

The homelessness monitor: England 2025

Beth Watts-Cobbe, Glen Bramley, Hal Pawson, Gillian Young, Rhiannon Sims, Lynne McMordie & Suzanne Fitzpatrick. Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University; City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

Executive summary
November 2025

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 Great Britain. Separate reports are produced for England, Scotland and Wales.

This twelfth annual report updates our account of how homelessness stands in England in 2025, or as close to 2025 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.

The homelessness monitor: England 2025

Beth Watts-Cobbe, Glen Bramley, Hal Pawson, Gillian Young, Rhiannon Sims, Lynne McMordie & Suzanne Fitzpatrick. Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University; City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

Executive summary
November 2025

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.

Crisis head office
50-52 Commercial Street
London E1 6LT
Tel: 0300 636 1967
Fax: 0300 636 2012

www.crisis.org.uk

Copyright Crisis 2025

ISBN: 978-1-78519-095-7

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

About the authors

Beth Watts-Cobbe, Glen Bramley, Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Rhiannon Sims, Lynne McMordie, and Gillian Young are all based at the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE). Professor Hal Pawson is based at the City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned and funded by Crisis, and our thanks go to Dr Francesca Albanese, Dr Alice Dore and their Crisis colleagues 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 to help us with this, and likewise to all 178 local authorities who completed the online questionnaire despite all of the intense challenges they face.

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.

Foreword



This edition of the Homelessness Monitor sheds light on deeply concerning trends. On any given night a shocking 300,000 households are now experiencing homelessness in England, trapped in unsuitable temporary accommodation, staying on sofas night after night, or sleeping rough.

The difficult economic environment, insufficient levels of social housing, and benefits that do not cover the cost of rent, make it increasingly harder to find settled and good quality homes for people experiencing homelessness.

What's more, the statistical modelling presented in the Monitor shows that homelessness in England is on track to keep rising if we don't act now. With rough sleeping and temporary accommodation already reaching record highs and the homelessness system under immense strain, this further rise in homelessness cannot be allowed to happen. The survey findings presented in the Monitor show that 70 per cent of local authorities have seen an increase in people needing support for homelessness in the last year.

The evidence uncovered this year shows local authorities are at breaking point. Councils across the country cited a lack of affordable housing and insufficient welfare support as fuelling record levels of homelessness and forcing them to spend hundreds of millions of pounds on temporary accommodation which is not fit for people's needs. This includes a growing number of children.

Despite these harsh realities, the Monitor shows change is still possible. The Monitor's projection modelling shows homelessness could begin to fall in two years or less with the right policy reforms. In particular, the findings highlight the positive impact of increasing the availability of Housing First services, restoring Local Housing Allowance so that housing benefit covers the bottom 30% of private rents, and allocating an appropriate share of social lettings to households facing homelessness.

Coming on the eve of the publication of the Government's strategy for ending homelessness, the Monitor tells us that change is not only possible, but essential. Through the Monitor's survey, local authorities have been loud and clear about their priorities for this strategy: strengthen homelessness prevention, address the temporary accommodation challenges through investment and regulation, and deliver new housing suitable for households facing homelessness. Local authorities urge that this strategy be truly cross-governmental, looking across departments in addressing homelessness, and strengthening the role of wider public sector partners in identifying and preventing homelessness before it happens.

Crisis echoes these calls for decisive action to make a future free from homelessness a reality.

Matt Downie MBE
Chief Executive at Crisis

Executive summary

The Homelessness Monitor series is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments across Great Britain.¹ This twelfth annual Homelessness Monitor England updates our account of how homelessness stands in 2025, or as close to 2025 as data availability allows. This year’s report focuses on the initial record of the new Labour Government elected in 2024 on homelessness, as well as offering a deep dive on the current operation and effectiveness of the statutory homelessness system introduced under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Updating and building upon analysis presented in previous Homelessness Monitors, we also project homelessness trends in England into the future under various policy scenarios.

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

- The number of people estimated as sleeping rough in England grew by 20% in the last year to 4,667 at the November 2024 snapshot, and now stands at almost double the low point achieved in 2020 in the context of COVID-19 measures. Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s target of ending rough sleeping by 2024 was

thus spectacularly missed. In London, over half of those sleeping rough are non-UK nationals, following a sharp increase in non-European people sleeping rough during 2022 and 2023. This likely reflects in significant part the sharp post-2020 increase in asylum applications, as well as ramped-up efforts to reduce the applicant backlog in 2023 and 2024.

