Crisis

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.

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Heriot Watt University

UNSW Australia

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.

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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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Acronyms

ASC	Adult Social Care
CHAIN	Combined Homelessness and Information Network
CHI	Centre for Homelessness Impact
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CRF	Crisis and Resilience Fund
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payments
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ENIC	Employer National Insurance Contributions
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
GB	Great Britain
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLA	Greater London Authority
HB	Housing Benefit
H-CLIC	Homelessness Case Level Information Collection
HMO	House in multiple occupation
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HRA	Homelessness Reduction Act
HSF	Household Support Fund
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Adviser
IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA	Local Authority
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
LWA	Local Welfare Assistance
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
NAO	National Audit Office
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
PRS	Private Rented Sector
RR	Renters' Rights
RSI	Rough Sleeping Initiative
RTB	Right to Buy
SA	Strategic Authority
SAHP	Social and Affordable Homes Programme
SMD	Severe and Multiple Disadvantage
TA	Temporary Accommodation
TDEL	Total Departmental Expenditure Limit
VAWG	Violence against women and girls

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 homelessness[2] – 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.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This longitudinal Homelessness Monitor study, which started in 2011, provides an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of economic and policy developments in England. It considers the consequences of economic and housing market trends for homelessness, with recent iterations capturing the homelessness-related effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. A central focus has been on the impacts of policy changes implemented under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015), and the post-May 2015 Conservative Governments.

This twelfth annual report provides an account of how homelessness stands in England in 2025 (or as close to 2025 as data availability will allow), and analyses key trends in the period running up to 2025. This year's report focuses the initial record of the new Labour Government elected in 2024 on homelessness and homelessness-related policy and trends, 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.

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.[3] Parallel Homelessness Monitors are also published on the Crisis website covering developments in Scotland and Wales.[4]

1.2 Scope of report

There remains considerable debate on the most appropriate definition of homelessness, with stakeholders often disagreeing on where the boundary should lie between 'homelessness' and other forms of housing need.[5] 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:

- People sleeping rough.
- '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.

3 See http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html
4 See http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html
5 Busch-Geertsema, V., Culhane, D. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2016) 'Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness,' *Habitat International*, 55: 124-132

- People experiencing 'core homelessness':[6] 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 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

We employ five main methods in this longitudinal study:

- First, relevant literature, legal and policy documents are reviewed for each report.
- Second, for each edition of the Monitor we undertake interviews with a sample of key informants from the statutory and voluntary sectors across England. The current sample of 16 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, including housing, health, social security and migration (see Appendix 1). These participants were interviewed during June and July 2025.
- 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 eighth Homelessness Monitor report in a row we have conducted a bespoke online survey of England's 296 LAs (from March-May 2025). As in previous years, the main aim of the survey was to delve beneath the routinely published statutory homelessness statistics to assess the impact of economic and policy change on homelessness trends and responses at local level. In all, 178 (60%) of all LAs in England responded to the survey. Response rates varied across broad regions, from a high of 68% in the North to a low of 57% in the Midlands and South, with London (at 64%) sitting somewhere in between. See Appendix 2 for details.
- Fifth, for the fourth time in the Homelessness Monitor England 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.

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.[7]

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.

6 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis.

7 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.

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.[8]

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, such as those associated with the current cost of living crisis, 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.

1.5 Structure of report

The structure of this year's *Homelessness Monitor* report is as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the wider context for homelessness, including economic, poverty and labour market trends, housing market developments, and social security policy changes. Chapter 3 shifts focus to homelessness-specific policies and practices at national and local levels, including on rough sleeping. Chapter 4 provides a fully updated analysis of the available statistical data on the current scale of and recent trends in homelessness in England. This analysis is substantially based on the operation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, in force from 1st April 2018. Chapter 5 provides estimates of the current scale of core homelessness in England, and 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 2025, and from the statistical and qualitative information gleaned from this year's online survey of LAs. In Chapter 6, we summarise the main findings of this year's report.

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

2. The wider socio-economic context

Key findings

The Labour Government elected in July 2024 faces several deep-rooted policy challenges. The UK economy 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 public services and infrastructure require urgent investment. Assuming the Chancellor sticks to her fiscal rules, the Autumn budget in November looks increasingly likely to announce higher taxes and/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, planning reform and an ambitious target to deliver 1.5 million 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 in 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.

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 (LHA) rates, the two-child limit and the Benefit Cap on the housing affordability crisis, child poverty and destitution. LAs 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 (HSF) and (where they operate) Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes can also support LAs 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 (CRF) 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. LAs are overall optimistic about the impact of the Renters' Rights Bill on homelessness. Between 49% and 74% of LA 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 let their properties to 'higher risk' groups. Additionally, LAs 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 in the last decade, availability of homes for social rent has fallen due a combination of the Right to Buy (RTB) and the shift to Affordable Rent. The flow of social lettings, including those let on an Affordable Rent basis, has also continued to shrink from 267,000 in 2011/12 to 174,000 in 2023/24, making it progressively harder to secure a social tenancy. At the same time, there has been a recent increase in the proportion of all general needs lets made to statutory homeless households, particularly amongst housing associations, but over two thirds (69%) of LAs we surveyed reported that accessing social housing for households facing homelessness had gotten harder over the past year.

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.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the wider environment in which homelessness occurs. Section 2.2 looks at recent economic, labour market and public spending developments as well as regeneration and devolution policy proposals that look set to shape the future delivery and funding of public services. Section 2.3 provides an overview of recent trends in poverty, welfare reform and the growing reliance in discretionary funding while Section 2.4 looks at housing delivery and issues around access to suitable rented homes that are affordable.

2.2 The economy and labour market

The new Government elected in July 2024 inherited a fragile economy. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the average annual rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth fell from 2.8% in 1993-2008 to 1.6% in 2009-2024 while productivity growth (measured as output per hour worked) fell from 2% to 0.5%. A key factor has been chronic public and private sector under-investment, aggravated by policy churn that has hampered efforts to secure growth and tackle stark regional imbalances.[9]

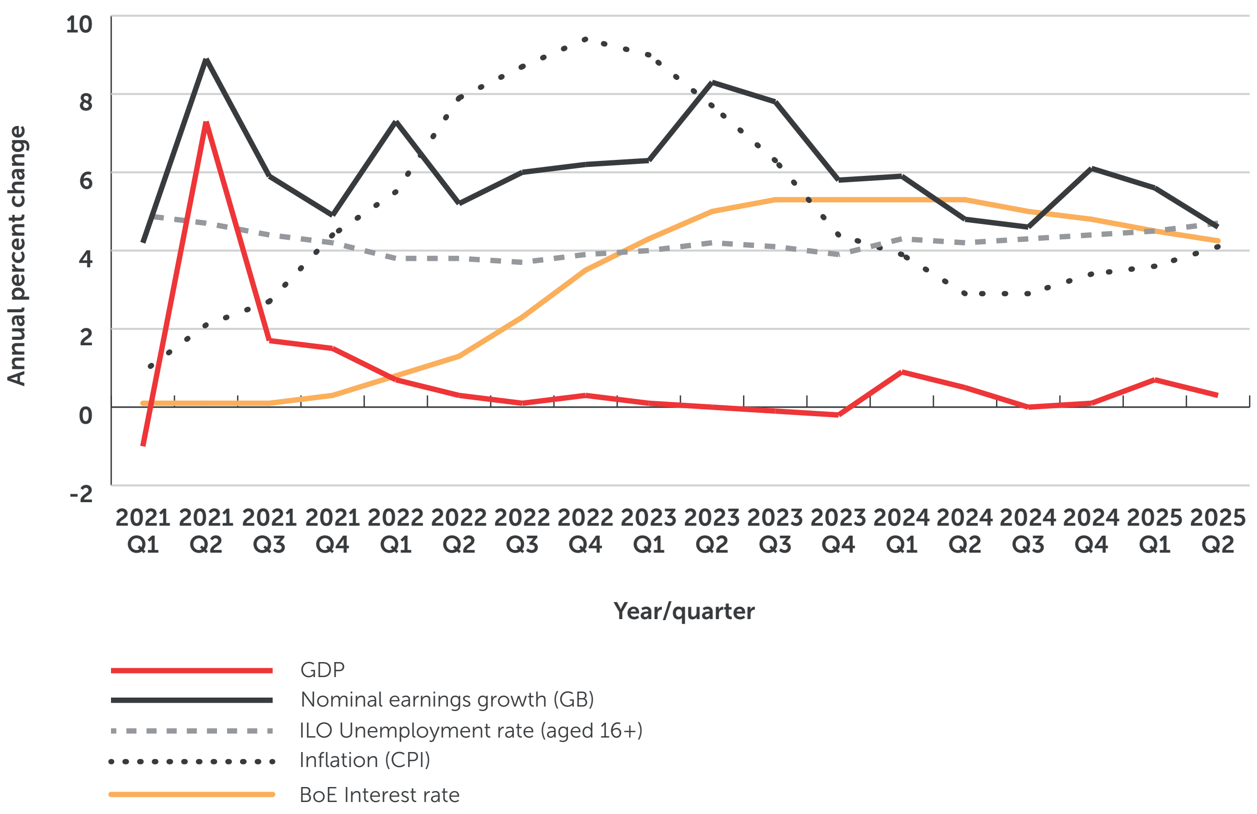
This underlying weakness has been compounded by post pandemic economic volatility, which saw inflation and interest rates rise sharply followed by a bumpy decline toward the UK's inflation target of 2% (see Figure 2.1). The ensuing increase in living costs at a time when real household income growth has stagnated, has contributed to a continued decline in living standards relative to most of Europe.[10]

Between Q1 2021 and Q2 2025, the UK unemployment rate fluctuated between 4% and 5%. Nonetheless, the official employment rate (75.3%) in Q2 2025 remained below the Government's

9 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2024) *OECD Economic Surveys: United Kingdom 2024*. Paris: OECD.

10 National Institute of Economic and Social Research (2025) *UK Living Standards Review 2025*. London: NIESR.

Figure 2.1: Key economic indicators for the UK



Source: ONS March 2025, Economic & Labour Market Statistics; Bank of England Bank Rate
Notes: 1. Since 2021, the International Labour Organisation unemployment figures have been more volatile due to a drop in Labour Force Survey response rates. Average weekly earnings represent annual GB growth rates, seasonally adjusted.

80% target[11] and the pre-pandemic rate. Diminishing Labour Force Survey (LFS) response rates[12] cast doubt on the reliability of these estimates, however, with one alternative estimate based on His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) payroll and other data suggesting employment had returned to the pre-pandemic rate of 76% in 2024.[13]

Low productivity growth has held back real terms wage growth. Average weekly pay in England increased by just £23 to £526 in the 15 years to 2024 whereas it increased by £145 in the 15 years to 2010. Wages in the lower half of the distribution have also become more compressed,[14] largely due to policy efforts to increase the National Living Wage (NLW) to 67% of median hourly pay. This was achieved by the previous Government in April 2024, at which point the National Living Wage was extended to 21-22 year olds.

11 Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Secretary of State for Education (2024) *Get Britain Working White Paper*. London: HMRC.

12 LFS employment estimates have become less reliable due to lower response rates. If the true rate of employment is higher, it follows that LFS based unemployment and inactivity estimates must be over-stated.

13 Corlett, A. (2024) *Get Britain's Stats Working : Exploring Alternatives to Labour Force Survey estimates*, London: Resolution Foundation.

14 Cominetti N. & Slaughter,H. (2024) *Job done? Assessing the labour market since 2010*. Online: Resolution Foundation.

In April 2025 the NLW was increased by 6.7% to £12.21[15] but it is not yet clear when and how the Labour Government will extend it to those aged 18+. For now, its 'Make Work Pay' priorities[16] centre on improving workers' rights though the Employment Rights Bill.[17] Once law, these measures will be phased in to allow time to draft and consult on regulations,[18] but consequently, key measures that will benefit low paid workers,[19] such as day-one protections against unfair dismissal and a ban on zero-hours contracts, will not take effect until 2027.

The Employment Bill forms part of the wider 'Plan for Change'[20] 'mission led' agenda to fix the foundations of the UK economy, create jobs and raise living standards. This will involve accelerating delivery of new homes and other infrastructure, modernising the NHS and investing in renewable energy, all of which will require difficult resourcing and cross-sector collaboration challenges to be tackled.

Fiscal challenges

The new Government inherited an unenviable public finance situation. Public services and infrastructure required urgent investment, but the tax burden was at its highest level for 70 years, and as Richard Hughes of the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) said, the UK had *"the sixth-highest debt, fifth-highest deficit, and third-highest borrowing costs out of 36 advanced economies"*.[21]

The 2024 Autumn Budget[22] reset the fiscal rules to allow increased borrowing to boost investment in transport, energy and other public infrastructure. Day-to-day departmental spending plans for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were also increased in real terms, paid for by tax increases, principally by continuation of the 2021 income tax threshold freeze until April 2028 and by increasing Employer National Insurance Contributions (ENIC). These increased ENIC contributions have posed a challenge for homelessness charities and services, with key informants in this study explaining that they had increased costs, forced them to eat into charitable reserves and in some cases risked the viability of commissioned services.

By March 2025, the OBR had halved its forecast of GDP growth in 2025 to 1%[23] as economic conditions deteriorated partly in response to geo-political conflicts and new United States import tariffs. Higher Government debt interest payments and weaker than expected tax receipts had also wiped out the £9.9 billion buffer included in the Autumn Budget. Having reiterated that the fiscal rules were non-negotiable, the Chancellor's

15 Low Pay Commission (2024) *Low Pay Commission - summary of evidence 2024*. Online: GOV.UK.

16 Department for Business and Trade (2024) *Next Steps to Make Work Pay*. London: DB&T.

17 Department for Business and Trade Various briefings and impact assessment papers relating to Make work Pay and the employment bill can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/make-work-pay

18 UK Government (2025) *Implementing the Employment Rights Bill – Our Roadmap for Delivering Change*. London: Department for Business and Trade.

19 Cominetti, N. (2024) *Low Pay Britain 2024: Examining the Government's proposed employment reforms*. London: Resolution Foundation.

20 HM Government (2024) *Plan for Change – Milestones for Mission Led Government*. London: HMSO.

21 Richard Hughes (2025) *July 2025 Fiscal Risks and Sustainability Report - Transcript of Presentation*. Online: OBR.

22 The Chancellor has two fiscal rules. First, day-to-day Government spending should be less than its revenues. Second, government debt should fall as a share of GDP by 2029/30 until 2029/30 becomes the third year of the forecast period, when it should then fall by the third year of the rolling forecast period.

23 Office for Budget Responsibility (2025) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2025*. London: OBR.

Spring Statement[24] said it would balance the books by lowering growth in public spending, mainly by reducing civil service staffing and administrative costs and cutting overseas aid and social security (disability) spending.

The previous Government had planned to cut total departmental expenditure (TDEL), which accounts for over 40% of government spending, whereas the new Government's inaugural Spending Review in June 2025[25] assumes TDEL will increase from £558.9 billion in 2023/24 to £716.9 billion in 2028/29 in current prices. TDEL will therefore increase by a yearly average of 2.3% in real terms and increase its share of total UK income from 20.7% to 21.5%.[26] This growth is mainly centred on investment (Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit), which will rise by 3.6% a year while day-to day spending (Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit) will increase by an average of 1.7% year.

