almost 15,000 people who were sleeping rough or at risk of doing so were helped into emergency (usually self-contained) accommodation, much of it in commercial hotels, but also in B&Bs, holiday lets, university accommodation and housing association stock. Over 90 per cent of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of the crisis were offered accommodation, many of whom will have been sleeping on the streets for years. By autumn 2020, around 30,000 people had been assisted under these 'Everyone In' arrangements.

Notable by its absence, at least towards the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, was any notion of a purely 'localist' or non-inclusive approach to assisting people experiencing homelessness: instead, strong, decisive and hands-on leadership was offered by central Government. This was received and acted upon by councils and other local stakeholders with a sense of urgency and collective endeavour. Levels of infection and COVID-19-related deaths have been kept low amongst this highly vulnerable population, so far at least, indicating a successful public health strategy. However, subsequent 'mixed messages' from central Government, particularly with regard to the accommodation of non-United Kingdom nationals ineligible for benefits and the continuation of Everyone In, became a matter of acute concern for Local Authorities and their third sector partners as the crisis progressed. It also resulted in growing variation in local authority practice across the country as the year progressed, notwithstanding a change in the Homelessness Code of Guidance advising local authorities to respond sympathetically to those made vulnerable as a result of the pandemic. The protections offered to those in asylum accommodation has also weakened in the second and third COVID lockdowns.

Other crucial factors in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on homeless people included substantial additional resources, radically stepped-up collaborative working (especially between health and homelessness services), and a workforce that adapted swiftly to a wholly unprecedented challenge. While LAs generally gave an upbeat assessment of their own performance in response to homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis, it is clear from our fieldwork that the resilience of both staff and resources had been severely tested, with many councils surprised by the sheer scale of need that Everyone In uncovered. The large scale of emergency funding made available by central Government to respond to homelessness during the pandemic was widely acknowledged. Equally, though, the proliferation of highly specified, short-term funding pots was viewed as less than strategic, with rapid turnaround bidding processes layering further stress onto already hard-pressed LAs.

Supportive wider changes to welfare and labour market policy were also vital in protecting homeless people and other low-income groups during the crisis. Specifically, the moratorium on evictions from private and social tenancies, the enhancement of the Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance benefit rates, and the pausing of both benefit sanctions and debt-related deductions, were all necessary and effective steps. The official homelessness statistics from April-June 2020 capture the dramatic impact of the evictions ban, with the number of homeless households assisted as a result of the ending of private and social tenancies plummeting, while cases associated with family and friend exclusions or domestic violence remained steady.

The suspension of evictions from asylum accommodation, and easement of restrictions on support for people originally from the European Economic Area not in employment, were humanitarian interventions that also likely saved lives, or at least immense suffering. Nobly, and sensibly, Everyone In really meant everyone in at the start of the pandemic. However, subsequent 'mixed messages' from central Government, particularly on the accommodation entitlement of non-United Kingdom nationals ineligible for benefits, became a matter of acute concern for LAs and their third sector partners as the crisis progressed.

Alongside this array of emergency measures, it shouldn't be forgotten that the pre-COVID-19 policy context also helped to shape interventions responses during the pandemic. Key informants pointed to the strong foundations laid by the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the Homelessness Reduction Act in enabling a more effective response to COVID-19 than might otherwise have been the case, particularly with regards to single homeless people. That said, the Homelessness Reduction Act received only qualified endorsement from local authority respondents on the role it played during the pandemic; those who were positive pointed to its pivot towards earlier intervention, while the (very small) minority who were singularly critical flagged what they perceived to be excessive bureaucracy associated with Homelessness Reduction Act processes and monitoring.

This year's Monitor was the first where the analysis of statutory homelessness trends was substantially based on the operation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and its associated (H-CLIC) administrative dataset. With only two years of H-CLIC data available, and the new legislative framework still bedding in, caution is required in interpreting these figures – particularly with respect to short-term trends over time. Nonetheless, some interesting patterns are beginning to emerge, not least with regard to the increased 'visibility' of single adults in the official homelessness statistics, who accounted almost three-quarters (72%) of all of those assessed as homeless and entitled to the 'relief' duty, and half (49%) of those threatened with homelessness and entitled to a 'prevention' duty. This is in stark contrast to the pre-Homelessness Reduction Act era when the key headline statistic – households 'accepted' by LAs as in 'priority need' – comprised only around one-third single people.

Also interesting is the emerging intelligence from H-CLIC on the profile of support needs in the statutory homeless population. While almost half (48%) of all households assessed as owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty are recorded as having a relevant support need, these needs were highly diverse in nature. Far from being dominated by complex support needs associated with drug or alcohol problems, offending or rough sleeping histories, as some might assume, mental or physical ill-health problems, and experience of domestic violence, were more prominent.

Other key points to flag from analysis of these first two years of the Homelessness Reduction Act operation include some positive signs that may allay initial concerns about certain aspects of the legislation (e.g., discharge of duty on grounds of 'non-cooperation' is actually rarely recorded in practice), but also its limitations. Principal amongst these limitations is that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants still reach the end of the post- Homelessness Reduction Act assistance without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them (around 20,000 households in 2019/20). It is the very existence of this group – that is, single, non-priority homeless people for whom the Homelessness Reduction Act has meant a significantly improved but still highly partial safety net – that necessitated the need for the extraordinary, large-scale emergency efforts undertaken under Everyone In in the first place. It is notable that in Scotland, where single homeless people are routinely entitled to rehousing necessary COVID-19-related emergency efforts were on a vastly smaller scale and could be much more heavily targeted on the very modest numbers sleeping rough or living in communal shelters.