- In 2024, 330,000 households were assessed by local authorities to be homeless or at risk, up 4% year on year, and 21% over three years. While those judged at risk of homelessness within 56 days increased by 1% in the last year, those already experiencing homelessness increased by 6%. Increases in London have been much steeper (7% and 27% respectively). In line with these official trends, 70% of local authority survey respondents perceived that homelessness service ‘footfall’ had increased in the year preceding our 2025 survey.
- The last year has seen significant increases in the numbers facing homelessness because of evictions from Home Office asylum accommodation (up 37%) and institutional discharge (up 22%). Numbers facing homelessness because of domestic abuse have also been on an upward trajectory, increasing by 14% since 2021 following the granting of automatic priority need to survivors via the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

- The effectiveness of prevention and relief actions in resolving homelessness has declined, with an ‘accommodation secured’ outcome falling from 47% in 2021 to 39% in 2024. As a result, numbers progressing further through the system and owed the full rehousing duty have increased, from 21% of initial applications in 2019 (61,000) to 33% in 2024 (109,000). In the last year, 35,000 households were deemed either ‘non-priority’ or intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty despite being homeless.
- The number of temporary accommodation placements remains on a rapid upward trajectory and stood at 128,000 households in late 2024. Over half (56%) of these placements are by London boroughs who have a rate of placement seven times that of the rest of England (19.25 per 1,000 households compared to 2.71 nationwide). The majority of temporary accommodation placements involve self-contained accommodation, but around one in six placements are in Bed & Breakfast hotel or hostel rooms. At the end of December 2024, 8,000 households with children were residing in Bed & Breakfast accommodation, widely considered an especially unsuitable form of temporary accommodation.
- Local authorities spent £2.8 billion on temporary accommodation in 2024/25, with such costs now representing a critical financial risk for local government finances. Over half of our local authority survey respondents (61%) reported that levels of temporary accommodation subsidy loss (resulting from an outdated Government funding model) were ‘very challenging’ for their authority’s overall finances, with many stressing that these costs risk forcing local authorities into bankruptcy and divert attention and funding away from homelessness prevention.
- The statutory homelessness system is under enormous strain. While the Homelessness Reduction Act has meant that thousands of single people have access to substantive help from their local authority when facing homelessness, it is not yet living up to its potential as a preventative, housing-led and partnership-driven framework. Many local authorities offer assistance online or by phone by default, prioritising urgent cases and missing opportunities for prevention. The duty to refer is clearly inadequate as a means to ensure the involvement of wider public bodies, with only 4% of local authorities describing it as ‘very effective’ in assisting them in their prevention duties. Our survey also demonstrates significant scope for improvements in partnership working. Almost half (47%) of local authorities report that many of those who need floating housing-related support do not have access to it, undermining their ability to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies. Local authorities report routinely struggling to meet their duties under statutory homelessness legislation. These struggles are most acute where applicants have complex needs: 79% of LAs report struggling to meet the main rehousing duty for this group all or most of the time.
- Local authorities are exceptionally downbeat about recent trends in their capacity to access appropriate housing for households facing homelessness. Over two thirds (69%) report accessing social housing for households facing homelessness getting harder in the last year, rising to 92% of LAs in the North, though much lower at 53% in London. Almost all (87%) report accessing private tenancies for this group getting harder in the last year and three quarters (76%) report accessing supported housing getting harder.

¹ Parallel Homelessness Monitors have recently been published for Scotland and Wales. All of the UK Homelessness Monitor reports are available from <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html>