Health and social care, education, defence and energy and net zero will be the main beneficiaries of the increase in TDEL, but as discussed later in this and the following chapter, the June 2025 Spending Review made inroads to addressing the under-resourcing of housing and homelessness. Budgets for non-protected departments, however, are tight and some face real term cuts. This includes the Home Office, where it remains to be seen if it can reduce the cost of the asylum system and end spending on asylum hotels by 2029.

Prior to the Spending Review, prospects for the UK economy were already weakening, and government borrowing costs were increasing. Backbench rebellions also forced the Government to row back on planned cuts to the winter fuel allowance and disability benefits that it hoped would save £6.5 billion a year by 2030. Further tax rises in the Autumn Budget therefore look likely despite concerns that the ENIC uplift has weakened the financial viability of services, especially in the charity sector.[27] The Fair Pay Agreement for adult social care in England may also hasten the downward trend in people able to access social care unless extra funding is found.[28]

Regional disparities, devolution and local authority funding

England has amongst the starkest spatial disparities of all advanced economies,[29] despite the efforts of Governments of all political hues to address the issue for over 40 years. Ranking 269 European territorial areas (International Territorial Level 2)[30] by income per person, researchers from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESRC) found that in 2023/24 the poorest UK areas, such as Birmingham and much of the North-East, were poorer than the poorest regions in Slovenia, Lithuania and Malta.[31]

24 HM Treasury (2025) *Spring Statement 2025*. London: HMSO.
25 HM Treasury (2025) *Spending Review 2025*. London: HMSO.
26 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2025) Spending Review Podcast: Paul Johnson's Opening Remarks. Online: IFS
27 Howden (2025) *Rewarding Industries 2025*. London: Howden Group Holdings.
28 Battery, S. & Jefferies, D (2025) King's Fund, Social Care 360 (March). London: King's Fund.
29 Fai, F. M., & Tomlinson, P. R. (2023). Levelling up or down? Addressing regional inequalities in the UK, *Contemporary Social Science*, 18(3–4): 285–297.
30 A description of International Territorial Level 2 areas can be found at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/programmesandprojects/europeancitystatistics
31 Mosley, M., Ryan Wattam R., & Vincent, C. (2025) *UK Living Standards Review 2025*. London: National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)

The Plan for Neighbourhoods Prospectus issued in March 2025[32] drew a line under the previous Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda. It had been bedevilled by frequent changes in priorities, under-investment, fragmented and under-spent competitive funding pots and lack of local engagement.[33] The new £1.5 billion Plan for Neighbourhoods initiative will support regeneration in 75 local areas, including 58 in England, and is central to the Spending Review announcement that the Government will assist 350 deprived communities across the UK.[34] Investment will start in 2026/27 following Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) scrutiny of each Neighbourhood Board's[35] 10 year strategy, which will include four year delivery plans that are permitted to invest in housing and homelessness services.[36]

Factors said to have hampered efforts to reduce spatial inequalities include over-centralised policy making[37] and the lack of LA autonomy and resources[38] to deliver strategies for growth.[39] Against this backdrop, the English Devolution White Paper[40] issued in December 2024 set out proposals to deepen English devolution and restructure local government with the aim of boosting economic growth and reducing inequalities.

The resulting English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill[41] introduced in July 2025 confirmed that a three-tier network of Strategic Authorities (SAs) will operate across functional economic areas of around 1.5 million residents. SAs will be responsible for policy decisions and funding priorities in areas such as transport, economic development, housing and spatial planning that are core to 'local place making', with Established Mayoral SAs having more powers and functions than Mayoral SAs and Foundation SAs without a mayor will have least. To facilitate the move to SAs, Greater Manchester and West Midlands received integrated settlements for 2025/26[42] that combined funds from several government departments.[43] The Spending Review also included Devolution Priority Programme funding to assist the establishment of new mayoral strategic authorities.

Elsewhere, the Bill will accelerate the shift from a two-tier council system (i.e. county and district councils) to unitary authorities of around 0.5 million residents, replace the committee system with leader and cabinet

32 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local government (2025) *Plan for Neighbourhoods: Prospectus*, London: MHCLG.
33 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2023) *Funding for Levelling Up - House of Commons Committee report*. Online: GOV.UK
34 HM Treasury (2025) *Spending Review 2025*. London: HMSO
35 Each Board must include MPs, councilors and senior police and can also include representatives from the community, local businesses, and social enterprise. Plans must build on extensive community engagement.
36 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local government (2025) *Plan for Neighbourhoods: Regeneration Plan Guidance*. London: MHCLG
37 Institute for Government (2023) *How Can Devolution Deliver Regional Growth In England?* London: IoG
38 Billingham, Z., Swift, R., Mort, L., Kearns, E., Evans, J., & Emden, J. (2024). *Taking back control? Devolution, Regional inequalities, and 20 years of IPPR North*. Online: IPPR
39 Sandford, M. (2025) *Slow burn revolution? Collaborative governance in the English Devolution White Paper*. Online: Bennett Institute.
40 Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) *Power and Partnership: Foundations for Growth*. London: HMRC
41 UK Parliament (2025) *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill*. Online: GOV.UK
42 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Integrated Settlements for Mayoral Combined Authorities*. Online: GOV.UK
43 They will be joined in 2026/27 by Liverpool City Region, the North East, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

arrangements and establish councillor led neighbourhood governance structures to amplify local voices.[44] The latter hints at a lesser role for town and parish councils.

This ambitious and challenging agenda will impact on housing development, partnership working and the delivery of services to meet resident needs, including homeless households. What these impacts might be is unknown but previous local government re-organisations disrupted public service delivery during the transition phase.[45]

The National Audit Office (NAO) recently highlighted the precariousness of local government finances in England and the failure of funding to keep pace with the growing demand for services, the increasing complexity of need and the rising costs of delivering services.[46] This includes provision of temporary homeless accommodation where net expenditure increased from £135 million to £732 million between 2017/18 and 2023/24 (see Chapter 4).[47]

Councils in the most deprived areas will have their 2025/26 core revenue spending (i.e. the sum of central government grants, council tax and locally retained business rates) boosted by the £600 million Recovery Fund. Those with social care duties will see core spend increase by 3.6% in real terms.[48] Nonetheless, 30 councils facing bankruptcy were granted Exceptional Financial Support for 2025/26, enabling them to borrow money or sell assets to fund essential services and balance their books.[49] This is up from 19 in 2024/25.

Looking ahead, the Spending Review says core revenue spending will rise from £60.4 billion in 2023/24 to £79.3 billion in 2028/29, a yearly real terms rise of 3.1%. This rise is being driven by assumed council tax increases of 3% (or 5% for those with care duties), the maximum permitted without a referendum. Even so, Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) report that core revenue spend will remain 10% lower on a per-person basis in 2028/29 than in 2010/11.[50]

From 2026/27, multi-year budget allocations will be re-introduced, fewer funding pots will operate outside the local government financial settlement[51] and a new funding distribution method will be phased in.[52] On balance, these changes should improve the transparency, fairness and efficiency of the local government finance system, That said, the reforms will not improve the financial sustainability of the sector or resolve the special educational needs deficit, which could exceed £8 billion by 2027[53] and see two-

44 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Guidance*. London: MHCLG.

45 Rhys Andrews, R. & Boyne, G. (2012) Structural Change and Public Service Performance; The Impact of the Reorganisation Process in English Local Government, Public Administration, 90(2): 297-312

46 National Audit Office (2025) *Local government financial sustainability*. London: NAO.

47 Tinelli, M. (2025) *Modelling The Future Of Emergency Accommodation In England*. London: Crisis.

48 Brien, P. & Sandford, S. (2025) *Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26*. London: House of Commons Library.

49 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Exceptional Financial Support for local authorities for 2025-26 – Guidance*. London: MHCLG.

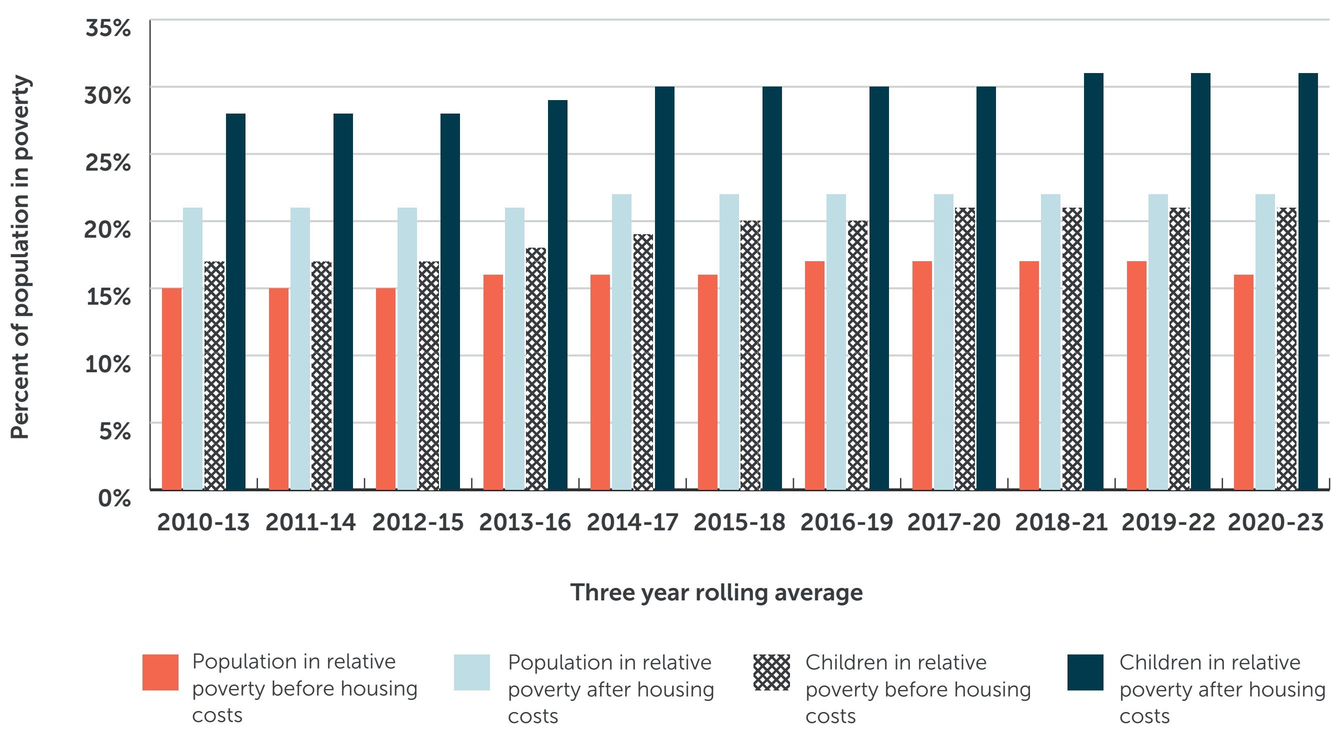
50 Warner, M. (2025) Spending Review Analysis: Impacts for Public Services (slides). Online: IFS.

51 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Local Authority Funding Reform: Objectives And Principles*. London: MHCLG.

52 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *The Fair Funding Review 2.0*. London: MHCLG

53 Sibieta, L. & Snape, D. (2024). *Spending On Special Educational Needs In England: Something has to Change*. London: IFS.

Figure 2.2: Population and child poverty rate in England 2010/13 – 2021/24



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2025) Family Resources Survey – Households Below Average income (three year rolling average)

fifth of LAs facing bankruptcy by March 2028.[54]

2.3 Household finances under strain

Since 2010 household incomes have risen more slowly than in much of Europe.[55] The ongoing tax threshold freeze and council tax rises have also increased the likelihood that there will be no improvement in disposable household income in the current decade.[56] Worse still, the disposable income of lower income households of working age is set to fall in real terms,[57] partly as a result of successive welfare reforms over the past 15 years. This section therefore explores the inter-relationship between social security and poverty, the latest welfare reform proposals and the role of discretionary funding in tackling homelessness.

Deepening poverty and destitution

During the 14 years of Conservative rule, the overall poverty rate stalled (see Figure 2.2). Three-year rolling averages for 2021/22 to 2023/24 (2021-24) suggest

54 National Audit Office (2024) *Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs*. London: NAO.

55 Mosley, M., Ryan Wattam R., & Vincent, C. (2025) *UK Living Standards Review 2025*. London: National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR).

56 Corlett, A (2025) *The Living Standards Outlook 2025*. London: Resolution Foundation.

57 Ibid.

17% of residents in England lived in a household[58] with an income below 60% of median household income before housing costs and 22% after housing costs.[59]

For many, the rise in the price of food and other essentials has deepened poverty,[60] as reflected in the sharp rise in destitution, which at the UK level more than doubled to 3.8 million in the five years to 2022.[61] The rise in destitution has also contributed to the surge in emergency food parcels delivered by Trussell across England, which jumped by 146% from 1.05m in 2018/19 to 2.58 million in 2023/24.[62]

Most of the destitute population are single people but there has been a sharp rise in families experiencing destitution.[63] Child poverty rates in England have also increased, with families with three or more children much more affected (44%) than smaller families (23%). Poorer migrant families are also especially vulnerable to deep poverty and destitution due to the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) rules and institutional barriers, such as the steep rise in visa and legal fees, discrimination and language barriers.[64]

Even if the economy improves, poverty rates are unlikely to decline before 2030 without policy change.[65] The single most cost-effective policy would be to end the two-child limit. IFS estimate this would reduce child poverty in the UK by 540,000 (4 percentage points) in the long run at an annual cost of £2.5 billion, some £4,500 per child lifted out of poverty.[66]

It is uncertain if the long awaited child poverty strategy will commit the Government to the abolition of the two-child benefit and other benefit reforms that would ensure those claiming social security avoided deep poverty as called for by the Children's Commissioner[67] and the Poverty Strategy Commission.[68] In the meantime, around 500,000 children in England will benefit from the expansion of free school meals to all families in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) from September 2026,[69] which could lift 100,000 children out of poverty in the long run.[70] The £500 million Government investment in the 10 year Better Futures Fund announced in July 2025 should also improve opportunities for up to 200,000 vulnerable children facing poverty, especially if match funding is secured from social and private bodies.[71]

58 The FRS/HBAI figure are for 'benefit units', which refer to a person's direct family (single, couples, lone-parent and two adult families) and exclude adult offspring and others that may be living at the same address.

59 DWP (2024) *Households Below Average Income, 2022/23*. London: DWP.

60 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025) *UK Poverty 2025*. York: JRF.

61 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., and McMordie, L. (2024) *Destitution in the UK 2023*. York: JRF.

62 Trussel Trust end year stats online

63 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., and McMordie, L. (2024) *Destitution in the UK 2023*. York: JRF.

64 Qureshi, A. & Morris, M. (2025) *Hidden hardships: The immigration system and child poverty*. Online: IPPR.

65 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025) *UK Poverty 2025*. York: JRF.