Also linked with this, and for the first time in this year's Monitor, we present quantitative analysis of 'core homelessness', which captures some of the most severe and damaging forms of homelessness, and groups conventionally under-represented in official statutory statistics, including people sleeping rough and those 'sofa surfing'. We estimate core homelessness in England to have totalled nearly 220,000 in 2019, having risen from about 187,000 in 2012. During 2020 these numbers dropped somewhat to around 200,000, mainly due to the effects of the Everyone In programme.

Our projections indicate that the economic aftermath of COVID-19 risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping, unless national and/or local Government continues Everyone In style interventions on a substantial scale, maximises targeted homelessness prevention measures, ensures social rehousing quotas for homeless people, places limits on evictions, and implement key welfare changes. In the longer term, the largest projected impact on reducing core homelessness would result from national application of Housing First, increased rates of Local Housing Allowance, and expansion of total and social housing supply (accompanied by the maintenance of social housing quotas for core homeless households). A successful levelling up of economic performance across the English regions would also contribute to the reduction of core homelessness.

Finally, it is worth reflecting that the sharp disjuncture represented by the catastrophe of the COVID-19 pandemic also opens up an opportunity to reflect on the shape of homelessness services in the future. One striking – shocking – point to emerge during the pandemic was the extent to which dormitory-style shelters are still used to accommodate homeless people in at least some parts of England. Over half (52%) of local authorities in England reported at least some homelessness accommodation of this type in their area pre-pandemic, albeit often confined to winter or extreme weather conditions. A decisive shift away from the use of night shelters was, unsurprisingly, a priority of many of the senior homelessness experts we interviewed mid-pandemic. Interestingly, the Local A survey also indicated that only a very small number of councils expected to continue to use dormitory-style provision post- pandemic. However, given the high-profile Government commitment to 'end' rough sleeping by 2024, fears were expressed by some key informants that communal shelter provision, or at least more congregate-style hostels, might be expanded to help meet this target. Furthermore, the speed with which the capital budget in the Next Steps programme was required to be spent was argued to undermine the ability to deploy these resources strategically and, potentially, to open up the danger of damaging new 'path dependencies' associated with hasty investments in inappropriate forms of accommodation.

On the more immediate horizon, a pressing priority remains effective move on arrangements for people temporarily accommodated during the COVID-19 crisis, especially those with No Recourse to Public Funds who, by autumn 2020, comprised around half of the population accommodated in London under the 'Everyone In' arrangements. The 2022 Homelessness Monitor England will be able to assess the success or otherwise of efforts to resolve the predicament of these vulnerable migrants, as well as to stem the potential tidal wave of 'new' homelessness expected as the COVID-19 induced recession takes hold, Brexit causes disruption to trade and various temporary labour market, welfare and housing protections are scaled back or ended. More positively, it should also enable reflection on the extent to which opportunities to 'build back better' are starting to materialise in the post-pandemic era.

Appendix 1 Topic guide (2020)

1. Introduction (IF NECESSARY)

- Explain nature and purpose of research, and focus on COVID-19 homelessness impacts this year
- Their job title/role; how long they have been in that position/ organisation, and specific involvement in COVID-19 homelessness response

2. Impact COVID-19 on homelessness trends

- What impact has COVID-19 had on levels of homelessness? (increased/ decreased footfall in LA homelessness services and vol sector homelessness services)
    - Probe different kinds of homelessness: rough sleeping, hidden homelessness, TA etc.
- What impacts has COVID-19 had on the drivers/triggers/causes of homelessness or the 'inflow' of people into homelessness?
    - Intensification/reduction in any specific drivers (poverty, unemployment, evictions/ landlord forbearance, relationship breakdown, family ejection, domestic abuse/violence, etc.)
- What impact has COVID-19 had on profile of those experiencing/at risk of homelessness?
    - Probe impacts on different groups: single, families, young people, complex needs, migrants etc.
- Has COVID-19 changed the accessibility / availability of services available to those experiencing / at risk of homelessness? If so, how? For the better/worse, etc.
- What evidence/data is available on these post-COVID trends as yet (if any)? Probe local street counts, inflow into services, etc?

3. Impact of COVID-19 on homelessness responses

- What have been the most important Central Government responses to manage the homelessness related impacts of and risks associated with COVID-19 been? How effective/ ineffective have they been; main strengths/weaknesses? Probe as needed:
    - The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 – and exemptions from restrictions made for individuals experiencing homelessness/organisations providing them with support/ services
    - Emergency funding to LAs to manage impact of COVID-19 across services, including recent 1.6million additional funding and 3.2million specifically on rough sleeping
    - Casey letter to LA homelessness managers and RS coordinators to get everyone rough sleeping, in hostels and night shelters in accommodation by end of March
    - Guidance:
        - for hostel or day centre providers of services for people experiencing rough sleeping
        - on response to people with No Recourse to Public Funds
        - on those experiencing or fleeing domestic abuse/violence during the pandemic
        - other relevant guidance?
- What have the most important measures taken at LA/organisational level? For each probe variation across country/geographic area of expertise.
    - Get people sleeping rough into appropriate accommodation in which they can self-isolate?
    - Ensure that anyone new/returning to the streets is helped into appropriate accommodation?
    - Shut down night shelters and find appropriate alternative accommodation for former users?
    - Shut down hostels in which self-isolation is impossible and find alternative accommodation for former users?
    - Provide adequate support to those accommodated as part of the COVID-19 response? Probe capacity of addiction, mental health, health services to meet demand and provide online/ phone based or 'in reach' support.
    - To what extent have enforcement measures been taken/ contemplated, e.g. to get people to 'come inside', desist from begging, street drinking, etc.
    - Have there been any changes in how legal criteria in the homelessness legislation (priority need, local connection, intentional homelessness) are deployed and what impacts is this having? Probe whether any guidance from central Government on this, how helpful, whether implemented etc.
- What factors have made achieving these things easier/harder in different areas? What have been the key enablers and barriers?
- Are we seeing different responses to COVID-19 in different parts of the country? Why? What will be the likely impacts of this variation (e.g. for different LAs, groups of homeless households)?
- What changes have been made to the frontline delivery of homelessness services in response to COVID-19? Probe rationale, effectiveness, enablers/barriers to doing so:
    - Assessment of priority/eligibility accounting for COVID-19 risk factors
    - Changes to hostel/service eviction and exclusion practices
    - Online/telephone assessments of homelessness by LA/voluntary sector providers
    - Reorganised access points to minimise risk to service users and staff
    - PPE for staff – probe availability, quality, etc.
    - Others?
- To what extent will current data collection protocols around homelessness (H-CLIC, annual rough sleeper count, CHAIN in London) capture the homelessness impacts of COVID-19? Probe: limitations/ strengths of the data in this context.