- 'Core homelessness' in England – a point in time estimate of the most acute forms of homelessness² – totalled 299,100 in 2024, up by 22% from 246,900 in 2022. Since 2012 such homelessness has increased by a total of 45% (from 206,400). Further increases are projected under current baseline assumptions and policies, with core homelessness expected to rise by 66% above 2020 levels to 361,400 by 2041.
- In the shorter term, the most effective policies for reducing core homelessness are modelled to be increased direct allocations of social lettings to core homeless households, Housing First provision, and improvements in the welfare benefits systems, particularly those geared to avoiding destitution and severe poverty (e.g. ending 5 week wait for Universal Credit, minimising debt deductions, removing the Benefit Cap and Two Child Limit, and higher personal allowances particularly for younger singles). In the longer term, the largest reductions would result from those same welfare benefit and direct rehousing/allocations measures, alongside restoring Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to the 30th percentile of local rent distributions and indexing to inflation, increased supply of social rented housing, enabling a reduction in hostel placements, and replicating best practice in homelessness prevention.
- A comprehensive programme of the recommended measures is shown to be capable of reducing core homelessness by 31% by 2031 and 36% by 2041, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies post-2024. This same package would achieve reductions of 81% in unsuitable temporary accommodation, 61% in hostels and 46% in rough sleeping.
- The new Government increased homelessness spending to £1 billion in 2025-26, including a large boost in the Homelessness Prevention Grant and continued investment in rough sleeping responses. These funding commitments were maintained in the 2025 spending review with additional funding directed at temporary accommodation, homelessness prevention and to support adults with complex needs. The Government has also committed to finally repealing the Vagrancy Act that criminalises rough sleeping and begging in Spring 2026. While these announcements have been welcomed, the Government's decision to halve the notice period newly granted refugees have before they are evicted from Home Office accommodation will increase homelessness and rough sleeping for this group.
- If achieved, the Government's target to halve violence against women and girls within ten years and associated actions to strengthen responses to domestic abuse could have significant implications for homelessness, but there are concerns about the likelihood of effective implementation not least in the absence of the promised cross-government Violence Against Women and Girls strategy. In the meantime, key stakeholders note a lack of focus on preventing homelessness for this group, and a continued reliance on crisis-driven 'victim moves' responses.
- The Government's broader approach to homelessness remains uncertain pending the publication of the cross-government homelessness strategy initially expected in Spring 2025. Local authorities reported four main priorities for the strategy, these being that it:
 - Includes a strong emphasis on **new housing supply targeted at and suitable for homeless households**, with a focus on one-bedroomed properties and strengthening the role of housing associations.
 - Is **truly cross-governmental** and addresses the role of wider government policy, especially social security and immigration/asylum policy in generating homelessness, alongside strengthening the contribution of wider public sector partners in addressing homelessness, in particular social care, mental health services and housing associations.
 - Focuses on **strengthening homelessness prevention** via investment in preventative interventions, floating support to help people maintain their tenancies and reform to the statutory homelessness system.
 - **Addresses the temporary accommodation challenge** via more investment, better regulation and changes to temporary accommodation subsidy rules that currently fail to cover the true cost of temporary accommodation.
- Alongside its ambitions to deliver higher economic growth, extend further devolved powers to strategic authorities, pursue planning reform, and improve the quality of existing rental stock, the current Government has an ambitious target to deliver 1.5m homes, translating to 300,000 houses per year over the course of the parliament. Although there is a lot of scepticism that it is achievable, stakeholders welcome this ambition, alongside the £39 billion Affordable and Social Housing Programme (2026-36) that could deliver 300,000 affordable homes, of which 60% are intended to be social rented homes. If achieved, stakeholders believe this will have positive impacts on homelessness in the longer term, though stress that increased supply alone is not sufficient to turn the tide on homelessness.
- The Government is also progressing commitments to boost the rights of private renters, with key measures in the Renters' Rights Bill including abolishing Section 21 evictions, extending notice periods for most grounds to four months, establishing periodic open-ended tenancies in full and restricting rent payments in advance to one month. Local authorities are optimistic about the impacts of the Bill, with between 49% and 74% of local authorities expecting these measures to help their efforts to address homelessness. At the same time, some are concerned that these changes will encourage landlords to leave the market, increase reluctance to let to 'higher risk groups' and undermine the effectiveness of their own landlord incentive schemes.
- Cuts and freezes to social security benefits since 2010 have seen payments for many working age households fall below the level required to avoid severe material hardship. Marginal changes to the generosity of Universal Credit, including a 1.7% increase in May 2025 and a reduction in the maximum proportion of benefits that can be deducted, were viewed by local authorities as having made little difference on homelessness. By contrast, the decision to freeze Local Housing Allowance (again) in 2025/26 and maintain the Benefit Cap, Two Child Limit and Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35s were roundly viewed as incredibly unhelpful, forcing more households into homelessness and making sustainable rehousing difficult, and in some areas impossible to find.

² As opposed to the annual in-flow data on local authority assessments reported in statutory statistics.

- The economic context in which the Government is pursuing its ambition to “*put Britain back on track to ending homelessness*” remains exceptionally challenging. Growth has been sluggish since 2008/09, compounded by a succession of shocks such as the pandemic, the energy crisis, and ongoing geopolitical conflicts and uncertainties. Employment growth and living standards have stalled, rates of child poverty and destitution are rising, and both public services and infrastructure require urgent investment. Assuming the Chancellor sticks to her fiscal rules, the 2025 Autumn budget in November looks increasingly likely to announce higher taxes and/or public spending cuts. On top of all of this, prospects for reform to immigration and asylum policy that take seriously the impact of Home Office decisions on homelessness seem to be diminishing in the face of the Reform party’s growing prominence and impact on Government policy and rhetoric.