66 Henry, A. and Wernham, T. (2024) *Child Poverty: Trends and Policy Options*. London: IFS.

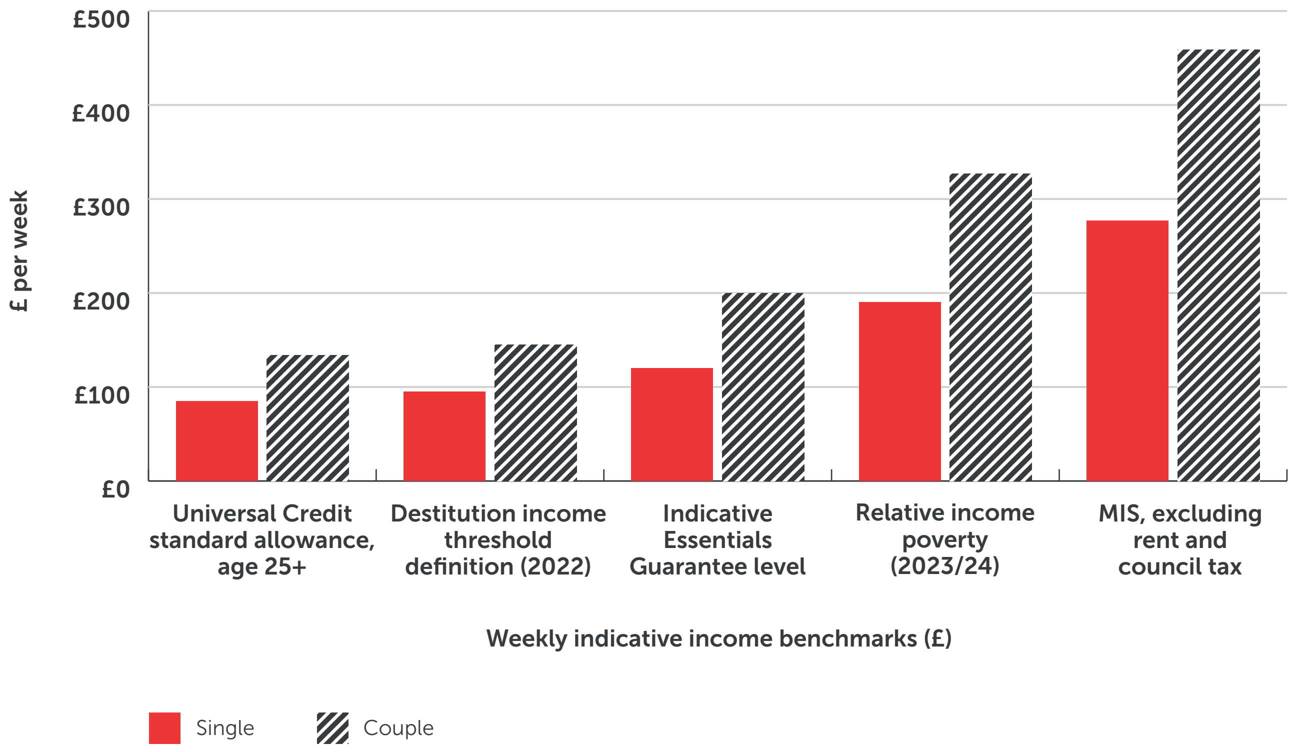
67 De Souza, R. (2025) Joint Statement From UK Children's Commissioners To Tackle Root Causes Of Child Poverty. London: The Children's Commissioner for England.

68 Poverty Strategy Commission (2025) *New Framework For Tackling Poverty - The Final Report Of The Poverty Strategy Commission*. London: PSC

69 Department for Education (2025) *Over Half A Million More Children To Get Free School Meals* (Press Release). Online: DfE.

70 Farquharson, C. & Waters, T. (2025). *Benefits - and costs - of expanding access to free school meals will grow over time* [Comment]. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Figure 2.3: Universal Credit single adult and couple Universal Credit standard allowance 2023/24 and income benchmarks



Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2024). An Essentials Guarantee: Technical Report
Notes: Figures are for 2023/24 unless stated otherwise and exclude housing costs and council tax.

Welfare reform

Measures to constrain social security expenditure since 2010 have eroded the real value of income-related benefits for those of working age. In 2023/24 the UC standard allowance for single adults aged 25+ (£85 pw) was equal to 23% of the minimum wage (NLW) for a 35 hour week. It was also lower than the single person destitution threshold (£95) and other low income thresholds (see Figure 2.3).[72] This erosion is strongly correlated with a decline in life expectancy, with the North East and East Midlands most negatively affected.[73]

The numbers of working age people claiming state benefits has remained well above pre-pandemic levels (see Figure 2.4). In February 2025, there were 8.6 million working-age claimants in England. Of those, 3.17 million (37%) claimed a health-related benefit, 840,000 more than in February 2020.[74] Over much the same

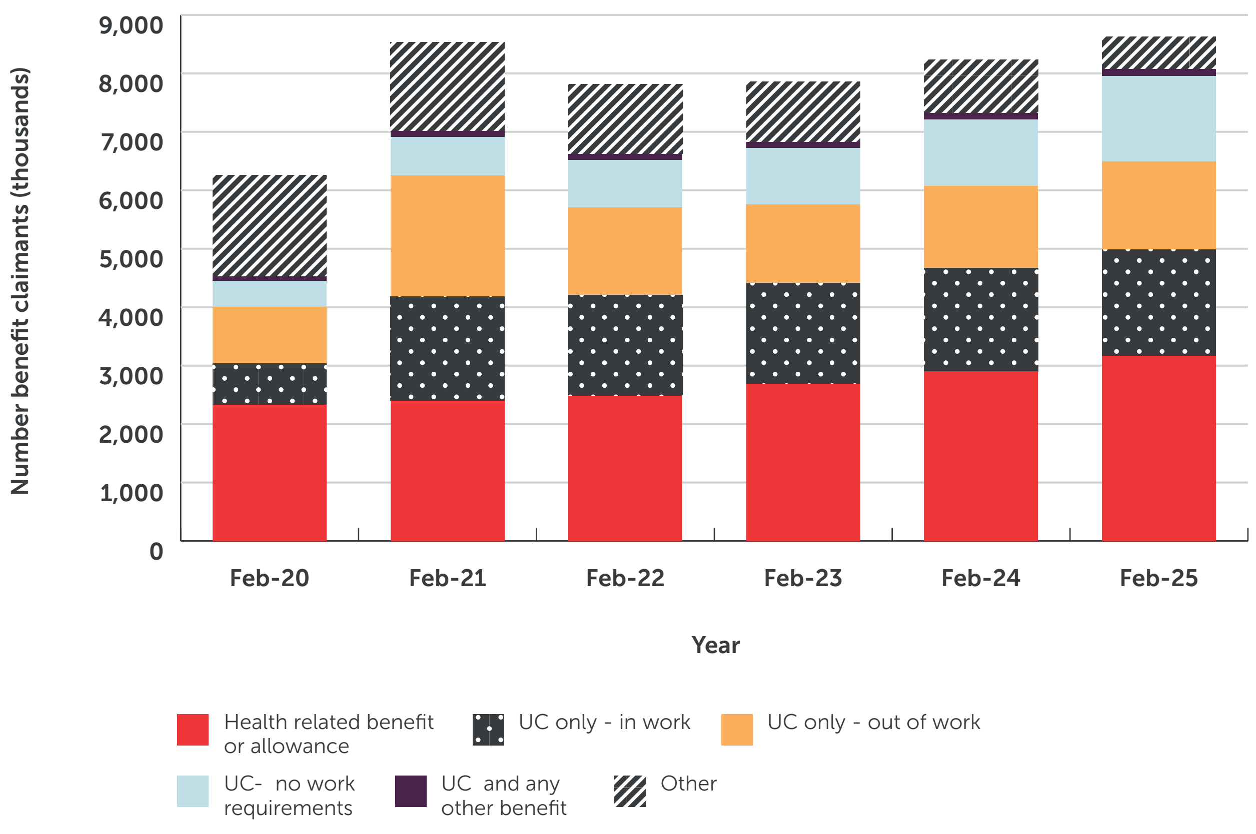
71 UK Government (2025) *The World's Largest Fund Of Its Kind Will Support Vulnerable Children And Families Across The Country*.(Press Release). Online: GOV.UK.

72 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) *An Essential Guarantee: Technical Report*. York: JRF.

73 Berman, Y. & Hovland, T. (2024) *The Impact of Austerity on Mortality and Life Expectancy, Working Paper (139)*, International Inequalities Institute, LSE. Online: LSE.

74 The main health related benefits are PIP, the Disabled Living allowance (DLA), the UC health premium plus ESA.

Figure 2.4: Working age benefit claimants in England, February 2020 – February 2025



Source: DWP Benefit Combinations: Official Statistics accessed September 2025
Notes: 1. Figures are for working age claims for various benefits including UC, Personal Independence Payment, Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit (HB) and other legacy benefits. The categories are mutually exclusive and sequential. Those claiming a health-related benefit are only counted as claiming a health related benefit even if they also claim UC to avoid double counting. All UC categories therefore exclude people claiming health-related benefits,
2. "UC and any other benefit" is mostly those claiming HB and/or Carers Allowance. "Other" mainly comprises of those claiming HB, Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support and other legacy benefits.

period, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spending on these benefits in England and Wales[75] has risen from £29.5 billion to £51 billion,[76] driven by a sharp rise in mental health-related claims,[77] the reasons for which remain uncertain and contested.[78]

The Pathways to Work Green Paper issued in March 2025[79] outlined a package of reforms centred on changes to UC, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and intended to rebalance the social security system. The package redirected

75 Department for Work and Pensions expenditure excludes spend on devolved benefits in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

76 Department for Work and Pensions (2025) [Spring Statement 2025 - Expenditure and Caseload forecasts](). Online: GOV.UK.

77 Latimer, E., Ray-Chaudhuri, S. & Waters, T. (2025) [The role of changing health in rising health-related benefit claims](). London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

78 Ibid.

79 [UC and PIP Bill (Bill 267 2024-25 as introduced)]()

support towards people out of work and those with very high health needs, whilst reducing support for those with modest health needs and removing entitlement to health-related benefits for those under 22 years. Both the Green Paper and subsequent Bill were very controversial, and several concessions were required before the Bill passed its final stage in the House of Commons on 9 July 2025.

Under the watered-down Bill[80] UC standard allowances will be increased at a faster rate than inflation from 2026/27 to 2029/30. Existing UC claimants in receipt of a disability allowance will see the sum of their UC standard and disability allowances rise in line with inflation, as will new claimants that are terminally ill or whose health conditions are so severe that they are not expected to ever work. Other new claimants that are awarded a disability related allowance will be paid at approximately half the 2025/26 rate, which will remain frozen until 2029/30.[81] Changes to ESA will largely mirror those made to UC while plans to tighten PIP eligibility rules have been deferred to Winter 2026 pending the outcome of the wider PIP review led by Disabilities Minister Sir Stephen Timms.[82]

The Government estimated that the *original* package would see 250,000 people in GB living in a household with a disabled person, including 50,000 children, fall into After Housing Cost poverty by 2030, assuming no-one moved off welfare and into work.[83] This was lowered to 200,000 in July as a result of modelling the impact of the concessions.[84]

The Local Housing Allowance and Benefit Cap

The LHA caps the amount private renters in receipt of UC can claim towards their rent. In May 2024, a month after the LHA had been restored to the 30th percentile of local rents, 45% of the 1.39 million private renters in England claiming the UC housing element had a shortfall between their LHA and their rent. This was a lower share than for the same month in each of the previous three years when the LHA had been frozen at 2020/21 levels despite rapidly rising rents and a paucity of lower priced rentals coming onto the market (see Figure 2.5). By November 2024 (latest) this proportion had risen to 48% and with LHA again frozen for 2025/26, this proportion will continue to rise, increasing the numbers of private renters at risk of poverty and homelessness.[85] In March 2025, research by Crisis and Health Equals found that fewer than three in every 100 private rental properties listed in England (2.5%) were affordable for people on housing benefit, down from 12% in 2021-22.[86]

If, as the OBR projected in 2023, LHA rates were frozen until 2029, JRF estimate 50,000 more private renters, including 30,000 children, in Britain would be in poverty and 140,000 of those already in

80 Due to these amendments, the Bill was renamed The UC Bill (previously The UC and PIP Bill).

81 The limited capacity for work (LCW) element, which was an addition for less severe conditions for claims made prior to April 2017 would also be frozen at 2025/26 rate until 2029/30.

82 Department for Work and Pensions (2025) *Timms Review of the PIP Assessment: Terms of Reference*. London: DWP.

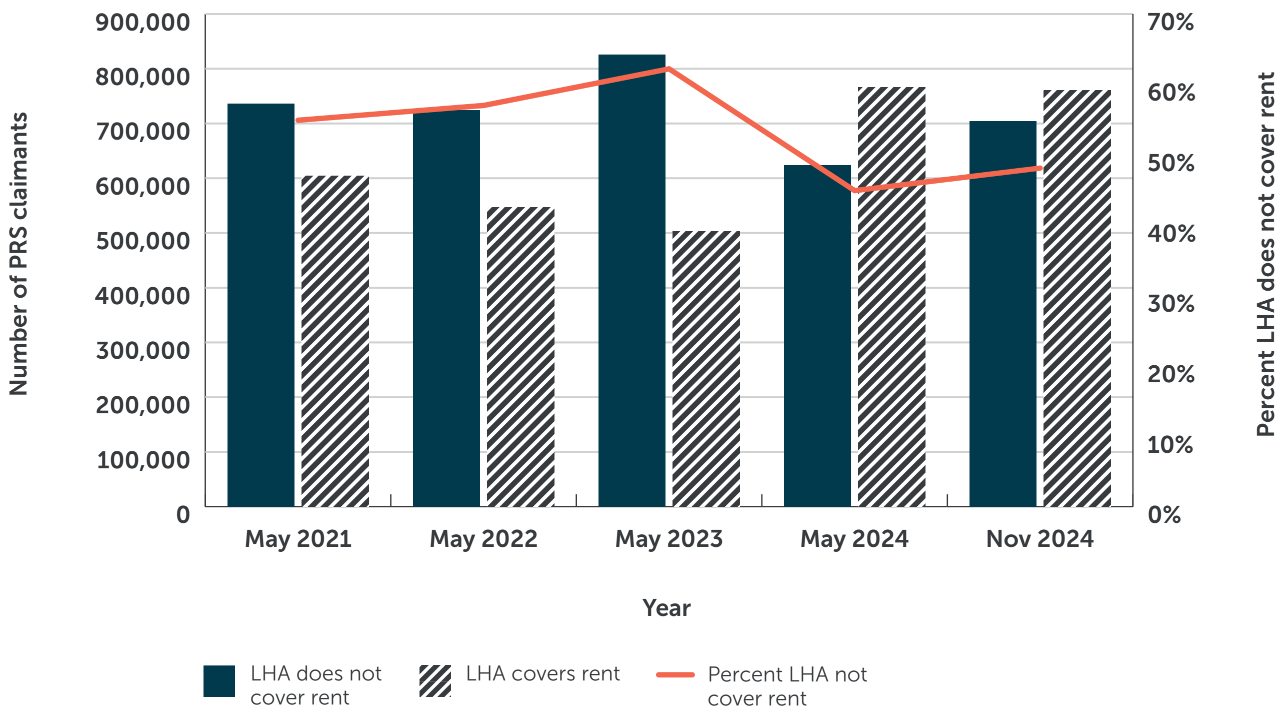
83 Department for Work and Pensions (2025) [Spring Statement 2025 Health And Disability Benefit Reforms – Impact Assessment](). London: DWP.