4. Impact of welfare reform response to COVID-19

- How effective or ineffective do you think the recent changes made to the UK benefits system will be in preventing homelessness among low income households/those facing a financial shock as a result of COVID-19? Probe:
    - LHA 30th percentile change
    - Increase in UC standard allowance
    - Support put in in place for self-employed
    - Extension to statutory sick pay entitlements
    - Suspension of work-related conditionality

5. Homelessness Reduction Act

- To what extent is the Homelessness Reduction Act providing an appropriate/adequate legal framework for dealing with the homelessness-related challenges of COVID-19?

6. Post COVID-19

- What do you anticipate happening to emergency and TA provision / homelessness responses [in your area/city, across the country, as appropriate] as social distancing requirements ease and end? Probe: return to business as usual or not; if not, what can we expect?
  - Is there a risk that responses will be damaged in the medium/long term by the crisis? If so, how? Probe risk that return to crisis management focus, loss of gains on prevention; insufficient support provision for those in emergency/temp accommodation; return to the streets for those currently accommodated.
  - Is there potential for responses to transition to something better following COVID-19? If so, what might this look like? What are the barriers/enablers to it happening? What do LAs and services need to help make this happen?

Thanks and close.

Appendix 2 Local authority survey (2020)

Emulating similar surveys implemented as an integral component of Homelessness Monitor England fieldwork since 2014, an online survey of England's 314 LAs[192] was undertaken in July-October 2020. As in earlier years a key aim was to delve beneath the routinely published statutory homelessness statistics to enhance understanding of how housing market trends and welfare reforms have impacted on (a) homelessness demand pressures, and (b) LAs' ability to prevent and resolve homelessness.

While the starting point for this year's survey was the suite of questions posed in previous years, the survey's scope was also updated to reflect recent, ongoing and anticipated policy developments. More importantly, it was tailored to focus substantially on LA experience of managing homelessness during the initial COVID-19 national lockdown period (March-July). Survey design was also informed through consultation with national experts in the field, as well as with Crisis colleagues. A draft version of the questionnaire was kindly piloted by two case study authority contacts.

An e-mail invitation to participate in the survey was sent to LA homelessness contacts (or 'housing options managers'). After three sets of general reminder messages, and bespoke prompting of contacts through a range of means, responses were filed by 148 authorities or 47 per cent of all authorities – see Table Table A2.1.[193] In terms of its regional distribution the achieved sample is appropriately representative of England. Given the relatively lengthy (three month) window allowed for survey responses to be made, and the rapid change in some aspects of policy over that period, we have exercised additional some caution in interpreting some of the data below for the purposes of the analysis offered in this report.

Table A2.1: Survey response rate

Broad region*	Responding local authorities	All local authorities	Response rate %
London	16	33	48
South	66	139	47
Midlands	33	70	46
North	33	72	47
England	**148**	**314**	**47**

*In this survey we have followed the convention that the South includes the East of England as well as the South East and South West of England.

192 As constituted in 2020/21

193 Two responses on behalf of local authorities slated for merger in 2021 were duplicated to reflect current 2020/21 official configurations

Table A2.2: Overall number of households seeking homelessness assistance in Q1 2020/21 compared with equivalent period in 2019/20 (%)

	Significantly higher	Slightly higher	Fairly similar	Slightly lower	Significantly lower	Total	N=
1 London	38	25	25	13	0	100	16
2 South	23	26	30	20	2	100	66
3 Midlands	31	31	19	9	9	100	32
4 North	24	21	18	29	9	100	34
England	**26**	**26**	**24**	**19**	**5**	**100**	**148**

Table A2.3: Perceived change in expressed demand from specific groups: Q1 2020/21 compared to the equivalent period in 2019/20 (%)

	Increase	Fairly steady	Decrease	Total	N=
Rough sleepers	81	17	1	100	143
Single people aged 25+	75	22	3	100	143
Young single people 16-24	38	50	12	100	143
Families with children	12	36	52	100	143
EEA nationals – no access to benefits	25	66	8	100	143
All other migrants no access to benefits	26	65	9	100	143

Table A2.4: Looking ahead to the post-lockdown period, do you anticipate any change in the numbers of people in particular groups seeking assistance from your Housing Options/homelessness service? (%)

	Will increase	Will remain fairly steady	Will decrease	Total	N=
People evicted from private rented sector	94	3	3	100	143
Newly unemployed people	94	6	0	100	143
Survivors of domestic violence	78	20	1	100	143
Repossessed home owners	69	29	2	100	143
People being asked to leave the family home	62	37	1	100	143
Sofa surfers	55	41	5	100	143
People evicted from social rented sector	54	41	6	100	143
People accommodated under 'Everyone In' initiative	25	45	29	100	143
Prison leavers	24	76	1	100	143
EEA nationals lacking entitlements/no access to benefits	19	75	6	100	143
All other migrants with NRPF/no access to benefits	16	77	7	100	143