Trends in homelessness

Rough sleeping

Government estimates suggest that at least 4,667 people slept rough on a single night in November 2024, up 20% in the last year and almost double (91% higher than) the 2020 low point achieved as a result of the pandemic response. Service-based data gathered in London via the Combined Homelessness and Information Network system shows rough sleeping up 5% in the year to Q4 2024 and 27% higher than in 2019. Our own estimates triangulating a range of data sources suggest that over 15,000 people experienced rough sleeping in 2024, up from under 12,000 in 2022. On any of these measures, the 2019 Conservative Government target to end rough sleeping by 2024 was missed spectacularly.

Over half of those sleeping rough in London are non-UK nationals, following a sharp increase in non-European people sleeping rough during 2022 and 2023. This is likely to reflect an increase in the number of people seeking sanctuary in the UK since 2020 and Home Office efforts under the previous Conservative Government to ‘clear the backlog’ of decisions on asylum applications.

Statutory homelessness

In 2024, 330,000 households applied to local authorities as homeless or at risk, up 4% year on year, and 21% over three years. There has been higher growth in applications from households already experiencing homelessness (up 6% in 2024) than from households threatened with homelessness (up 1%). In London, increases have been much steeper, with numbers assessed as homeless increasing by 27% and those threatened with homelessness by 7% in the last year.

Referrals to local authorities from public sector agencies under the ‘duty to refer’ introduced via the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018 have doubled since the first full calendar year of the Act’s operation, to 30,000. The largest referring agencies are probation and community rehabilitation services and Social Services departments.

Recent years have also seen shifts in the profile of statutory homelessness. Applications from single men have grown disproportionately over the last two years, by 20% compared to 13% across all household types.

In 2024, 56% of applicant households judged homeless or threatened with it included one or more persons with support needs, up from 52% in 2021. The majority of these (103,000) were households with two or more support needs and the most commonly recorded support needs related

to mental ill health (26% of households in Q4 2024) and physical ill health or disability (20%). Much smaller proportions were assessed as having support needs associated with drug problems (5%) and alcohol dependency (4%).

Over three-quarters (78%) of local authority survey respondents reported a recent increase in demand from people with complex needs, which key informants saw as reflecting the cumulative impact of long-term pressures on wider public services. The proportion of applicant households with support needs is far lower in London than elsewhere, reflecting the role of the city’s especially pressurised housing market in placing a wider cohort of the population at risk.

The most commonly reported immediate reasons for homelessness (or being at risk) in 2024 were the ending of a private tenancy (28%) and being asked to leave by family or friends (27%). Having seen a steep upward trajectory since the ending of evictions protections introduced during the pandemic, the number of households whose homelessness was caused by the ending of a private tenancy actually fell back very slightly in 2024.

Homelessness resulting from evictions from Home Office asylum accommodation was up by 37% in the last year, influenced by the acceleration of Home Office decisions on claims. Homelessness resulting from discharge from hospitals, prisons and other institutions increased by 22%, likely to be in substantial part the result of the Government’s early release scheme introduced to ease pressures in the prison system. Households facing homelessness because of domestic abuse have also been on an upward trajectory, increasing by 14% since 2021. This was widely understood to reflect the granting of automatic priority need to domestic abuse survivors via the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 meaning that more survivors of

domestic abuse are coming forward for homelessness support, and that recording of this as a cause of homelessness has improved.

The effectiveness of prevention and relief action in resolving homelessness is falling, with the proportion of applications ending with accommodation secured falling from 47% in 2021 to 39% in 2024. As a result, many more households are progressing further through the statutory system and are owed the full rehousing duty. This figure stood at 61,000 in 2019 (the first full calendar year of the Homelessness Reduction Act’s operation), equating to 21% of initial applications, increasing to 109,000 or 33% in 2024.

Since 2010, temporary accommodation placements have more than doubled. In 2022, placements exceeded 100,000 for the first time in 18 years and 2023-24 saw a further acceleration in placement growth, resulting in total placements having exceeded 127,000 by 2024 year end – up 33% in just three years. Over half (56%) of these placements are the responsibility of the London boroughs and the rate of temporary accommodation placements for London is more than seven times that of the rest of England (19.25 per 1,000 households compared to 2.71 nationwide). Most placements involve self-contained accommodation, but around one in six are in Bed & Breakfast hotel or hostel rooms over which there are particular concerns about quality and suitability. At the end of December 2024, 8,000 households with children were residing in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

Some 50,000 applications resulted in a ‘Main Duty owed’ decision in 2024. In 78% of cases the outcome was a tenancy offer accepted, and in the vast majority of cases this was a social tenancy. Private tenancy outcomes are twice as common in London (15%) as nationally (7%).

However, substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants exit the statutory homelessness system without having secured settled accommodation, or even having received such offers. In 2024, some 35,000 homeless households were deemed either not to be in priority need or to be intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty despite being assessed as homeless.

Core homelessness

The concept of 'core homelessness' captures some of the most severe and immediate forms of homelessness, which includes people sleeping rough, but also those staying in places not intended as residential accommodation, living in homeless hostels, refuges and shelters, placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation, and sofa surfing.

Our central estimate of core homeless numbers in England in 2024 is about 299,100. This is up sharply from 246,900 in 2022, an increase of 22%. Compared to 2020, overall core homelessness is up 37% (from 217,600) and since 2012 has increased by a total of 45% (from 206,400). These increases have been driven by inflation squeezing real incomes and increasing poverty and destitution, private rents rising alongside evictions, and social rented lettings declining.

The elements of core homelessness which have risen the most recently are rough sleeping and unsuitable temporary accommodation, rising by around 150% each since 2020. The largest component of core homelessness, sofa surfing, rose by 35% in the same period, while numbers in hostels etc. and unconventional accommodation were relatively static.

Further increases are projected under current baseline assumptions and policies, with core homelessness expected to rise by 66% above 2020 levels to 361,200 by 2041.

In the shorter term, the most effective policies for reducing core homelessness would be increased direct allocations of social lettings to core homeless households, Housing First provision, and improvements in the welfare benefits systems, particularly those geared to avoiding destitution and severe poverty (e.g. ending 5 week wait for Universal Credit, minimising debt deductions, removing the Benefit Cap and Two Child Limit, and higher personal allowances particularly for younger singles).

In the longer term, the largest projected impacts on reducing core homelessness would result from those same welfare benefit and direct rehousing/allocations measures, but also rebasing Local Housing Allowance to the 30th percentile of local rents and indexing it to inflation, increased supply of social rented housing, enabling a reduction of traditional hostel accommodation, and replicating best practice in homeless prevention.

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 by 31% by 2031 and 36% by 2041, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies post-2024. This same package would achieve reductions of 81% in unsuitable temporary accommodation, 61% in hostels and 46% in rough sleeping.

Socio-economic, welfare and housing context

The Labour Government elected in July 2024 faces several acute policy challenges. It inherited a fragile UK economy, which has experienced sluggish growth since 2008/09, compounded by a succession of shocks such as the pandemic, the energy crisis, and ongoing geopolitical conflicts and uncertainties.

Employment growth and living standards have stalled, rates of child poverty and destitution are rising, and both public services and infrastructure require urgent investment. Assuming the Chancellor sticks to her fiscal rules, the 2025 Autumn budget looks increasingly likely to announce higher taxes or public spending cuts.

Central to the Government's plan to begin to tackle these challenges is delivering higher growth, pursuing structural interventions that encompass English devolution to Strategic Authorities, planning reform and an ambitious target to deliver 1.5m homes (300,000 houses per year) over the course of the parliament. There is much scepticism that this target can be met, partly fuelled by the drop in planning approvals for new housing developments. It is also recognised that while success increasing the supply of social homes will positively impact on homelessness, such impacts will be lagged and are far from sufficient to turn the tide on homelessness.

At the time of writing, with the Autumn budget and child poverty strategy yet to be published, it is unclear whether, how and when the Government will revisit the adequacy of the social security system and in particular address the impacts of Local Housing Allowance rates, the two-child limit and the Benefit Cap on the housing affordability crisis, child poverty and destitution. Local authorities are clear that these aspects of social security policy badly inhibit their capacity to prevent and address homelessness.

The effectiveness of Discretionary Housing Payments, which have come to play a vital role in assisting councils to prevent and address homelessness, is now being undermined by budgetary constraints and by variations in how the schemes are operated locally. The Household Support Fund and Local Welfare Assistance schemes (where they operate) can

also support local authorities in their homelessness responses but are similarly impacted by variable design and shrinking budgets. It is, as yet, unclear how the merging of these schemes into the Crisis and Resilience Fund in 2026 will impact on homelessness responses.