84 Department for Work and Pensions (2025) [Spring statement social security changes: updated impact on poverty levels in Great Britain](), July 2025 Update. London: DWP.

85 IPPR (2025) [Revealed: Almost One Million Children In Private Housing Face Rent Shortfall By 2026](). Online: IPPR.

86 Crisis (2025) [Fewer than three in every 100 privately rented properties listed in England are affordable for people on housing benefit, Crisis reveals]().

Figure 2.5: Private renters in receipt of UC housing element by whether LHA covers rent



Source: DWP Stat Explore Housing entitlement and tenure plus LHA indicator by Month, accessed April 2025.
Note: Updates to the LHA indicator data are currently suspended while DWP seek to resolve data issues.

poverty would fall into deeper poverty.[87] These figures do not appear to allow for the Benefit Cap,[88] which often works in tandem with the LHA to accentuate the risk of poverty, destitution and homelessness.

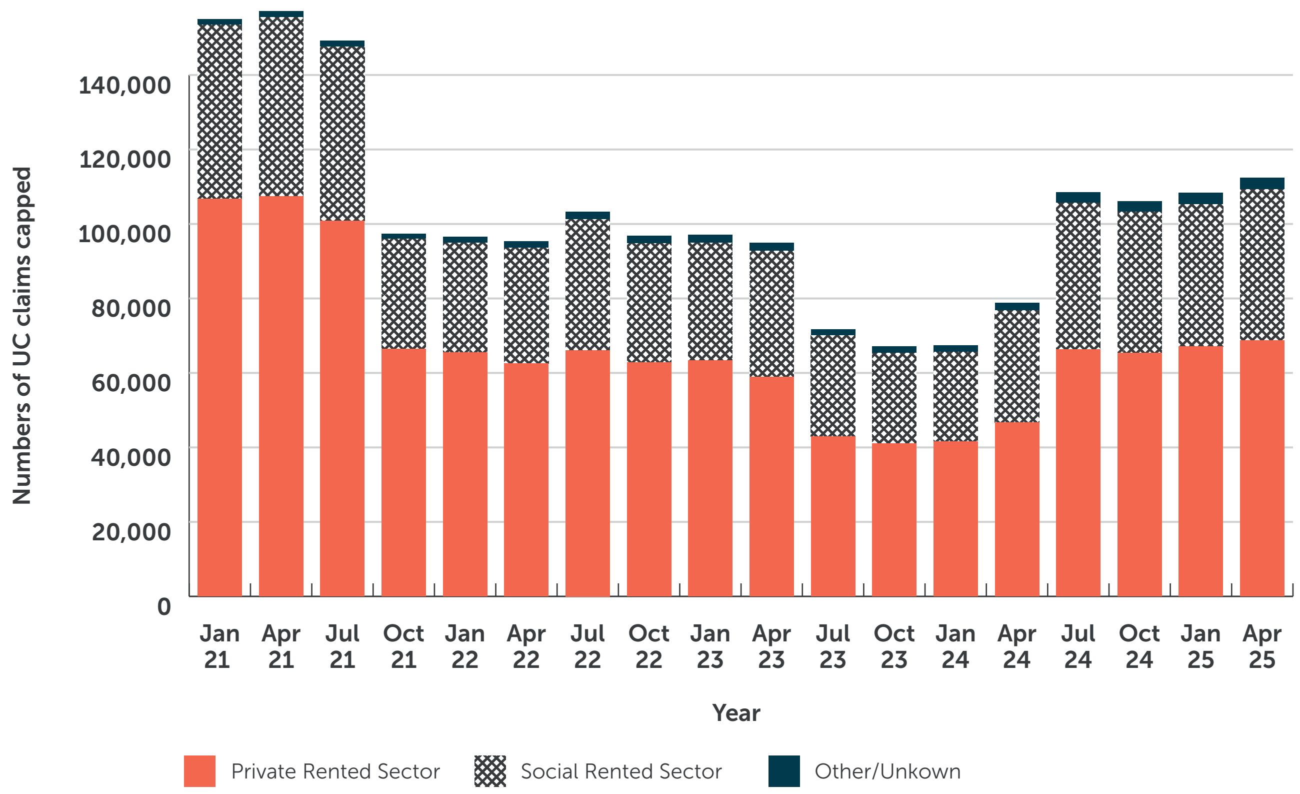
The annual Benefit Cap is currently £14,753 for a single adult (£16,967 in Greater London) and £22,020 for families (£25,323 in Greater London), the latter £14,000 lower in real terms than in 2013.[89] Figure 2.6 illustrates that claims affected by the cap dipped after the temporary £20 UC uplift ended in October 2021 and dropped again when the Benefit Cap was last increased (10.1%) in April 2023. In contrast, numbers shot up following the LHA uplift in April 2024. Over 108,330 claims in England were capped in February 2025 compared to 66,380 in March 2024, with 64% of the additional 41,950 claims being private renters. Most capped claims are from households with children (83%), especially lone parents (69%), but the numbers of single adults affected more than doubled to 18,160 in the 11 months to February 2025, most of whom were private renters living in Greater London.

87 Earwaker, R. (2024) *Stop the Freeze: Permanently Re-Link Housing Benefits To Private Rents*. York: JRF.

88 Kumar, A. (2024) *Modelling the Effects of Changes to the Local Housing Allowance. Manchester: Policy Evaluation Research Unit*, Manchester Metropolitan University.

89 Try, L. (2024) *Catastrophic Caps: An Analysis Of The Impact Of The Two-Child Limit And The Benefit Cap*. London: Resolution Foundation.

Figure 2.6: UC claims in England affected by the benefit cap by tenure, December 2021 – February 2025



Source: DWP Benefit Cap statistics, updated September 2025
Notes: 1. Figures tend to exclude households that are capped and then uncapped within a month or so.

Sanctions and other benefit deductions

Income volatility increases the risk of rent arrears, eviction and homelessness, which for UC claimants can be exacerbated by sanctions and deductions.

The numbers of people serving a sanction increased following the resumption of face-to-face interviews in late 2021 that had been halted during the pandemic. Numbers then fluctuated little until March 2024 when they began to fall back (see Figure 2.7). In June 2025 just under 96,000 people claiming UC in England were serving a sanction, 34,000 fewer than in June 2024, principally because the length of sanctions is becoming shorter.[90]

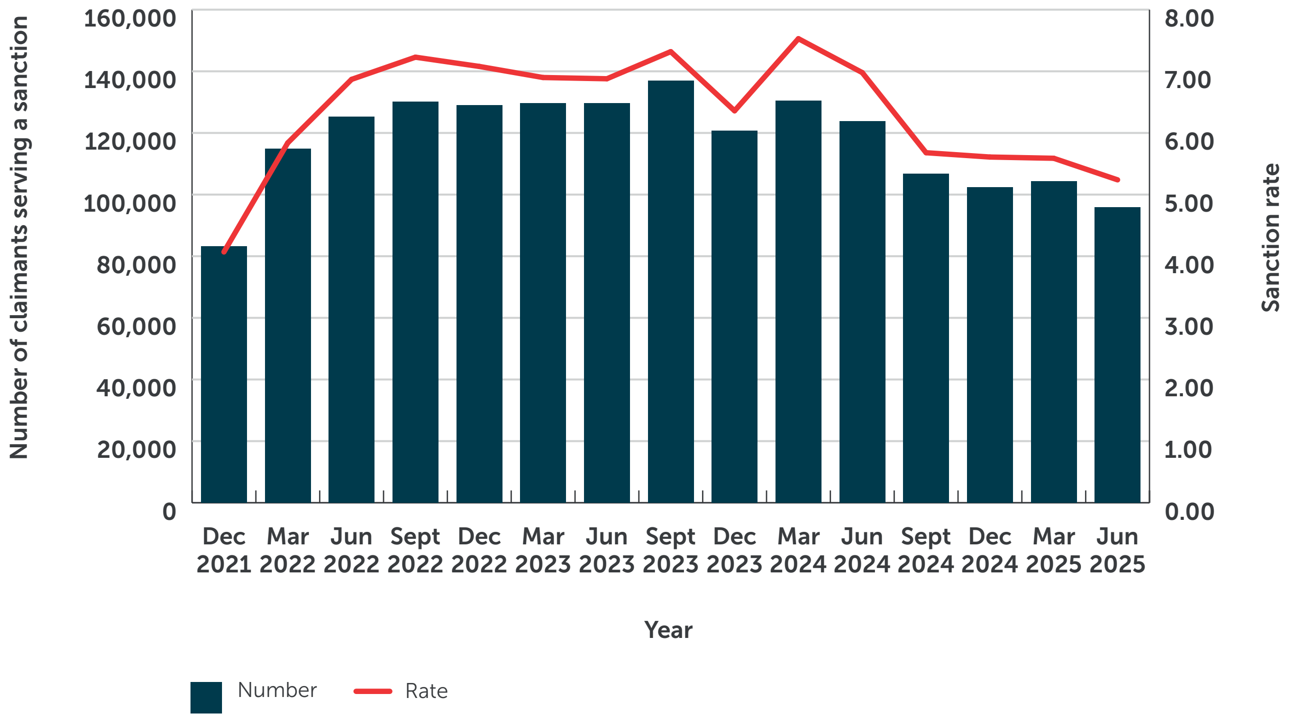
The previous Government's proposals to intensify conditionality have been scrapped but little is known about how 'conditionality' will be affected by the planned merger of Job Centres and the National Careers Service to create a new service that will prioritise supporting people into work over benefits administration and compliance monitoring.[91] The Work & Pensions Committee's inquiry on reforming jobcentres[92] may offer some insight into

90 Webster, D. (2025) *Benefit Sanctions Statistics Briefing – August 2025 release*. Online: CPAG.

91 Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Secretary of State for Education (2024) *Get Britain Working White Paper*. London: HMRC.

92 Work and Pensions Committee (2025) *Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres* (inquiry). Online: GOV.UK.

Figure 2.7: UC claimants in England serving a sanction in given month, December 2021 – June 2025



Source: DWP UC Benefit Cap (Point in Time) Statistics Stat-Xplore accessed September 2025

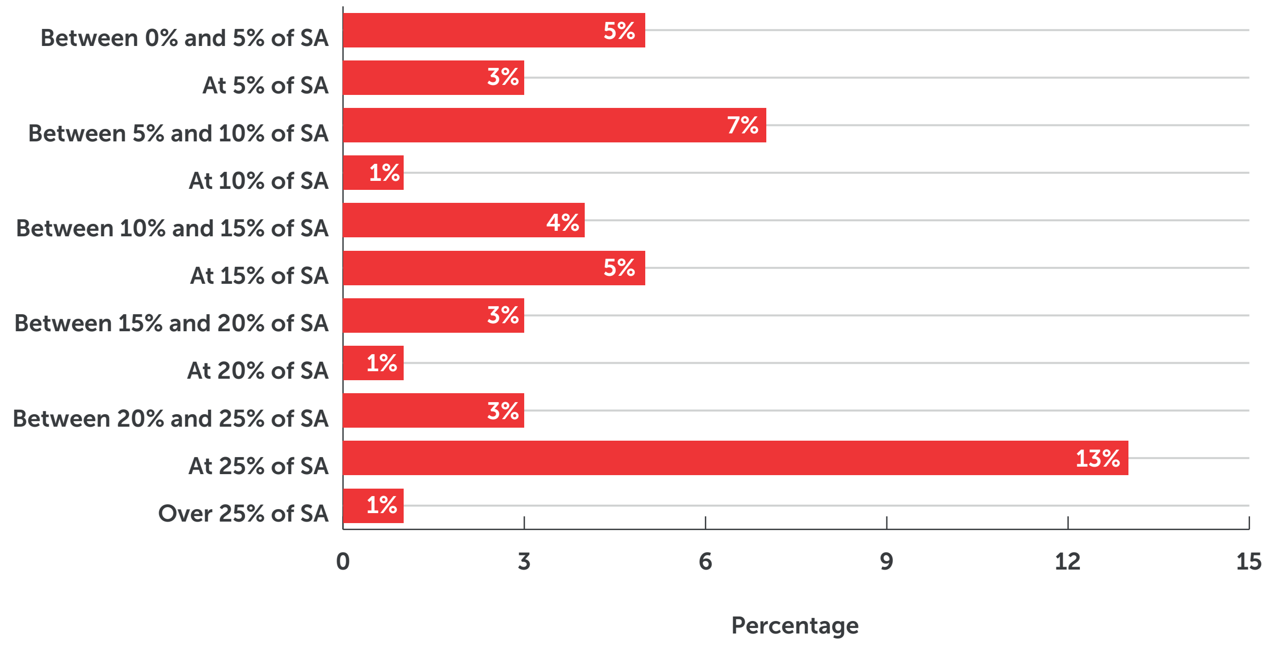
how the new agency might operate. Meanwhile, another Committee inquiry into the DWP's approach to supporting and safeguarding vulnerable people, including those experiencing homelessness, has called for deep-rooted cultural change and consideration of a statutory safeguarding duty to drive change and improve accountability across DWP.[93]

Around 2.6 million households in England had a deduction of, on average £67.50, from their monthly UC in May 2025 for debt repayments. Repayment of DWP advances to cover the five-week UC wait period remain the single most common deduction but arrears owed to energy companies, landlords and the HMRC are commonplace, often paid in addition to DWP deductions.

In 2024/25, over a fifth of claimants had deductions equal to more than 15% of their UC standard allowance. The Fair Repayment Rate lowered the cap on benefit deductions from 25% to 15% from April 2025. Although the proportion of claimants paying over 15% remained unchanged in May 2025 (see Figure 2.8), this should change once the Fair Repayment Rate comes into full effect from the end of June 2025, with DWP suggesting that 1.2 million claimants will, on average, retain £35 per month.[94] That said, breaches of the cap will still be permitted in exceptional circumstances such as payments for rent arrears to prevent eviction.

93 Work and Pensions Committee (2025) *Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants* (inquiry and report). Online: GOV.UK.
94 Parliamentary Question UIN 34029, tabled on 26 February 2025

Figure 2.8: Percent of Great Britain households with deduction by share of Universal Credit standard allowance (SA) lost, May 2025



Source: DWP (2025) Universal Credit deductions statistics to May 2025, accessed September 2025
Note: Figures take only partial account of the extension of the repayment period on budgeting advances from 12 months to 24 month which came into effect from December 2024.