Table A2.5: In relation to prevention and relief activity, and as compared with the period immediately before March 2020, would you say that your authority has been? (%)

	More active during the pandemic	Less active during the pandemic	Neither more nor less active during the pandemic	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	53	33	7	7	100	15
2 South	43	26	28	3	100	65
3 Midlands	59	21	17	3	100	29
4 North	29	38	29	3	100	34
England	**44**	**29**	**24**	**3**	**100**	**143**

Table A2.6: Has the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 enabled a more or less effective response to homelessness in your area during the COVID-19 crisis than would have otherwise been the case? (%)

	More effective	More effective in some ways, less in others	Neither – about the same	Less effective	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London		53	33	7	7	100	15
2 South		43	26	28	3	100	65
3 Midlands		59	21	17	3	100	29
4 North		29	38	29	3	100	34
England	**26**	**18**	**46**	**6**	**4**	**100**	**143**

Table A2.7: How important have the following policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis been in preventing or minimising homelessness in your area? (%)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Don't know	Total	N=
Suspension of evictions from private and social rented tenancies	87	12	1	1	100	143
'Everyone In' initiative	76	19	5	1	100	143
Job Retention scheme (furloughing)	54	26	1	19	100	143
Suspension of evictions from asylum accommodation	31	18	27	24	100	143
Suspension of derogation to allow housing of EEA migrants not in work	24	30	27	19	100	143

Table A2.8: How important have the following welfare changes made in response to the COVID-19 crisis been in preventing or minimising homelessness in your area? (%)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Don't know	Total	N=
LHA maximum raised to 30th percentile	46	36	6	11	100	143
Suspension of benefit sanctions	43	31	6	20	100	143
Additional Welfare Assistance Funding	34	32	5	29	100	143
Additional £20/week in Universal Credit standard allowance	33	35	8	24	100	143
Suspension of debt-related benefit deductions	32	35	7	26	100	143
Pausing full roll out of Universal Credit	17	24	27	31	100	143

Table A2.9: Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, has access to social rented tenancies for homeless households become easier or more difficult in your area? (%)

	Easier	More difficult	No difference	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	20	60	20	0	100	15
2 South	14	57	29	0	100	63
3 Midlands	3	62	31	3	100	29
4 North	15	50	32	3	100	34
England	**13**	**57**	**29**	**1**	**100**	**141**

Table A2.10: Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, has access to private rented tenancies for homeless households become easier or more difficult in your area? (%)

	Easier	More difficult	No difference	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	40	40	20	0	100	15
2 South	13	52	33	2	100	63
3 Midlands	3	76	17	3	100	29
4 North	12	74	6	9	100	34
England	**13**	**61**	**22**	**4**	**100**	**141**

Table A2.11: How would you rate your authority's capacity to deal with the homelessness- related challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic? (%)

	Well equipped	Adequately equipped	In-adequately equipped	Poorly equipped	Don't know	Total	N=
Staff capacity	27	48	22	3	1	100	141
Staff expertise	57	37	5	0	1	100	140
Access to sufficient revenue funding	19	41	26	7	6	100	140
Access to relevant support services	11	54	26	5	4	100	140
Access to self-contained emergency accom.	17	46	29	6	1	100	139
Access to settled housing	6	29	52	9	4	100	140
Access to clear guidance	19	57	16	3	5	100	140
Access to equipment for working remotely/safely	46	41	9	3	1	100	140

Table A2.12: 'The Government's emergency response has made it more likely that we will be able to move people experiencing rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping into safe permanent housing in the long term (i.e. implement a housing led response)' (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	N=
1 London	7	60	20	7	7	100	15
2 South	16	43	33	6	2	100	63
3 Midlands	18	29	32	14	7	100	28
4 North	12	26	50	12	0	100	34
England	**14**	**38**	**36**	**9**	**3**	**100**	**140**

Table A2.13: 'There is sufficient funding in the current financial year (2020/21) to deliver an effective response to homelessness in our area, taking into account the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic' (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	N=
1 London	0	7	13	40	40	100	15
2 South	3	11	37	32	17	100	63
3 Midlands	11	29	29	18	14	100	28
4 North	3	6	35	50	6	100	34
England	**4**	**13**	**32**	**34**	**16**	**100**	**140**

Table A2.14: Possible impact of extended priority need provisions in the Domestic Abuse Bill on councils' ability to assist people fleeing abuse into settled accommodation (%)

	It will significantly enhance it	It will slightly enhance it	It will make little difference	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	33	20	47	0	100	15
2 South	17	25	51	6	100	63
3 Midlands	7	28	48	17	100	29
4 North	9	18	68	6	100	34
England	**15**	**23**	**54**	**8**	**100**	**141**

Appendix 3 Additional details on core homelessness estimates and projection

In this Appendix we provide some additional information about the baseline estimates of core homelessness numbers and about the forecasting model and scenarios used to examine the effects of different policies and economic assumptions on core homelessness. A fuller Technical Report provides a more detailed discussion about each data source and more detail on the statistical models used to predict housing market variables and both core and statutory homelessness numbers.[194]

A.3.1 Data sources and baseline estimates of core homelessness numbers

Rough Sleeping. We draw on five sources here, including retrospective questions within general household surveys (Public Voice and the ONS Survey of Living Conditions, a specialist survey of users of emergency support services ('Destitution in the UK'), a new administrative record (H-CLIC) and the annual street count/estimate data. Of these, we regard the 'Destitution' (service user) survey as relatively robust and the estimates from the official count/estimates and from the new administrative (H-CLIC) system as relatively less robust, at least with regard to total level (these sources have value in tracking trends and mapping down to local level). The limitations of street count methodology have been extensively rehearsed elsewhere (see also further discussion in Chapter 5, s.5.2); the figure derived from this source includes some adjustments reflecting evidence from CHAIN in London and some imputation of values for authorities which had not carried out an actual count. With H-CLIC the uncertainties include deciding what proportion of the 'No Fixed Abode' category to include, the annual multiplier conversion factor (from flow to stock), and the extent to which significant numbers of people affected still do not apply to the LA in England. However, under reasonable assumptions, including evidence from Destitution and Public Voice surveys on the proportions of core homeless people reporting applying to the LA, the resulting figure is not very different from Destitution and the two retrospective surveys. Overall, the pattern across the five sources shows considerable consistency, apart from the count estimate being a low outlier.