The Government is progressing commitments to boost the rights of private renters, accelerate the remediation of dangerous cladding, and improve the quality and safety of new and existing homes, especially in the rental sectors. Local authorities are overall optimistic about the impact of the Renters' Rights Bill on homelessness. Between 49% and 74% of local authority survey respondents expect key measures to help their efforts to prevent and tackle homelessness, though concerns were raised about the impact of increased tenure security on landlord decisions to exit the market and their willingness to let properties to 'higher risk' groups. Additionally, local authorities were eager that restrictions to rent in advance payments did not blunt the effectiveness of their own landlord incentive schemes.

While the overall stock of social dwellings has increased slightly in the last decade, the numbers of homes for social rent has fallen as Affordable Rent (homes let at up to 80% of market rents) have become more common. Moreover, the flow of lettings to households new to social housing, including homes let on an affordable basis, has continued to shrink from 267,000 in 2011/12 to 174,000 in 2023/24, making it progressively harder to secure a tenancy from a social landlord. There has been a recent increase in the proportion of all general needs lets made to statutory homeless households, particularly amongst housing associations. Nonetheless, over two thirds (69%) of LAs we surveyed reported that accessing social housing for households facing homelessness had got harder over the

past year, rising to 92% of LAs in the North, though much lower at 53% in London.

Between 2021 and 2024, possession claims to recover a property where a tenant had not vacated a property after being served an eviction notice jumped from 37,015 to 96,572. While social landlord claims (34,982) remained well below pre-pandemic levels in 2024, private landlord claims were 48% higher at 61,590 and are a major driver of homelessness.

Implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act

Local authorities' duties established via the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 form the centrepiece of UK homelessness policy, and the Act's regime has now been operational for five full years. In this year's Monitor we asked local authorities a suite of questions to assess how effectively they are able to meet their duties under the Act, where they struggle, and why. Their answers reveal a statutory homelessness system under enormous strain and struggling to live up to its potential, as housing-led, preventative and partnership-driven.

In many local authorities, face-to-face housing assistance and assessment are available only on request or in specific circumstances, with online or phone access the default. This may create barriers to people accessing assistance when they are in need and undermine the effectiveness of the assistance offered. The decision to provide access by phone or online as a default often reflects intense pressures on service and the need to prioritise the most urgent cases. Such triaging can mean that opportunities to prevent homelessness are lost.

The Homelessness Reduction Act introduced a duty on some public bodies to refer households at risk of homelessness to their local authority for assistance, but only 4% of local authorities see the duty to refer as 'very effective' in assisting them in their prevention duties with most seeing it as only 'somewhat effective' (49%). Limited effectiveness was attributed to agencies providing insufficient information during the referral process, local authorities lacking the capacity to respond to referrals and a paucity of housing options available to effectively prevent homelessness even where early and informative referrals are received. This suggests that the duty to refer is clearly inadequate as a means to ensure the effective involvement of wider public bodies in homelessness, a finding bolstered by evidence from our survey that there is significant scope to strengthen partnership arrangements with a range of public sector agencies, in particular children's and adults social care services, the Department for Work and Pensions/Jobcentres are weaker and the Home Office.

Local authorities report routinely struggling to meet their duties under statutory homelessness legislation. These struggles are most acute where local authorities owe duties to people with complex needs: 79% report struggling to meet the main rehousing duty for this group all or most of the time, 71% the prevention and relief duties, and 58% the temporary accommodation duty. This suggests that individuals with complex needs remain acutely underserved by the Homelessness Reduction Act. Key reasons include a lack of suitable accommodation for this group, often due to a lack of support provision and risk aversion on the part of landlords, alongside insufficient contributions from wider public services to meet their needs, in particular mental health, substance use and social care services.

Many local authorities also struggle to meet the duties owed to single person households, with over half reporting struggling all or most of the time to meet prevention and rehousing duties for this group, 44% struggling to meet their relief duties to this group and 39% their temporary accommodation duties. The key drivers of these struggles were reported to be a lack of one-bedroom accommodation, the inadequacy of Local Housing Allowance rates and the Shared Accommodation Rate facing most under 35-year-olds.

Local authorities appear to struggle somewhat less in meeting their duties towards families with children, albeit that over 40% still reported struggling most or all of the time to meet their prevention, relief and rehousing duties to this group and a not insubstantial 28% their temporary accommodation duties. Securing appropriate settled housing for *large* families, those with medical or accessibility needs and those with a history of arrears or anti-social behaviour are particular pressure points and local authorities also stressed the challenge of finding affordable rehousing for families in the context of often high rents and current social security policies, especially the Benefit Cap.