The impact of social security decisions on homelessness

We asked LA survey respondents about the impact of key decisions on social security policy on their ability to prevent or minimise homelessness in their area. These included the decisions by the current government to retain key aspects of former Government's welfare reforms, these being the Benefit Cap, Two Child Limit and Shared Accommodation Rate for most under 35 year olds, as well as the Government's decision to freeze LHA rates until at least 2026. We also asked about the impact of the reduction in benefit deduction limits discussed above and the 1.7% increase in UC payments implemented in April 2025. The results are presented in Table 2.1.

Clearly, it is the continuation of the freeze on LHA that LAs deem most unhelpful to their abilities to effectively address homelessness, with 83% of respondents taking this view, including 70% who considered it 'very unhelpful'. LAs explained that LHA rates are a *"major barrier"* to accessing the private rented sector (PRS) for homeless households or those at risk (LA, South) and alongside other social security policies lead to poor outcomes for households and LAs themselves:

Table 2.1: How important have the following decisions been (or how important will they be) in helping or hindering efforts to prevent or minimise homelessness in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Will make little difference	Total	N=
1.7% uplift in UC	10	28	5	0	57	100	152
Reducing maximum UC deductions from 25 to 15%	10	37	6	3	44	100	147
Continuation of the LHA freeze until at least April 2026	4	7	13	70	6	100	160
Retention of the Benefit Cap	3	1	28	52	16	100	155
Retention of the Two Child Limit	3	1	34	44	19	100	152
Continuation of Shared Accommodation Rate applying to 25 to 35 year olds	4	2	20	62	11	100	158

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses.

"Continuation of freezes or caps to benefits significantly limits options for these households and can make it very challenging for the council to find their affordable housing. Often these households will remain in TA for significant periods of time or will have to move significant distances away from the borough to afford to rent."

(LA, South)

The view that the LHA freeze was somewhat or very unhelpful was shared by a strong majority of LAs across the English regions but was clearly especially problematic in London:

"The freeze on LHA and retention of the Benefit Cap make it almost impossible to secure accommodation that is affordable in London to meet homelessness duties."

(LA, London)

"Significantly contributes to homelessness and risk of homelessness as well as financial distress for low income households."

(LA, London)

Very high proportions also viewed the Benefit Cap (80%), the Two Child Limit (78%), and the application of the Shared Accommodation Rate to 25 to 35 year olds (82%) as somewhat or very unhelpful to their efforts to address homelessness, with the Benefit Cap and Two Child limit viewed as especially problematic in London, where all responding LAs described these policies as very unhelpfully impacting their efforts to tackle homelessness. Some LAs described households affected by the Benefit Cap as sometimes "stuck" in TA with no prospects of moving on (LA, South), with another explaining that rent shortfalls created by the Cap and Shared Accommodation Rate were being met by the Homelessness Prevention Grant. The expectation that under 35 year olds should share was seen as unfair and unrealistic by some LAs, while others highlighted that it simply isn't suitable for those with complex needs and routinely avoided by some households, including those sleeping rough due to prior bad experiences:

"Applying the shared room rate to 35 yr olds makes it incredibly difficult to engage single homeless people and rough sleepers with an accommodation offer. Most of our rough sleepers choose to remain on the streets and refuse HMO [house in multiple occupation] offers, due to previous bad experiences."

(LA, South)

More practically, others commented that shared accommodation was not affordable within the rate in their area, with one claiming that this was driving an increase in claims for PIPs:

"We also struggle to secure room to rent as they are nearly at the same cost as a one bed rate."

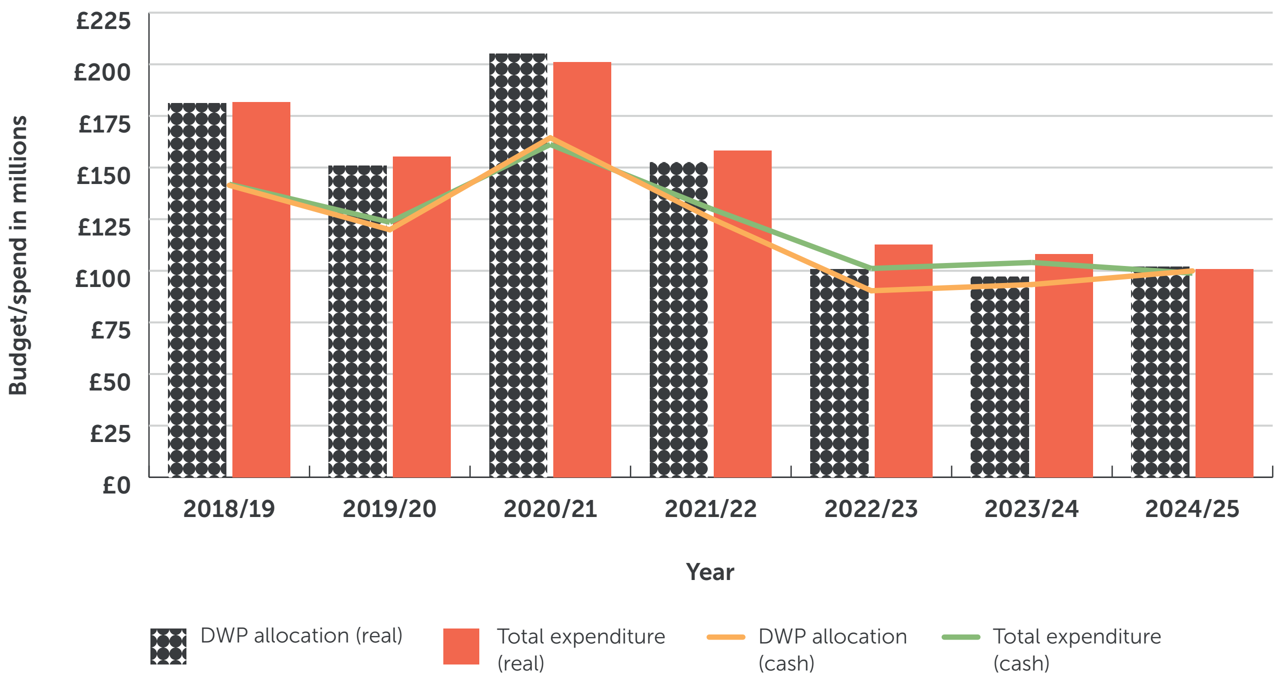
(LA, South)

"Shared rooms are costing £700 in our district with the LHA rate being £450.00. It is not affordable to any of our young people unless they are on medical benefits. An increase in PIP applications is solely due to this."

(LA, South)

Between a third and a half of respondents saw the 1.7% uplift in UC (38%) and the reduction in UC deductions (47%) as at least somewhat helpful with regards to their efforts to table homelessness. These are not insignificant proportions and some LAs stressed that *"anything to increase benefit income would be helpful"* (LA, South) in terms of tackling homelessness given the costs of accommodation and low levels of benefit many low income households receive. But others emphasised that increases in benefits would need to be *"significantly more"* (LA, South) to make a real difference and that these policy decisions amounted to *"tweaks around the edge of UC"* (LA,

Figure 2.9: Discretionary Housing Payment budget and expenditure in England, 2018/19 – 2024/25



Source: DWP Use of DHPs tables, updated July 2025
Data is based on financial information provided by LAs. DWP do not impute figures for non-respondents.
Real prices are adjusted to 2025 prices.

south) that were a *"drop in the ocean"* (LA, North) compared to what was needed.

Discretionary financial support

UC payment deductions not only intensify financial hardship and destitution.[95] but they increase pressure on discretionary funding pots[96] that play an important role in preventing financial hardship escalating into homelessness. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), the HSF and LWA are the main discretionary funds in England, all of which are administered by LAs, with ring-fenced resources provided by DWP for the first two funds.

A recent DWP funded review found DHPs play a vital role in preventing eviction and homelessness, with 75% of survey respondents agreeing they would have been homelessness without the DHP payment.[97] Regardless, the DHP allocation for 2025/26 was frozen for a third successive year, at some £94 million for England.[98] Even assuming it is topped up by LAs, DHP expenditure will almost certainly continue to drop below pre-pandemic levels (see Figure 2.9),[99] further constraining the support available at a time when rents and homelessness are rising. In 2024/25, around 133,770 awards were made in England, down from 158,740 DHP in 2023/24 and 226,970 in 2019/20.[100]

Echoing the findings of previous Monitor reports,[101] LA survey respondents were clear that DHPs are important in enhancing their capacity to prevent homelessness; Over half described DHPs as very important in this regard and a further 35% somewhat important. LAs described DHPs as a *"core homelessness prevention tool"* (LA, South) and explained that they 'rely' on them (LA, Midlands) in their responses to homelessness, with some pointing out that they boost their DHP pot to better achieve these goals. As such, there was concern about the real terms cut in DHP funding in 2025/26, which 84% of LAs described as challenging with respect to their efforts to address homelessness. Increasing rental costs and decreasing DHP budget led several LAs to comment that the scheme goes less far in enhancing homelessness prevention efforts than it used to:

"DHP is nearly always spent in full and before year end and the need for it will only increase. is spent. If DHP is not increased homelessness will rise further."

(LA, South)

"DHP is essential for Homelessness prevention. The reduction is causing significant issues."

(LA, South)

Other issues limiting DHPs effectiveness as a homelessness prevention tool in some areas included that it was not accessible to the homelessness team, gets used up early in the year or to mitigate particular welfare reforms, primarily the Bedroom Tax, and/or that LAs choose to grant only short-term awards that at best delay rather than prevent homelessness:

"DHP funding is typically used as a short term measure and therefore cannot be considered by itself as an effective means to prevent homelessness."

(LA, South)

"The homelessness team has no control over DHP or HSF."

(LA, Midlands)

The HSF began in October 2021 as a short-term measure to help households meet the rising cost of food and other essentials but by March 2026 upper tier LAs (county councils and unitary authorities) will have received a cumulative allocation of over £3.2 billion.[102] Early evaluation suggests the HSF has helped people obtain food, keep warm and, in

95 Trussell Trust (2022) Debt And Deductions Factsheet

96 Tims, S., and Wright, H. (2024) Benefits Debt Deductions Trapping People In Poverty And Debt. London: New Economics Foundation.

97 Department for Work and Pensions and IPSOS UK (2024) Early Evaluation of Discretionary Housing Payments, London: DWP.

98 Department for Work and Pensions (2024) S9/2024 Discretionary Housing Payment Government Contribution For English And Welsh Local Authorities For Financial Year Ending March 2026. London: DWP.

99 Hays, Z., & Frank Hobson, F. (2024) Discretionary Housing Payments – Research Briefing. London: House of Commons Library.

100 Department for Work and Pensions (2025) Use Of Discretionary Housing Payments: Analysis of End-Of-Year Returns -Tabular data

101 See https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-monitor/

102 Department for Work and Pensions (2025) Guidance - 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026: Household Support Fund Guidance For County Councils And Unitary Authorities In England. London: DWP.

many cases, (45%) pay rent.[103] This in despite management data reporting that only 31 out 153 councils spent 5+% of their 2023/24 HSF allocation on housing costs (72 spent zero) and just 21% of HSF funding was spent on direct cash payments.[104]

Over three quarters (78%) of LAs saw the HSF as important in mitigating the risk of homelessness in their area. LAs explained that its value is often in meeting households' immediate needs for food or other basics:

"HSF with food vouchers and money for Rent In Advance and Deposit payments for clients - it has been a lifesaver to get supermarket vouchers to households quickly so that they can go down to the supermarket and buy food but also towels, toiletries, crockery, pans etc - often people turn up with nothing and this really helps."

(LA, South)

Despite these positive survey results, LAs expressed frustration at having to rely on short-term, budget limited, *"sticking plaster"* (LA, South) or *"stop gap"* solutions to help households. As was the case for DHPs, some LAs highlighted that homelessness teams struggle to access HSF payments for those they work with. These varied comments reflect that LAs have considerable flexibility and discretion over how these localised schemes are managed and delivered, meaning that their effectiveness as a homelessness response is likely to vary considerably.

The Spending Review confirmed that the HSF and DHP will be merged to create the CRF from April 2026, with a yearly English budget of £842 million until 2028/2029. The merger should give councils greater flexibility on how to support people and prevent homelessness. However, there are reservations about the over reliance on crisis funds to compensate for deficiencies in the social security system,[105] the erosion of the value of CRF (and its predecessor) allocations,[106] and the possibility that CRF, like HSF, may be used to prop up local services such as food banks and welfare and debt advice services, rather than primarily provide cash-first support to households.[107] The next homelessness Monitor England will provide an opportunity to consider the effectiveness or otherwise of the CRF in tackling homelessness, compared to its predecessors.

LWA schemes have operated since the Social Fund budget was devolved to LAs in 2013, but measured on a per capita basis Wales and Scotland spend over nine times more than England and 36 English councils did not offer LWA in 2023/24.[108] Less than half (45%) of all LAs

103 Department for Work and Pensions and IPSOS UK (2025) *Evaluation of the Household Support Fund 4*. London: DWP.

104 Department for Work and Pensions (2024) *Household Support Fund 4 Management Information For 1 April 2023 To 31 March 2024*. London: DWP.

105 Meers, J., Colliver, K., Hudson, J., & Lunt, N. (2024) Sticking Plaster Support: The Household Support Fund and Localised Assistance in the UK welfare state, *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 32(1): 26-46.

106 Child Poverty Action Group (2025) *CPAG's response to the Spending Review 2025* (press release). Online: CPAG.

107 Ibid.

108 Peake, D. (2024) *A Bleak Future for Crisis Support*. Liverpool: End Furniture Poverty.

who responded to our survey confirmed that a LWA scheme was operative in their area, with a fifth (21%) unaware whether a scheme is in place or not. This is indicative of a substantial change since the last Homelessness Monitor England LA survey in 2022, in response to which 66% of respondents confirmed the existence of a LWA scheme and only 14% didn't know. This data alone suggests that LWA schemes are of declining significance as homelessness response in England, though in over half (63%) of the areas where such schemes were known to be operational, respondents judged them to be 'somewhat or very important' in mitigating the risk of homelessness. LAs were eager not to overstate the role of such schemes given the often small nature of awards and restrictions on how funds can be spent, but did stress the importance of LWA in enabling move on from TA and enabling the sustainability of new tenancies by providing access to furniture. The importance of this in terms of people's quality of life was significant according to some LAs:

"The welfare assistance scheme assists with people moving into properties so it protects health and welfare and wellbeing as avoids households moving into properties with nothing and improves the odds of them keeping accommodation/ not abandoning it."

(LA, South)

"The welfare scheme really impacts on the quality of life for residents."

(LA, Midlands)

As most LWA are now heavily reliant on HSF funds, the introduction of the CRF casts doubt on the future LWA, at least in their current form.

2.4 Housing dynamics

This final section looks at Government's ambitious plans to boost housing supply and other housing system and policy developments that are shaping the ability of households to access and retain a home of a decent standard that is affordable.

Housing delivery

Central to the Government's ambition to fix the broken housing system,[109] is the delivery of 1.5 million net additional homes in England by 2029, defined as the sum of completions plus conversions and other stock gains minus demolitions. At 300,000 annually, this is 66,000 higher than delivered on average in the seven years to 2023/24 (see Figure 2.10).