194 See Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University.

Unconventional & non-residential spaces. This combined category includes what was in the previous study presented as 'Cars, vans, tents, public transport' and 'Squatting and non-residential buildings/spaces'. While somewhat more detail is available from one source (the Public Voice panel), albeit for smallish sample numbers, overall detail on these categories is sparse, and it can be seen that the estimates from our four sources vary quite widely. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the number estimated from the ONS Survey of Living Conditions (an official survey with quite a large sample) is surprisingly large. From Public Voice the most commonly reported 'other unconventional spaces' were car, caravan/motor home, shed or barn, van/lorry, squat/empty house, and tent. The weighted overall estimate is similar to but slightly higher than the rough sleeping figure, as in the previous study.

Hostels, etc. (including shelters, refuges, other emergency-temporary communal accommodation). This is the category of core homelessness for which we have the largest number of sources (six) and the highest level of consensus on numbers. We have given a lower weight to the Public Voice because of its smaller sample and to the H-CLIC estimate because it is derived from the flow from immediately preceding accommodation types, subject to assumptions about durations and proportions applying to LAs. We use the data obtained from our DWP Freedom of Information (FOI) from the Single Housing Benefit Extract data on housing benefit caseloads associated with temporary and supported accommodation, taking the relevant categories and adjusting to exclude rehab-type accommodation (also using information from the 2016 DWP/MHCLG study of Supported Accommodation).[195]

Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation. We give the highest weight to the source corresponding to the particular definition and approach used in the previous study, namely to the number of homeless households reported (under former P1E and now H-CLIC) to be placed in TA in the form of B&B, private nightly-let non-self-contained, and out of area placements (half of these in London).[196] The Destitution survey does not seem to capture such a large number of these cases directly, as they are lumped with hostels etc. With both of the retrospective surveys (Public Voice and ONS-SLC) the question wording refers to 'emergency or TA (e.g. hostel, refuge, B&B) so we apportion these responses 70% to 'hostels, etc' and 30% to 'Unsuitable TA'. With the DWP FOI data we combine 'Board and Lodging plus non-self-contained licensed TA with the 'out of area' numbers from H-CLIC. In the 'high' variant estimate we also make made a limited additional allowance for additional unsuitable TA arising from the exceptional recent growth in 'Exempt' supported accommodation in some localities (see further discussion below about the reasoning for possibly including this category).

Sofa Surfing. There is quite wide variation in the estimated numbers for this category, numerically the largest form of core homelessness. The numbers from the English Housing Survey now include the new category identified using a new question in 2017-18, which captures cases where a household has accommodated

195 Based on Blood, I., Copeman, I. & Finlay, S. (2016) Supported Accommodation Review: The Scale, Scope and Cost of the Supported Housing Sector. DWP Research Report No. 927. Online: Department for Work and Pensions. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572454/rr927-supported-accommodation-review.pdf

196 The rationale here is that in London placements in an adjacent borough may be reasonable solution but a placement in a different part of the GLA area would not be, because of the severing of social support ties, school changes, etc.

temporary members in the last year who would otherwise have been homeless, where this would have caused overcrowding on the bedroom standard. We place a lower weighting on the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS) to reflect the clear indications of sample attrition problems in UKHLS, while also using a constant averaged proportion of the relevant concealed/crowed households who want to move. The Crisis study of sofa surfing in autumn 2019[197] is not included as a source on numbers but we have made use of its analyses to inform assumptions about durations. The most important development here is probably the much greater legitimacy being given to the whole concept of sofa surfing as a result of its inclusion in the ONS *Survey of Living Conditions* and its highlighting in the recent *English Housing Survey* (EHS) release.[198]

It is acknowledged that there are uncertainties about durations, reflected in the sometimes wide variations in the figures derived from different sources. Certain logical issues need to be acknowledged. Firstly, durations recorded from a sample of people homeless at a point in time (e.g. hostel residents) will be skewed towards more chronic cases with longer durations, whereas durations recorded for retrospective experiences will contain a higher proportion of shorter episodes. Secondly, durations recorded in the middle of an episode will not be complete, but truncated. Thirdly, longer episodes have a higher chance of running across more than one year and this needs to be allowed for when estimating annual numbers. In addition, certain characteristics of the range of homelessness experiences need to be considered. Some people experience a single homeless episode which is continuous but one-off. Others experience repeated episodes of varying length but with intervals of non-homelessness separating them. It is also apparent that experiencing more than one type of homelessness is common, as is clearly revealed in our Public Voice survey, where this is shown to be particularly common for those experiencing rough sleeping or staying in other unconventional accommodation. However, some surveys (such as the ONS Survey of Living Conditions 2018) only records information about one type of 'housing difficulty', that most recently experienced; it is possible that the longer durations recorded in this survey include a mixture of modes bound up in that episode, or even repeated short episodes with short interruptions. Evidence from different parts of the same survey may not always appear to be completely consistent – for example our Destitution in the UK survey found that 3.4% of users of crisis services in 2019 were sleeping rough at the point in time of the survey, but 15.6% said they had slept rough in the last month. This implied a particular distribution of durations of rough sleeping involving both a cluster of short durations as well as a significant number of longer durations.