A key factor limiting local authorities' ability to effectively prevent homelessness and sustainably rehouse those they assist is a lack of floating housing-related support. Almost half (47%) of responding local authorities reported that *many* of those who need such support do not have access to it. Only 12% of local authorities reported that all those who need such support have access to it, though this varied substantially between the regions from 3% (only one responding local authority) in the Midlands to almost a quarter (24%) in London. Some areas reported no provision whatsoever, and in many others it was targeted at narrowly

defined groups or failed to offer the level or duration of support required.

Concerns about the quality, suitability and cost of temporary accommodation have reached acute levels. New data released in 2025 by the Shared Health Foundation showed that between 2019 and 2024, 74 children died with temporary accommodation listed as a contributing factor to their vulnerability, ill-health, or death. Key informants raised concerns about increased use of very cramped 'nightly paid' accommodation and about increased reliance on out-of-area placements that force people away from their lives and support networks and place burdens on 'receiving' authorities.

Local authorities spent £2.8 billion on temporary accommodation in 2024/25, with such costs now representing a critical financial risk for local government finances. One especially controversial element of the temporary accommodation funding system is that local authorities are only able to claim Housing Benefit at 90% of 2011 Local Housing Allowance rates for some types of temporary accommodation. As a result, many subsidise costs from their general funds – in some instances involving huge sums. Over half of our local authority survey respondents (61%) reported that levels of subsidy loss were 'very challenging' for their authority's overall finances, and many made the point that these costs risk forcing local authorities into bankruptcy. Many respondents also stressed that these challenges divert attention and funding away from homelessness prevention.

Local authorities are exceptionally downbeat about recent trends in their capacity to access appropriate housing for households facing homelessness. Over two thirds (69%) reported accessing social housing for households facing homelessness getting harder in the last

year, rising to 92% of LAs in the North, though much lower at 53% in London. Almost all (87%) report accessing private tenancies for this group getting harder in the last year and three quarters (76%) report accessing supported housing getting harder.

Developments in homelessness policy

The new Labour Government's overall approach to rough sleeping and wider-homelessness remains unclear in the absence of the cross-government homelessness strategy initially expected in Spring 2025. While investment in affordable and social housing and the planned ending of Section 21 evictions via the Renters' Rights Act are hoped to contribute to reducing rough sleeping in the long-run, the Government's decision to halve the notice period newly granted refugees have before being evicted from Home Office accommodation bodes poorly for rough sleeping trends. The decision exemplifies a socio-political environment in which addressing the impact of immigration and asylum policy on homelessness seems to be diminishing ever further.

The continuation of rough sleeping funding under the consolidated Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant was strongly welcomed by local authorities, though acknowledged to fall short of demand pressures. While additional winter pressures funding was helpful, its distribution via three separate announcements with short-spending periods attached made effective planning and investment difficult for local authorities.

The evaluation of the regional Housing First pilots yielded positive results in terms of tenancy sustainment, though the extent

to which pilot regions have maintained a focus on Housing First has varied in the absence of specific funding streams. High fidelity Housing First programmes operate in some pilot and non-pilot areas, with Housing First principles influencing provision elsewhere, including in London's soon to be expanded Homes Off The Street model. Without specific long-term funding, the future of Housing First in England is uncertain. The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent Night Shelter Transformation Fund have facilitated a move away from dormitory-style shelters, towards single room emergency accommodation, but traditional shared-air provision continues to operate in some areas, despite clear evidence of the harms associated with it. The Government has committed to finally repealing the Vagrancy Act that criminalises rough sleeping and begging in Spring 2026, following the passing of the Crime and Policing Bill.

Total homelessness spending was increased from £767 million to £1 billion in 2025-26. This included a large boost in the Homelessness Prevention Grant, bringing it to £633 million. Over two thirds (69%) of local authority survey respondents described this increase in funding as very important to preventing/minimising homelessness in their area. Local authorities were clear, however, that these funding boosts did not address the fundamental and systemic challenges limiting the effectiveness of local authority homelessness responses, including a lack of affordable housing and temporary accommodation subsidy loss. The June 2025 Spending Review saw funding levels for homelessness maintained and additional announcements of funding for temporary accommodation, homelessness prevention and to support adults with complex needs. Key informants saw the Review as generally positive, but also a missed opportunity to finally address the gap in funding for support costs.

In 2026/27, the Government plans to consolidate all homelessness revenue funding bar temporary accommodation costs into one grant, with temporary accommodation funding rolled into the overall Revenue Support Grant. It is hoped this will end the trade-off local authorities face between funding prevention and meeting temporary accommodation costs.

