

Briefing for South Scotland

Crisis in Scotland

March 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

Homelessness in South Scotland

During 2021/22, across the seven local authorities represented with the South Scotland region:

- 5,240 households were found to be homeless or at risk (5,861 adults and 3,025 children)

- 465 households slept rough in the three months prior to making a homelessness application. A quarter of these were in Dumfries & Galloway.
- 2,117 households were in temporary accommodation as of 31 March 2022. In five of the seven council areas fewer homeless applicants go into temporary accommodation than the national average. In East Lothian and especially Midlothian most homeless applicants go into temporary accommodation.
- In five areas, stays in temporary accommodation are shorter than the Scottish average, and people go through the homelessness system faster than elsewhere. In East Lothian and Midlothian these times are much longer than the national average.
- Midlothian has the longest time in temporary accommodation and the longest times in the homelessness system in the country. Average stays in temporary accommodation are 75 days longer than the next longest (City of Edinburgh), and time in the system is 49 days longer.
- East Lothian has a very high use of B&B accommodation, 440 placements, making up 66% of temporary accommodation placements and with an average duration of 84 days. South Lanarkshire has 115 placements in B&B lasting 5 days on average, making up 4% of its temporary accommodation placements. Midlothian had 40 placements in B&B lasting 48 days on average, and other areas had between 0 and 10 during the year. B&B is not suitable for long-term living and households should only be placed there for a maximum of 7 days.
- East Lothian and Midlothian both had more live cases than new homeless applications last year, meaning more people are entering their systems than leaving them.
- Across the region, rates of homelessness per 100,000 population are broadly around the national average.

	No. households found to be homeless / at risk	Slept rough in past 3 months	Households in temporary accommodation	Ave. no. days in TA	Ave. no days to close homeless application	Rate of homelessness per 100,000
Dumfries & Galloway	800	125	174	109	119	635
East Ayrshire	650	85	132	117	167	644
East Lothian	525	50	407	391	398	586
Midlothian	380	0	372	524	674	500
Scottish Borders	565	30	108	165	168	583
South Ayrshire	655	80	259	164	200	689
South Lanarkshire	1,665	95	665	180	204	623
South Scotland	5,240	465	2,117			
SCOTLAND	28,880	2,130	13,945	207	256	606