In view of the acknowledged uncertainties about durations, as well as some other assumptions, we also report 'high' and 'low' variations around our central estimates for each element of core homelessness.

These Low and high variants on the central estimates are shown in summary in A3.2 .

Taking the sum of the estimates based on lower assumptions, reflecting the uncertainties about some sources and assumptions, particularly in relation to durations, as discussed above, we have a total of 120,000 for England.

197 See especially Sanders, B., Boobis, S. & Albanese, F. (2019) *"It was like a nightmare". The Reality of Sofa Surfing in Britain Today.* London. Crisis.

198 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *English Housing Survey 2018-19: 'Sofa surfing' and 'concealed households'; Factsheet.* Online: MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2018-to-2019-sofa-surfing-and-concealed-households-fact-sheet

Table A3.1: Central estimates of core homelessness by component and source, England c.2018-19

Data source	Name	Destitution	Public voice	ONS-SLC	H-CLIC	HLESS LINK	DWP FOI	EHS-GB	UKHLS	RS Counts	Weighted
	Type	S U survey	Survey – retro	Survey – retro	Admin	Service Cens	Admin	Survey – curr + retro	Survey – curr	S U Survey	Total 2019
Rough Sleeping	Weight	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1					0.1	
	Estimate	14,402	16,352	12,584	16,674					5,138	13,729
Unconventional	Weight	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2						
Accomodation	Estimate	2,308	18,875	31,396	10,066						17,556
Hostels, etc.	Weight	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2				
	Estimate	40,343	38,673	29,952	31,578	33,898	42,756				36,415
Unsuitable Temporary	Weight	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5		0.2				
Accommodation	Estimate	5,918	16,348	12,661	22,840		18,020				18,517
Sofa Surfing	Weight		0.2	0.3				0.3	0.2		
	Estimate		142,182	114,603				133,204	58,068		114,392
Total Core Homeless											**200,609**

Table A3.2: Baseline estimates of core homelessness by element in 2018-19, showing central weighted total, and totals under 'low' and 'high' assumptions

Data source	Name	Weighted	Low Ass'm	High Ass'm
	Type	Total 2018-19 England	Total	Total
Rough Sleeping	Weight			
	Estimate	13,729	8,409	18,063
Unconventional	Weight			
& Non-resid	Estimate	17,556	6,054	25,573
Hostels, etc.	Weight			
	Estimate	36,415	32,482	38,955
Unsuitable Temporary	Weight			
Accommodation	Estimate	18,517	13,419	23,680
Sofa Surfing	Weight			
	Estimate	108,866	59,975	130,459
Total Core Homeless		**195,084**	**120,340**	**236,731**

237,000. The component of core homelessness for which this range of variation is least, in proportional terms, is hostels, etc., where we have the most sources and the most concordance. The component where the range of variation is greatest is unconventional accommodation, where our data sources are most sparse. This is followed by sofa surfing, which happens to be the largest single component, but here the difference is partly accounted for by differences in definition and coverage, which we regard as an improvement. While we report the low and high variants here, these are perhaps misleading if simply summed, because while the probability of one component being at or below its low variant may be quite tangible, the probability of all components simultaneously being at or below their low variant must be seen as very low.

It should be noted that there are slight differences between the numbers in column 1 of Table A3.2 and the annual estimates presented in Figures 5.1-5.2 in Chapter 5. These reflect decisions and procedures followed in translating these national estimates into projected numbers for individual years at local/sub-regional level, including making more use of the DWP FOI data available at that level in relation to hostels etc. and the reconciliation of forecasting model-based back-projections with national control profiles for rough sleeping and sofa surfing.

A.3.2 Updating and refinement of the forecasting models

As in 2017 the approach adopted has been to build on an existing modelling framework which has been used in both this and a number of other research studies. This framework is the SRHMM which one of the current authors has developed.[199] The essence of this model is to inform planning, housing and related social policies by presenting consistent scenarios for the housing market and related systems over the medium to longer term. These scenarios are driven by conditional forecasts embodying econometric functions to predict key variables (for example, housebuilding, house prices and rents, tenure shares and lettings). Key assumptions about future economic growth and financial conditions are judgemental inputs informed by independent forecasts and assessments, including national population projections. The model predicts the evolution of levels of housing need and key homelessness numbers, statutory and core.
These predictions are made for 102 subregional areas in England with a major focus on time horizons of 2026, 2031 and 2041.

This application of the SRHMM is a more than incremental extension of the work published in 2017 and 2018. In practice it has entailed a wholesale re-estimation and re-calibration of many key functions in the model, including some new elements. At the same time for a large number of variables in the model base period input data has been updated by 2-3 years, or in some cases for a longer run of years

So, as part of this exercise the following core econometric functions within the SRHMM have been re-estimated and recalibrated, using data from the period 2009-18:

- Private housing completions
- House prices (real, mix-adjusted)
- Private market rents
- Lettings and net changes in private rental tenure
- Housing vacancies
- Net relets of social rented housing
- Household income levels
- Poverty after housing costs (AHC)

Most of these were re-estimated using annual panel data for LAs or Housing Market Areas, but the last two were fitted to micro-longitudinal survey data from the UKHLS.
In addition to updating the above functions relating to the housing market/system, predictive functions for the following elements of homelessness were also re-estimated on longer runs or more recent or wholly new data:

- Total homeless applications to the LA
- Total households in TA at year end
- Households in unsuitable TA
- Rate/number of rough sleepers – three separate models based on survey/indicators, Public Voice survey and H-CLIC data were combined
- Other unconventional accommodation – model developed using Public Voice data
- Sofa surfing – two separate micro-econometric models based on EHS