The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act granted survivors automatic priority need under homelessness legislation and introduced duties on local authorities to provide safe accommodation. 71% of local authorities reported increased demand from survivors of domestic abuse, which they attribute to the widening of priority need to include this group automatically and increased awareness of available support. An evaluation of new safe accommodation duties found that they had enabled improvements in delivery and increased numbers to access safe accommodation, though inconsistencies in and insufficient levels of provision were also highlighted.

As domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness for women, Labour's manifesto pledge to halve violence against women and girls within ten years would have significant implications for homelessness if achieved. In pursuit of this, the Government has announced a range of measures including piloting Domestic Abuse Protection Orders, investing in perpetrator programmes and introducing geographic restriction zones for violent offenders. Social housing allocations rules have also been changed to exempt survivors from local connection rules. The absence of the promised cross-government Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, due before summer 2025 recess, has raised doubts about the translation of commitments into concrete action, however. Key informants lamented a lack of focus on preventing homelessness for victims of domestic

abuse, including by enabling them to stay in their own homes where this is their preference, rather than default to a crisis-driven 'victim moves' response.

Over half (57%) of local authorities who reported having poor quality supported exempt accommodation in their area anticipate that forthcoming regulations will help address this issue, which was driven in part by the unscrupulous actions of opportunistic providers. Over a third (39%) anticipated that these regulations would have wider mixed or negative impacts, with the central concern being that they would reduce exempt accommodation provision, leading to increased homelessness in the short to medium-term as current residents are evicted, and a lack of options for single households facing homelessness in the longer term. Local authorities were also concerned about the costs of implementing the new regulations. Key informants were eager for regulations to be brought forward as soon as they could be to end current uncertainty and providers having to navigate local authority-specific measures being introduced in the interim. While the new regulatory framework will set standards for support, there are concerns there is no government attention on addressing the chronic underinvestment in support provision.

Local authorities articulated four main priorities that they hope to see addressed in the forthcoming cross-governmental homelessness strategy. First, they hoped to see a strong emphasis on new housing supply that is targeted at and suitable for homeless households. Some stressed the need for one-bedroomed properties in particular and the need to strengthen the role of housing associations in accommodating this group. Second, local authorities strongly emphasised hopes that the strategy would be 'truly cross-governmental'. There was a

strong emphasis on addressing the role of wider government policy (especially social security and immigration/asylum policy) in generating homelessness and on strengthening the contribution of wider public sector partners in addressing homelessness, in particular social care, mental health services and housing associations. Third, local authorities were eager for a strong emphasis on homelessness prevention, including via investment in preventative interventions, crucially floating support to help people maintain their tenancies and via reform to the statutory homelessness system. Fourth, local authorities called for a focus on temporary accommodation in the strategy, stressing the need for more investment, better regulation and in particular changes to temporary accommodation subsidy rules that fail to cover the true cost of temporary accommodation. Key informants feared that despite initially high expectations, the strategy risked being a missed opportunity for transformative change following signals from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government that ambitious approaches with significant public spending requirements attached were off the table.

Conclusion

More than a year into its parliamentary term, the current Government's policy approach on homelessness remains uncertain, given the continued wait for the promised cross-government strategy and changes in ministerial leadership. In the meantime, key measures show an intensifying homelessness crisis, with the numbers rough sleeping and in temporary accommodation rising, and the local authorities' ability to prevent and resolve people's homelessness diminishing. An emphasis on increasing social housing supply, strengthening renters' rights, increasing investment in homelessness prevention and tackling domestic abuse are hoped to ease some of these pressures, especially in the medium to longer-term. In the immediate-term, the continued and dire inadequacy of the social security safety-net, challenging housing market context in many parts of the country and direction of travel on immigration policy continue to badly undermine the in-principle strengths of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Looking ahead, the Homelessness Monitor series will continue to interrogate homelessness policies, trends and outcomes in England and the other two Great Britain jurisdictions until at least 2027. By the time the next Monitor for England is published, we should know how this new Labour Government plans to address these worsening homelessness trends and whether its initial actions in this area have started to pay off.

Crisis head office

50-52 Commercial Street

London E1 6LT

Tel: 0300 636 1967

Fax: 0300 636 2012

www.crisis.org.uk

Copyright Crisis 2025

ISBN: 978-1-78519-095-7

Crisis UK (trading as Crisis).

Registered Charity Numbers:

E&W1082947, SC040094.

Company Number: 4024938