Early tasks in support of this target have been investment in training for construction jobs,[110] fast-tracking stalled housing developments,[111] planning for up to 12 new towns,[112] and amending the Treasury's Green Book to facilitate greater public investment outside of London and the South East. The two most important policy actions, however, have been the

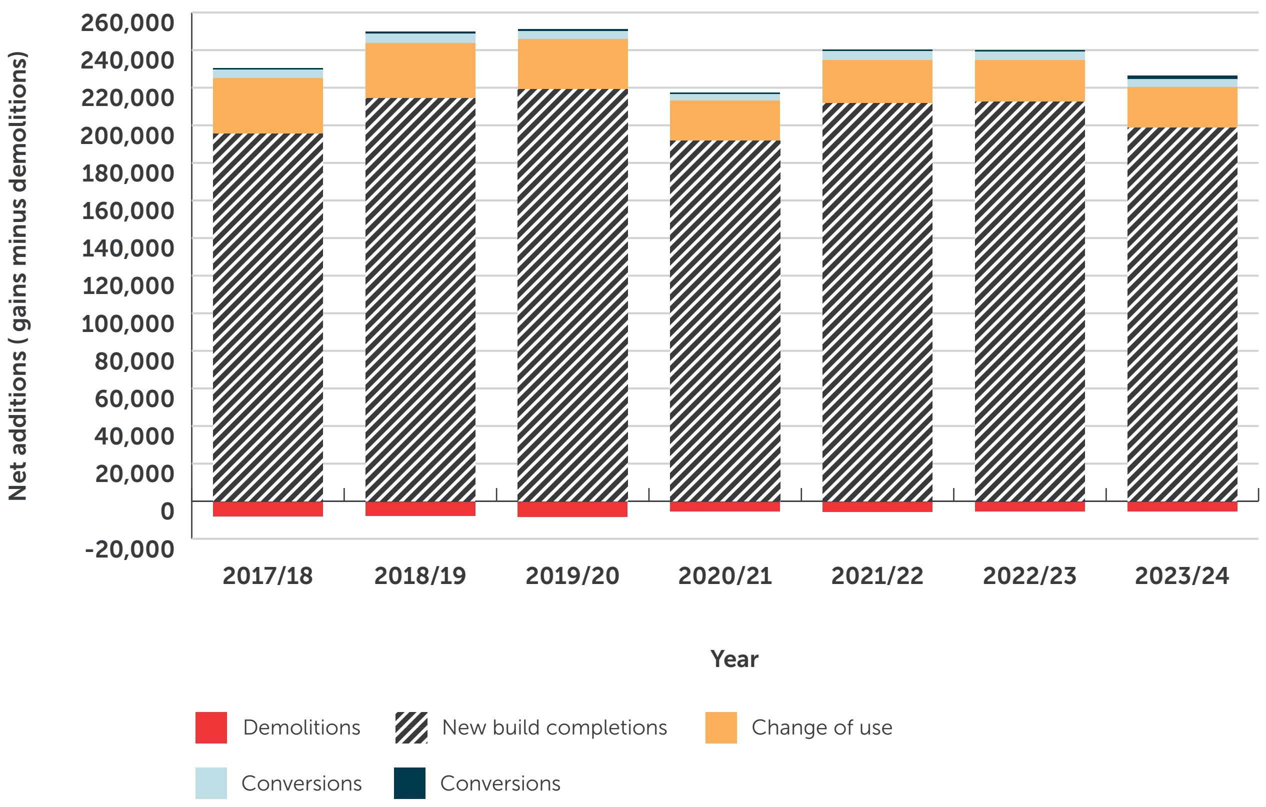
109 HM Government (2024) *Plan for Change – Milestones for Mission Led Government*. London: HMSO.

110 HM Treasury (2025) *Government Unleashes Next Generation Of Construction Workers To Build 1.5m Homes* (Press Release). Online: GOV.UK.

111 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) *New Homes Accelerator Programme (Guidance)*. London: MHCLG.

112 New Towns Task force (2025) *Building New Towns for the Future: Interim Update*. London: MHCLG.

Figure 2.10: Net additions to the housing stock in England, 2017/18 – 2023/24



Sources: MHCLG (2025) Live Table 118 - Housing supply: net additional dwellings (annual)
Note: As totals are adjusted to allow for 2021 Census, they may not equal the sum of component elements.

overhaul of both the planning system and housing investment priorities.

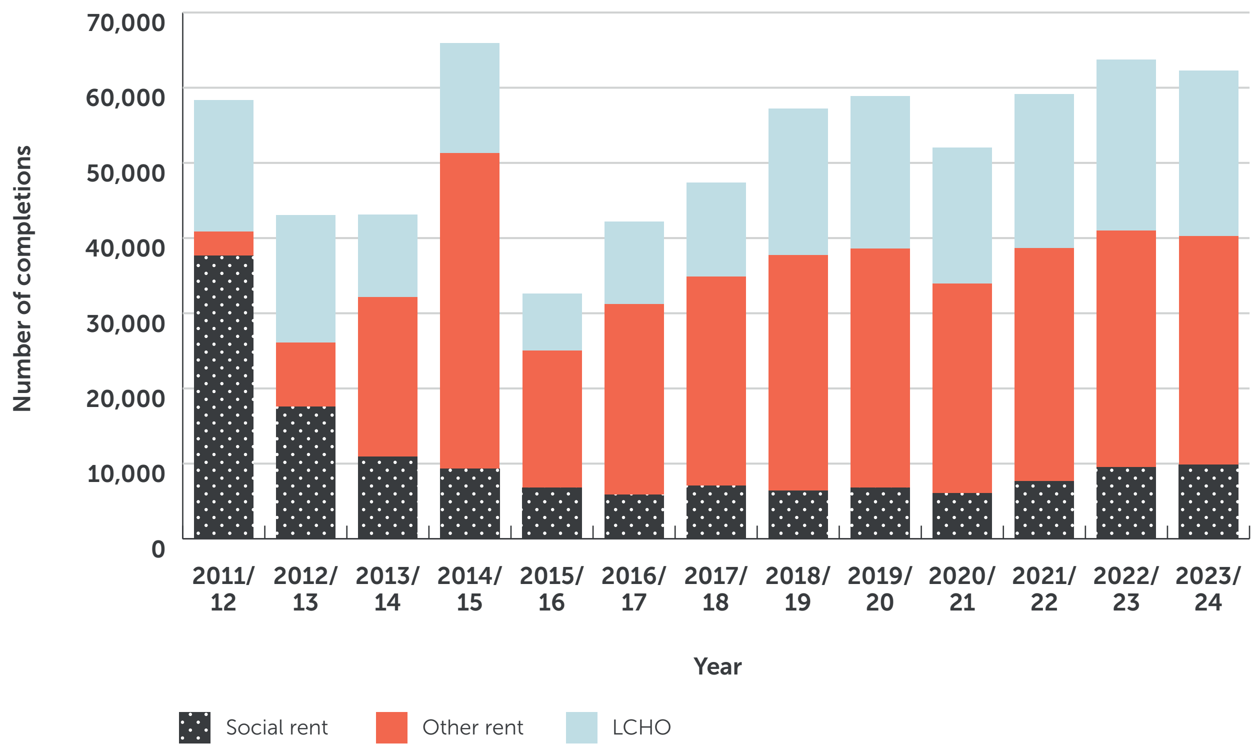
The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[113] and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill[114] contain many measures to accelerate housing development. Mandatory housing targets and five-year demonstrable housing land supply requirements for LAs have been reinstated, underpinned by a revised method for calculating the minimum number of homes to be planned for. Spatial development plans prepared at SA level will be rolled out to facilitate cross-boundary planning and joined up decisions on housing, business growth and infrastructure.[115] Additionally, a new grey belt classification will allow land that contributes little to Green Belt purposes to be reallocated for housing while compulsory purchase procedures aims to enable councils to secure land at a fair price.

113 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) *National Planning Policy Framework*. London: HMSO.

114 Planning and Infrastructure Bill, https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3946/publications

115 This will be further supported by the Government's 10-year infrastructure strategy to support water, energy and transport connections as well as social infrastructure (e.g. doctors' surgeries) required for major housing projects.

Figure 2.11: Affordable housing additions, England, 2010/11 – 2023/24



Source: MHCLG Live Table,1000, additional affordable homes provided, England, accessed July 2025.
Notes: Includes S105 and other nil grant completions. Figures from 2017/18 exclude a small number of affordable completions whose tenure is not known.

Investment in new and existing social and affordable housing

Affordable homes have been prioritised for investment to help households at the sharp end of the housing crisis and to reduce poverty and homelessness.[116] Longer term, the £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) 2026-2036 is currently expected to part fund some 300,000 affordable homes over the 10 year period, including 180,000 (60%) for social rent,[117] although the tenure composition of what will be funded in the first three financial years will only become clear once the SAHP Prospectus is published towards the end of 2025.[118] Nonetheless, it marks a decisive break from the recent past that saw social rent as a share of affordable additions fall from 65% in 2010/11 to 16% in 2023/24, when c10,000 social homes were built (see Figure 2.11).

More immediately, the Affordable Housing Programme 2021-26 has been increased by £850 million to £12.3 billion and refocused on social rent. The National Housing Bank within Homes England will oversee provision of £2.5 billion in low-interest loans to support the delivery

116 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing (Policy Paper)*. London: MHCLG.

117 Ibid.

118 Annual SAHP spending is expected to reach £4bn per year in 2029-30 and then rise in line with inflation, meaning that upwards of three quarters of the £39 billion and most of the 180,000 expected homes will be delivered after 2028/29 and thus in the next parliament.

of SAHP. It will also have £16 billion of financial capacity to make the long-term investment in major housing regeneration projects.[119]

The Government's five step plan for social and affordable housing renewal[120] also aims to give social landlords the stability and confidence to invest in new and existing homes. A ten-year social rent settlement (Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1%) will come into effect from 2026, alongside the re-introduction of rent convergence.[121] Right to Buy (RTB) reforms to protect investment will see RTB discounts further reduced and new homes exempt from RTB for 35 years. Councils will also be given greater flexibility in the use of RTB receipts,[122] while the potential to lower Public Works Loan Board interest rates for new affordable home are under review.

Over the next 18-24 months it will become clearer if these Government building blocks have been sufficient to accelerate housing development but there are reservations about the speed with which planning reforms can take effect.[123] Despite measures so far taken, the pace of delivery could continue to be hampered by escalating building costs, skills shortages and other delivery challenges.[124]

Demand for private sector constructed homes remains uncertain because of the financial constraints faced by consumers. This has been compounded by housing associations becoming wary of acquiring S106 units[125] due to reservations about the suitability and affordability of the units for tenants.[126] So far the Homes England clearing service has done little to restore the appetite for unsold S106 units.[127]

SAHP will make important strides in tackling housing need, but it falls well short of the House of Commons Committee endorsed[128] yearly estimates that 60,000-70,000 social rented homes are needed to 2030 and 90,000 thereafter.[129] SAHP is also backloaded to 2029-30 and beyond, so that much of the funding may not materialise if there is a change of Government in 2029.

Key informants we spoke to broadly welcomed the Labour Government's housing and planning reforms, and in particular that they had pursued a suit of actions spanning planning reform and changes to the RTB alongside investment in new housing supply. The emphasis on social housing supply was especially and robustly welcomed but key informants stressed that the impacts of these policy

119 Minster for Housing and Planning (2025) *National Housing Bank and National Housing Delivery Fund*, Hansard, Volume 769: debated on Wednesday 18 June 2025. Online: Hansard.

120 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing (Policy Paper)*. London: MHCLG.

121 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *How to Implement Social Rent Convergence (Consultation)*. London: MHCLG.

122 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Consultation outcome-Reforming the Right to Buy*. London: MHCLG.

123 The Housing Forum (2025) Roadmap to 1.5 million New Homes - One Year in. London: Housing Forum

124 House Builders Federation (2025) *2025 Government Progress Report*. London: HBF.

125 Messenger, J. (2024) *Riverside To Avoid Bidding For Section 106 Homes 'For The Foreseeable Future.'* Online: Inside Housing.

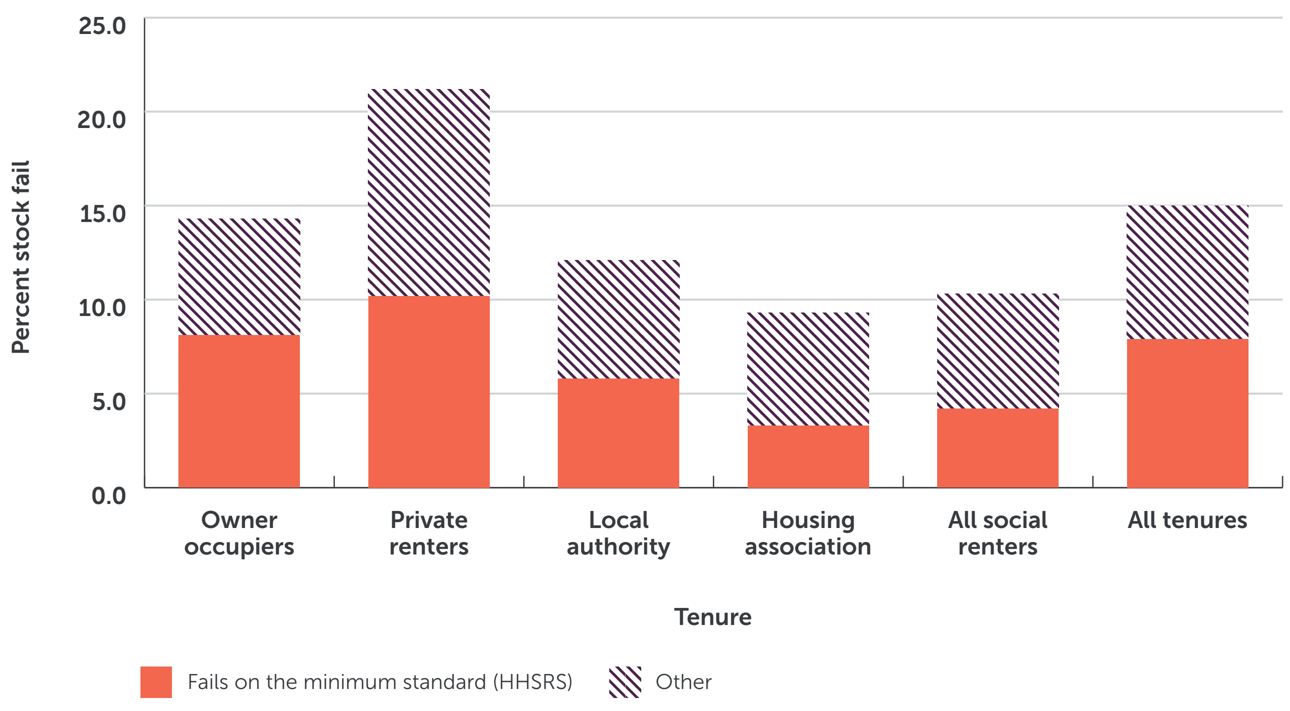
126 Savills (2024) *The Challenges Of Unlocking Section 106 Deliver*. London: Savills.