199 See in particular: Bramley, G. & Watkins, D. (2016) 'Housebuilding, demographic change and affordability as outcomes of local planning decisions: exploring interactions using a sub-regional model of housing markets in England', *Progress in Planning*, 104, 1-35; Bramley, G., with Leishman, C., Cosgrove, P. & Watkins, D. (2016) *What Would Make a Difference? Modelling policy scenarios for tackling poverty in the UK*. Online: I-SPHERE. https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/10844984/Bramley_WhatWouldMakeaDifference_Report.pdf; and, Bramley, G. (2018) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for Low-Income Households and Homeless People: Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation; Main Technical Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/housing-supply-requirements-across-great-britain-for-low-income-h

and UKHLS are combined, with a third Public Voice based model as backup

- Rate of households applying to LA as homeless due to loss of private rental tenancy, based on H-CLIC and P1E data

Some new elements were brought into the modelling framework, including local estimates of destitution rates (overall and for complex need adults), based on our programme of research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation since 2014.[200] These are then overlaid by the complications of a significant 'regime change' ushered in by the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) and an ambitious new individual-level administrative data system, 'HCLIC', then followed by the onset of COVID-19.

A3.3 Description of and commentary on individual policy scenarios

Local Housing Allowance

The LHA is essentially the maximum level of private rent which the UC or HB systems will support for private tenants. These levels are laid down for 'Broad Housing Market Areas' and for different bedroom sizes of accommodation. Before 2013 these were based on the median of observed rents. From 2013 they were set at the 30th percentile of rents. However, these levels were then indexed to rise by only small amounts (CPI, then 1%, then 0% from 2015 to 2019). As a result of these decisions a gap developed between typical market rents and LHA levels, which was of quite significant magnitude in some areas (particularly in London and the south). Much evidence from the Homelessness Monitor showed that it was increasingly difficult for LAs to discharge homelessness duties or assist with prevention and relief into the private rented sector where this LHA gap was substantial. It was also believed to contribute to arrears and evictions within the sector.

Consequently we tested for the effect of the LHA-rent gap in a number of our models used to predict different elements of core homelessness or its drivers, and we found significant effects in a number of cases (homeless through loss of private tenancy, total homeless applications, total TA, unsuitable TA), reflected in the model as now operating. We looked at two opposing policy options for LHA, given the baseline position is one of maintaining LHA at the 30th percentile level with appropriate indexing. These alternatives are (a) to lift the LHA so that effectively the full amount of median market rents would be coverable by the system, at LA district level or (b) to revert to something similar to the 2018 position, with the LHA indexed only to CPI, but subject a maximum rent gap of £100 pw (2 bedroom). It should be noted that option (a) implicitly assumes that the total benefit cap is also lifted where this would have otherwise overridden the intention to fully match median rents at local authority level.

We found that raising the LHA further to eliminate remaining rent gaps (illustrated in Figure 6.6, Tables 6.1) would have a moderately positive effect overall, reducing core homelessness by 1.2% (2,000) in 2026, 2% (5,000) in 2031, rising to 4.6% (12,500) by 2041. This reduction would be mainly channelled through reduced levels of unsuitable TA (down 56%) and would provide a disproportionate benefit to London (11% reduction in core homeless) and to some extent the South, with little impact on Midlands or North. Subsequently, we explored a slight modification to the predictive models for sofa surfing, to remove a perverse effect. This particularly affects the LHA scenario, generating larger reductions in core homelessness of 4.1% in 2026, 5.6% in 2031, 7.3% in 2036 and 11% in 2041, and makes LHA one of the most impactful policies in the medium to longer term.

The converse policy, of reverting towards the earlier position by indexing LHA to CPI inflation, rather than actual rental inflation, would lead to a rapid escalation in core homelessness, by 11% in 2023, 29% in 2026 and 116% by 2031. Clearly this second option would not be sustainable for any extended period, and is indicative of the difficulties which were emerging in the period up to 2019.

Other social security measures and destitution

While the LHA is a well-understood factor which can be shown to directly impact on core homelessness, there should be a role for other changes in social security/welfare policy parameters, given the evidence from many of our predictive models of the roles played by poverty, unemployment and debt/financial difficulties. We have tested one specific measure and a more general package, both targeted on reducing destitution in the general population.

The first measure is to maintain the £20 pw temporary enhancement to personal allowances in the UC system, initiated in March 2020, from April 2021. We simulate the impact of this on poverty after housing costs and on destitution using the UKHLS data set and from econometric modelling of food bank demand.[201] This would appear to have a modest impact on core homelessness, reducing it by 1.9% (5,000) in 2023, 1.0% (2,300) in 2026 and 1.4-1.9% (5,000) in later years. It is worth noting that its relative impact on rough sleeping would be larger, with an 11% reduction attributable in 2041, and also unsuitable TA which would be down by 5%in the longer run. We also test a much larger increase in allowances, sufficient to reduce poverty by a quarter and core homelessness by 6-7%.

The destitution-oriented package is strongly informed by emerging findings from the JRF study of *Destitution in the UK 2020*,[202] as well as the above. Additional key measures would include ending of the 5-week wait for UC, strictly limiting the amount of debt recovery from benefit payments, and drastically reducing the incidence of 'failed' Personal Independence Payment assessments for people with long term health conditions and disabilities, plus improved local welfare assistance schemes. It is judged that these could make a substantial reduction in destitution, of the order of 45%. The impact of these measures in combination on core homelessness appears, to be significant and useful, in the range 3.6-5% (8-14,000) in all years from 2023 to 2041, including a halving of rough sleeping.

Prevention

The previous projections study showed that a more active and comprehensive approach to prevention by LAs appeared to be associated with lower levels of core homelessness. However, the 2017 HRA has made prevention a universal statutory responsibility, so making such modelled effects less relevant. We have been able to pick up some effects of one key indicator of prevention effectiveness

200 See Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & Sosenko, F. (2020) Destitution in the UK 2020 – Technical Report. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/38CP-AS95. Sections 3.3 & 5.