127 Brown, E. (2025) Less than 10% of estimated unsold Section 106 homes have passed through clearing service Inside Housing (16/07/25). Online: *Inside Housing*.

128 House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2024) *The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector*. Online: Parliament.

129 Bramley, G. (2024) 'How much housing do we need and how should we provide it?' in M. Stephens, J. Perry, P. Williams and G. Young, UK Housing Review 2024. Online: Chartered Institute of Housing

Figure 2.12: Properties failing the Decent Homes Standard in England by tenure, 2023/24



Source: MHCLG (2025) English Housing Survey 2023/24 headline findings (housing quality & energy efficiency)
Note: Fails for other reason includes dwellings that are not HHSRS but fail one or more other decent home criteria such as disrepair criteria, modern facilities criteria and thermal comfort criteria

shifts on homelessness would take time to materialise and were necessary, but not sufficient, to turn the tide on homelessness:

"The mood on boosting housing supply and particularly social housing... [is] broadly positive... what's good here is it's not just about the cash, it's also about the stuff they done around, around planning, around all of that... it's putting all of the pieces of the jigsaw together... we are encouraged that they have said that social housing in particular will be the biggest pot from this allocation... the problem is we're like a desert, and this is you can pour some water on it and that's fantastic, but it's immediately being absorbed. The need is so high."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

"The... big thing from the spending review is the affordable homes programme, which is £39 billion over ten years, which is a significant investment. It's not going to turn the dial immediately, because it takes time to build the homes, but it's the right thing to do, to address the

general shortage of affordable housing in the long term.”

(Key informant statutory sector)

Overall, social housing is in better condition than in other tenures (see Figure 2.12) but the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 underlined the primacy of resident safety and engagement and the provision of safe, quality homes and services. It paved the way for the phasing in of Awaab’s Law between 2025 and 2027.[130] From October 2025, phase one will require social landlords to inspect and fix dangerous damp and mould within set time periods and complete all emergency hazard repairs within 24 hours.

Plans to complete the removal of unsafe cladding from social homes in buildings over 11 meters in height, backed by Government investment of over £1 billion,[131] should ease the cost of complying with building safety regulations. However, the Future Homes Standard[132] and modernised Decent Homes Standard,[133] will put further upward pressure on the cost of constructing new homes, tackling damp and mould and improving energy efficiency of existing homes.

Even allowing for the new rent settlement, deepening financial pressures may see many housing associations continue to prioritise investment in existing rather than new homes. More homes may also be converted from a social rent to affordable rent to raise funds, increasing costs for tenants and Government through higher UC payments.

Funding pressures also extend to local housing authorities, with many having used their reserves to plug shortfalls between expenditure and income.[134] In a recent survey, two-thirds of the 76 council respondents said they were at considerable risk of being unable to set a balanced HRA budget within the next 5 years.[135] Rather than building new homes, some said they may have to sell some homes to fund investment in their remaining stock.[136]

Private renting

Around 20% of homes in England were in the PRS in 2021. It is hard to say conclusively whether the PRS has grown[137] or shrunk[138] since then but the expansion of build to rent[139] and the exit of landlords with small portfolios[140] will have had some impact on scale, composition and geographical spread of the sector since 2021.

130 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Awaab’s Law To Force Landlords To Fix Dangerous Homes – Press Release*. Online: GOV.UK.

131 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Joint Plan To Accelerate Remediation Of Social Housing*. London: MHCLG.

132 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Rooftop Solar For New Builds To Save People Money (Press Release)*. London: MHCLG.

133 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Consultation On A Reformed Decent Homes Standard For Social And Privately Rented Homes*. London: MHCLG.

134 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee (2025) *The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector: Government Response*. Online: Parliament.

135 Southwark Council (2024) *Securing The Future Of England’s Council Housing Report*, Online: Southwark.gov.

136 Riding, J. (2025) Two-Thirds Of Surveyed Councils Fear Housing Budgets Will Collapse By Next General Election. Online: *Inside Housing*.

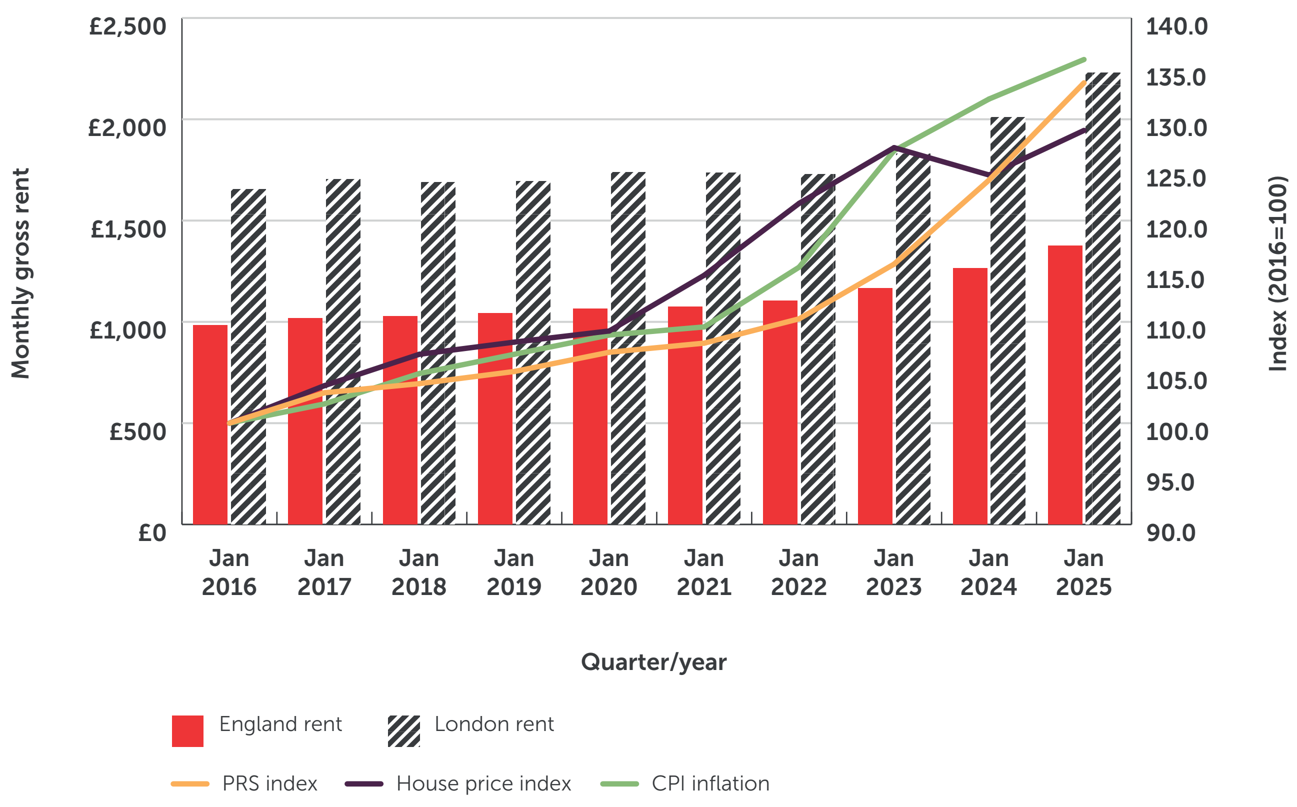
137 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024) *Dwelling Stock Estimates, England: 31 March 2023*. Online: GOV.UK.

138 Bank of England (2023) *Has the private rental sector been shrinking?* Online: Bank of England.

139 BPF (2024) *Build-to-rent map*. Online: BPF.

140 Deposit Protection Service (2023) *The Private Rented Sector Review*. Bristol: DPS

Figure 2.13: Private rents, house prices and inflation January 2016 – January 2025



Source: ONS Price Index of Private Rents, UK House Price Index and Consumer Price Inflation Index

Demand has fallen back since 2024, partly due to lower levels of net migration following visa rule changes, but it continues to outstrip supply. The UK Rental Market Index reports there were 12 ‘would-be’ renters chasing every PRS vacancy in 2024, double the level prior to the pandemic, though demand has significantly dropped back since 2022 and 2023.[141] Excess demand and a reported drop in the pool of private lets at rents close to or below LHA rates,[142] saw above inflation rent increases (23%) in the three years to January 2025 (see Figure 2.13). In London, the uplift was higher still (29%).

On average, households living in the PRS spend far more of their gross income (including benefit income) on housing costs (34%) than social tenants (26%) and mortgagors (19%).[143] Affordability pressures are severest in the capital, where households could expect to spend almost 42% of their income on rent in 2023/24 compared to between 20% and 31% in other English regions. This was despite those living in London having a median gross income of £4,639 per month, almost £1,200 higher than the median for all private renters in England.[144]

141 Donnell, R. (2025) *Rental Market Report: March 2025*. Online: Zoopla.

142 Grayston, R., Hudson, N. & Lloyd, T. (2024) *Is the private rented sector shrinking?* York: JRF.

143 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2024) *English Housing Survey 2023/24*. London: MHCLG.

144 ONS (2024) *Private rental affordability, England, Wales & Northern Ireland: 2023*. London: ONS.

Regulation of the PRS in England is weak compared to elsewhere in Great Britain (GB) and Europe. The new Renters' Rights Bill,[145] which builds on the Renters' (Reform) Bill that failed to get passed before the 2024 general election, will begin to close this gap. At the heart of the bill is the new assured periodic tenancy, which once in place, will mark the end of 'no-fault' evictions and allow tenants to remain in their home indefinitely, unless they choose to move or the landlord meets one of the reformed grounds for possession. The new tenancy will also limit rent uplifts to once a year and advance payments to one month's rent.

The Bill confirms that the modernised Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law will be extended to private landlords for the first time. Monitoring and enforcement should also be bolstered by a PRS Ombudsman Service that landlords will be required to join, the creation of a new national landlord register (the 'PRS Database') and expanded LA powers to investigate and issue civil penalties.

As the Bill approaches its final parliamentary stages, there is a clear risk that homelessness could increase if more landlords react by leaving the sector. There are also concerns about the potential negative impact of the abolition of reapplication duties which currently require local authorities to offer accommodation if the household becomes homeless again within two years of accepting a PRS tenancy, irrespective of whether the household is still in 'priority need'.

Details about key monitoring and enforcement provisions are also lacking. This includes how the Ombudsman and Awaab's law will be applied in the private sector and the capacity of the legal system (including Tribunals) and LAs to enforce changes. Moreover, as private landlords can consider income and ability to afford to pay rent when letting a home, there is a significant risk that clauses to prohibit discrimination against households claiming benefits or having children may have little impact in practice.

We asked respondents to our LA survey about the extent to which they anticipated specific measures in the Bill to help or hinder their efforts to tackle homelessness. The results indicate strong support for the Bill from a homelessness perspective, with most LAs of the view that each of the four measures asked about would help somewhat or significantly. LAs were most optimistic about the impacts of extending notice periods for post possession grounds to four months (74% anticipated this would be helpful in addressing homelessness), with two thirds (66%) expecting the establishment of period open ended tenancies in full to be helpful and well over half (58%) expecting restrictions to rent in advance to positively impact. A smaller but still high proportion of respondents (49%) thought the abolition of Section 21 evictions would help efforts to address homelessness in their area.

Alongside this overall positive set of expectations, between 14% and 29% of LAs expressed misgivings about the potential negative and mixed impacts of the Bill. These concerns were greatest in relation to the abolition of Section 21 evictions, where 16% of LAs anticipated mixed impacts and 13% anticipated the measure would hinder homelessness responses. A key concern here was that enhanced tenure security would lead landlords to sell their properties, driving homelessness in the short term and limiting its potential as a route out of homeless in the longer-term:

145 See https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3764/publications

Table 2.2: To what extent, if at all, do you think the measures proposed in the Renters' Rights Bill will help or hinder your efforts to prevent and address homelessness in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

Measure	Help significantly	Help somewhat	Will make little difference	Hinder significantly	Hinder somewhat	Will have mixed impacts	Total	N=
Abolition of Section 21 evictions	21	38	11	6	7	16	100	154
Extend notice periods for most grounds to four months	19	55	13	1	5	8	100	155
Establish periodic open-ended tenancies in full	16	50	16	3	7	8	100	147
Restricting rent payments in advance to one month	17	41	22	4	10	6	100	156

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses.

"The renters right bill will result in a large reduction in the private rented sector."

(LA, North)

Anxiety was also expressed that enhanced tenant security under the Act would make landlords more selective and risk averse in who they let to, disadvantaging households experiencing or at risk of homelessness or reliant upon benefits to pay their rent:

"There is likely to be a short terms rise in evictions ahead of implementation, and potential reluctance and risk aversion to taking on some people/ families deemed more risky."

(LA, South)

In total a fifth of LAs also voiced concerns that restricting rent in advance payments to one month would undermine homelessness or have mixed impacts, with the primary concern here that this would damage LAs' landlord incentive schemes reliant on substantial up-front payments:

"Restricting payments in advance means that we are unable to offer this as an incentive to Landlords."

(LA, Midlands)

Accessing high quality and affordable social housing

Between 2014 and 2024 the total number of low cost rented homes owned by social landlords in England, increased from around 4,082,700 to 4,234,000, driven by an increase in homes let on an Affordable Rent basis (c. 310,900), which more than offset the loss of 150,600 homes let on a social rented basis (c. 150,600).[146] Nonetheless, the flow of social lettings, of which around 18% are now let on an affordable rent basis, has continued to shrink. This has made it progressively more difficult to secure a tenancy from a social landlord. Between 2011/12 and 2023/24 the number of lettings to households new to the social rented sector (e.g. new social tenant lettings) fell from 267,000 to 174,000 as turnover slowed.

Changes in the data published by MHCLG mean that it is not currently possible to separate out general needs and supported lettings to new social tenants. However, there has been a recent increase in the proportion of all general needs lets made to statutory homeless households - defined to include those owed a prevention, relief or main homeless duty - particularly amongst housing associations. Nonetheless, over two thirds (69%) of LAs we surveyed reported that accessing social housing for households facing homelessness had gotten harder over the past year, rising to 92% of LAs in the North, though much lower at 53% in London.

The previous government's contentious plan to introduce six new qualification tests to favour UK nationals when allocating social housing, which risked pushing more people into homelessness, were abandoned in August 2024.[147] Instead, updated statutory guidance was issued in December 2024 by the Labour Government confirming LAs should exempt veterans, domestic abuse victims and young care leavers from local connection tests.[148] This looks set to be followed by policy efforts to encourage increased churn within the sector to allow people to move to more suitable homes.[149]

Evictions

Evictions in the rental sector impact on homelessness and can have compounding negative impacts on health and wellbeing.[150] Eviction action pursued through the courts has been on an upward trend since emergency pandemic measures to prevent evictions ended.