201 See Sosenko, F, Littlewood, M, Bramley, G, Fitzpatrick, S, Blenkinsopp, J and Wood, J. (2019) *State of Hunger: A Study of Poverty and Food Insecurity in the UK. London*: The Trussell Trust; and, Bramley, G. (2020) *Potential destitution and food bank demand resulting from the Covid-19 crisis in the UK: rapid research for Trussell Trust: modelling individual/household-level impacts and eligibility for mainstream welfare support: final report*. Online: The Trussell Trust. https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Heriot-Watt-technical-report-FINAL.pdf

202 See Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020

(proportion of prevention cases where accommodation secured) in cross-sectional models for two components (rough sleeping and total TA) in 2018. We therefore include these effects in our modelling, looking at the option of raising all LAs to the level of the mean plus one standard deviation.

This particular prevention scenario has a noticeable impact on core homelessness outcomes, including in the short run. It would reduce rough sleeping by around 9% in 2023 while reducing unsuitable TA by 32% in 2022, giving an overall reduction in core homelessness of 3.3%, with a relatively greater impact in London.

Social housing allocations
In practical terms, a policy lever which looks as though it ought to offer significant scope, particularly in facilitating 'routes out' of core homelessness, is to increase the share of available social lettings allocated to homeless households. There is a general parameter for this which can be varied, but we have also programmed a more targeted intervention, implementing an additional quota of (say) 20% of net lettings to be allocated specifically to core homeless households, post-COVID-19. The latter is shown to be more effective and relatively fast-acting, achieving reductions of 5.6% in (13,000) 2031 and rather more in 2036-41 (6-6.8%, or 17-18,000). An important feature of these measures is that they would effect a significant reduction (8.5%) in sofa surfing as well as similar levels of reduction in rough sleeping and unsuitable TA. It would also be expected to interact positively with increased social housing supply in a combined scenario.

Housing First and complex need reduction measures
The first part of this scenario is to increase (by a factor of 3) the level of Housing First provision (from an albeit rather low base), which is assumed to impact progressively in the form of a reduced level of SMD and the associated level of destitution. A related part is to reduce the scale of traditional hostel provision over time as more of its traditional clientele are sustainably settled in conventional housing with appropriate support.[203] A further linked part is to see a slightly larger annual reduction in crime rates (back to the rates of reduction seen in the period (2007-13). Implicitly assumed as part of this package is an increase in the scale and effectiveness of support and rehabilitation programmes for ex-offenders and people with addictions.

The results of this scenario are very encouraging, with progressively increasing reductions in core homelessness recorded of 5.9% (15,000) by 2031and 13.3% (36,000) by 2041. This is one of the largest impacts of any of the policy options modelled separately here.

Reduced private rental evictions
Quite a large number of tenants in the private rented sector potentially face eviction (in England), if/when the temporary suspension of evictions during COVID comes to an end and new cases work their way through the court system. We envisage that a combination of ending 'no fault' evictions, as in Scotland, and enhanced court protocols perhaps linked to LA prevention activity, could achieve a reduction in homelessness cases which result from the end of a private rental tenancy by a factor of around one half.

These initial impacts of this measure are moderate, being of the order 1% (or 2,300) in 2023, but they build up progressively to 2.9% (8,000) by 2041, mainly on rough sleeping and unsuitable TA and particularly in London. It is possible that our model is underestimating the potential impact of policies in this area, particularly among people not applying to councils.

Levelling up
We pick up on the recent political focus on the concept of 'levelling up', which implies a radical attempt to counter decades of relatively weaker economic performance of midland and northern English regions compared with the performance of London and the 'Greater South East'. Abstracting from the very challenging task of achieving such a change, we ask a simple 'what if?' question of our model: what would happen to core homelessness if economic growth rates over the next 20 years came closer to parity acoss the regions and subregions of England. The scenario here effectively reduces the GDP growth gap by about 70%, while only slightly reducing the growth of the leading region (London)

The impacts here are encouraging, with reductions in core homeless building up from and 2.9% (7,000) in 2031, to 5.5% (16500) by 2041. The biggest impacts are on sofa surfing, showing the pathway through general poverty and economic wellbeing factors, and as expected greater in the North (5.7% in 2041) than in the South (-4.1%), although there is still a sizeable reduction for London (-7.0%). This may be because this strategy would divert more internal migration from London towards the North and so ease pressure on London's overheated market. There are some grounds for expecting some positive synergies between this scenario and others, for example on housing supply.

Social and total housing supply
The next scenario considered is one involving a substantial increase in overall housing supply (new build completions) with a relatively large increase in new social housing. The scenario is similar to the recommended option emerging from the 2018 Crisis/National Housing Federation Housing Requirements study, entailing increasing total completions to between 300,000 and 340,000 across England, with social completions rising from 25-30,000 to between 78,000 and 91,000 p.a.

These impacts may initially appear disappointing in magnitude, particularly in the period up to 2031, with core homelessness reduced by 4.8% (13,000) in 2031, but rising to 14.6% (46.000) in 2041. It is well understood that the beneficial impacts of new housebuilding take quite a long time to work through. One of the reasons for the moderate initial impacts appears to be that there is a high level of new household formation triggered in the 2020s by the increased supply, as the previous backlog is cleared. These impacts are based on a slightly modified version of the predictive model for sofa surfing, which neutralises the perverse effect of a couple of variables.

203 The parameters assumed in constructing this scenario were based on evidence from the Bramley et al *Hard Edges* studies and from the Fitzpatrick et al *Destitution in UK 2020* survey.

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Registered Charity Numbers:

E&W1082947, SC040094.
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