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 (see Figure 2.15). While social landlord claims (34,982) remained well below pre-pandemic levels in 2024, private landlord claims were 48% higher at 61,590, over half of which were accelerated claims (32,287) initiated following a Section 21 (no-fault) notice.

146 Regulator of Social Housing (2024) *Registered provider social housing stock and rents in England 2023 to 2024*. Online: GOV.UK.

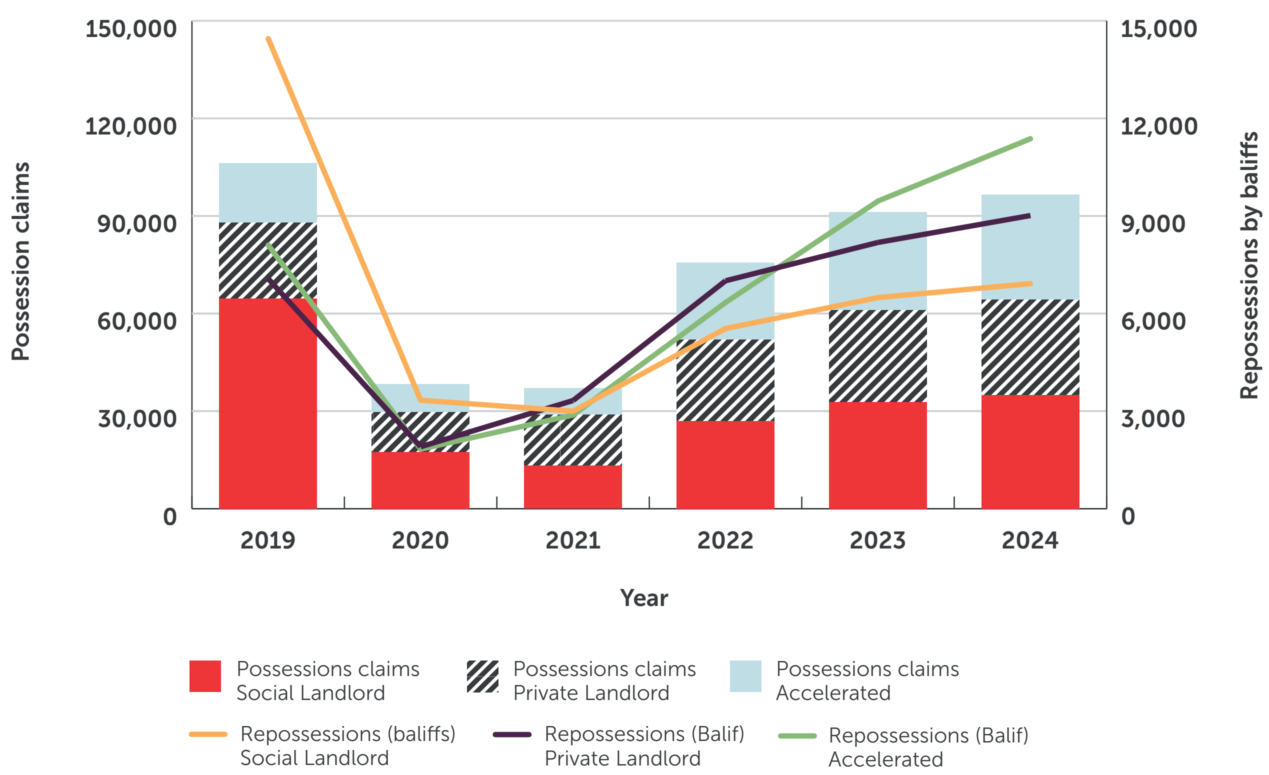
147 Betts, C.(2024) *Reforms to Social Housing Allocation - Letter from Levelling UP Housing and Communities Committee*. Online: Parliament.

148 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024) *Providing social housing for local people*. London: MHCLG.

149 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing (Policy Paper)*. London: MHCLG.

150 Smith, P. D., Keene, D. E., Dilday, S., Blankenship, K. M., & Groves, A. K. (2024) Eviction From Rental Housing And Its Links To Health: A Scoping Review, *Health & Place*, 86: 103-182

Figure 2.14: Annual private and social landlord eviction court action in England, 2019 – 2024



Source: Ministry of Justice, Mortgage and Landlord Possession statistics- accessed April 2025

Since the abolition of 'no fault' eviction was first promised in April 2019, over 107,000 private tenants have been served a S21 possession claim and 33,729 have been subsequently evicted by bailiffs, including 11,373 households in 2024 alone. The rapid rise in S21 possession claims and evictions have been a major contributor to rising homelessness, with close to a fifth of households threatened with homelessness and owed a prevention duty having been served a S21 in the first 9 months of 2024 (see also Chapter 4).[151]

While households with mortgage arrears have increased slightly in the three years to December 2024, there were only 3,233 bailiff enforced re-possessions in England in 2024. Mortgage repossessions are therefore unlikely to become a significant contributor to homeless presentations in the near future.

151 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) Homeless statistics. London: DLUHC.

3. Rough sleeping and wider homelessness Policy

Key findings

The official estimate of people sleeping rough in England grew by 20% in the year to November 2024, to stand at 4,667. Since the low point achieved in 2020 in the context of pandemic measures, the national total has almost doubled. 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 has likely to have been driven in significant part by Home Office efforts under the previous Conservative Government to 'clear the backlog' of asylum decisions, leaving higher numbers both being granted refugee status and facing eviction from Home Office accommodation and receiving negative decisions leaving them with No Recourse to Public Funds.

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 TA, 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 following the passing of the Crime and Policing Bill.

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. It is not yet clear whether the Government will pursue the scaling up and mainstreaming of housing-led and Housing First responses to rough sleeping, nor whether they will continue efforts to raise quality of night shelters and in particular phase out harmful dormitory-style 'shared air' shelters.

If implemented effectively, the Government's target to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within ten years and associated actions to strengthen responses to domestic abuse could have significant implications for homelessness if achieved, 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.

Over half (57%) of LAs who reported having poor quality supported exempt accommodation in their area anticipate that forthcoming regulations will help address this issue. However, over a third (39%) were concerned that these regulations would also have wider mixed or negative impacts, namely that they would reduce supply and limit accommodation options for single people. Key stakeholders also welcomed the implementation of new regulations, but raised concerns that there continues to be no Government focus on addressing long-term underinvestment in support provision.

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 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 TA challenge** via more investment, better regulation and changes to TA subsidy rules that fail to cover the true cost of TA.

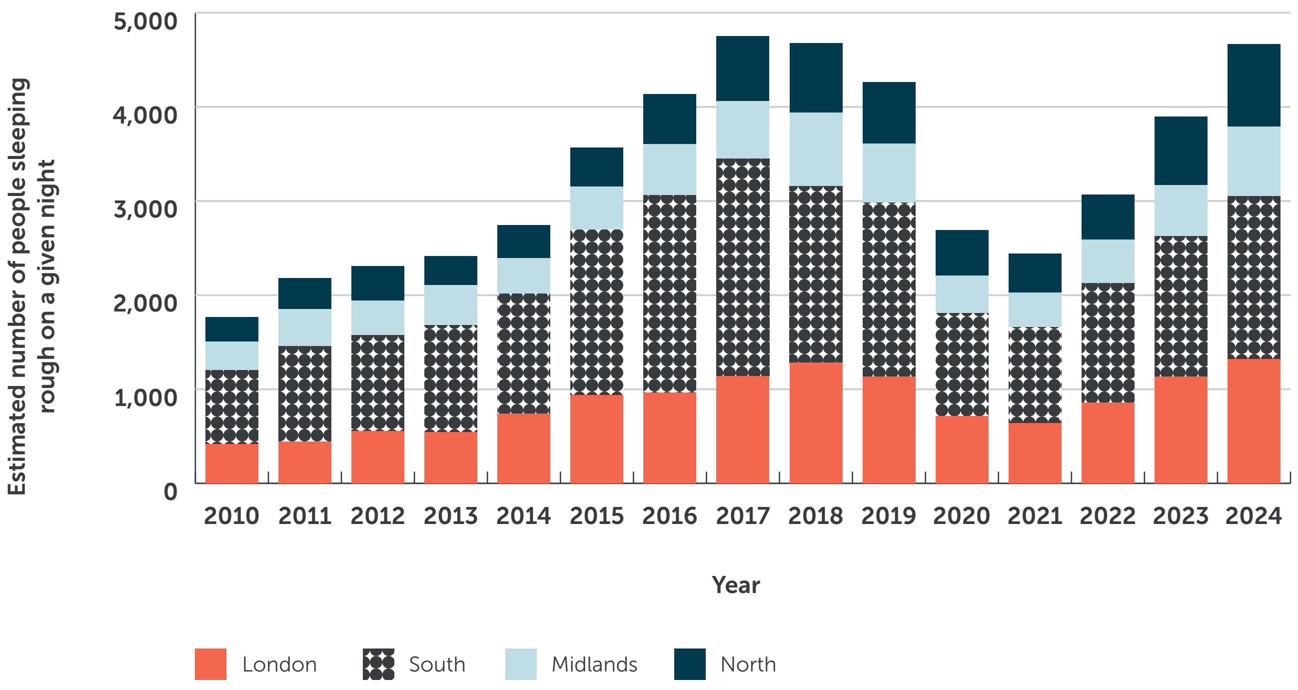
3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the recent evolution homelessness-specific policies, drawing on key informant perspectives, LA survey data and wider research and policy analysis. A crucial development has of course been the election of a new Labour Government, who committed in their manifesto to developing *"a new cross-government strategy… to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness"*. Despite initial expectations that the strategy would be published in Spring 2025, the Government then pushed back this date to Autumn 2025 and at the time of writing (September 2025) it is yet to have been made public. It is also unclear what impact changes in ministerial leadership following the resignation of key ministers and subsequent reshuffle will have on the timing or content of the new strategy.[152]

In the final section of this chapter (3.5), we consider key informant and LA hopes and expectations for the strategy. Before that, we focus in on three specific policy areas or themes, these being rough sleeping (Section 3.2), funding commitments on homelessness (Section 3.3); domestic abuse (Section 3.4) and developments in relation to the regulation of supported exempt accommodation (Section 3.5). The opening Section on rough sleeping begins with a review of key data on recent trends in the scale of rough sleeping across England.

152 Teixeira, L. (2025) *Why leadership at the centre matters in efforts to prevent homelessness*. Online: CHI; McKiernan, J. & Eardley, N. (2025) *Homelessness Minister Rushanara Ali quits over rent hike claims*. 7 August. Online: BBC; Weakley, K. (2025) *McGovern to be local government and homelessness minister*. Online: LGC; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government & The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP (2025) *Housing Secretary issues 'call to arms' to 'build, baby, build.'* Online: GOV.UK.

Figure 3.1: Rough sleeping in England, as officially estimated, 2010 – 2024



Source: MHCLG

3.2 Rough sleeping

The scale of and trends in rough sleeping

According to the latest Government statistics, 4,667 people were recorded sleeping rough on a night in November 2024. This figure was collated from LA 'snapshot' counts and estimates,[153] steered by official guidance and independently verified,[154] but such methods are inherently imperfect, and best conceived as offering a minimum estimate. The Women's rough sleeping census report, for example, suggests that ten times as many women may be sleeping rough than are identified through the Government's annual snapshot.[155]

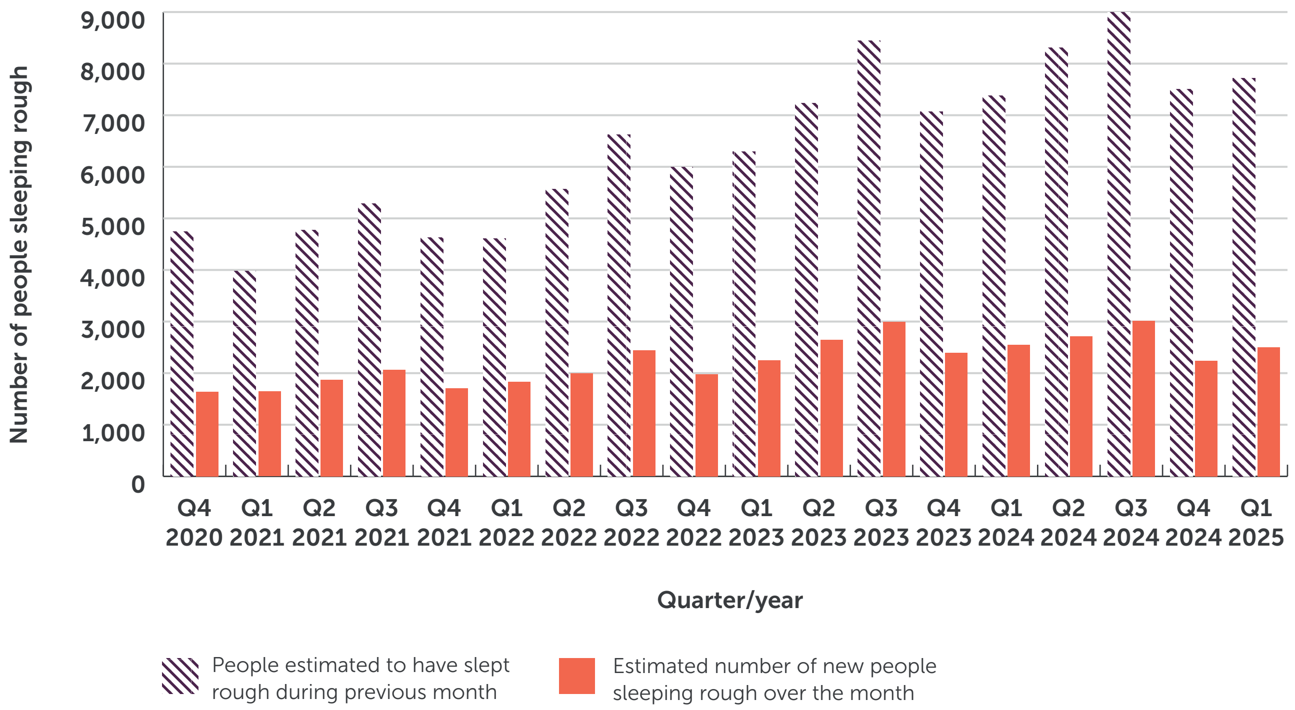
As shown in Figure 3.1, the national trend of these snapshot estimates has continued on an upward path, growing by 20% in the previous year. Increases were largest in the Midlands (36%) and the North (20%), whereas the comparable increase for both London and the South was 16%. Since its low point in 2020 – reflecting unprecedent measures put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic – the national rough sleeper total has almost doubled (up by 91%). If this growth continues during the current year, rough sleeping levels will exceed their post-2010 high, reached in 2017, by the November 2025 annual count.

153 In 2024, count-based statistics were submitted by 16% of LAs, with 84% of submissions being estimates of various kinds, in line with norms over the past decade.

154 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2024*. Online: MHCLG.

155 Wright, S., Greenhalgh, E., Nathie, L. & Campbell, L. (2025) *How do we sleep at night: Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2024 Report*. Online: Change Grow Live.

Figure 3.2: People estimated to have slept rough during previous month (last month of each quarter), England, 2020 – 2025



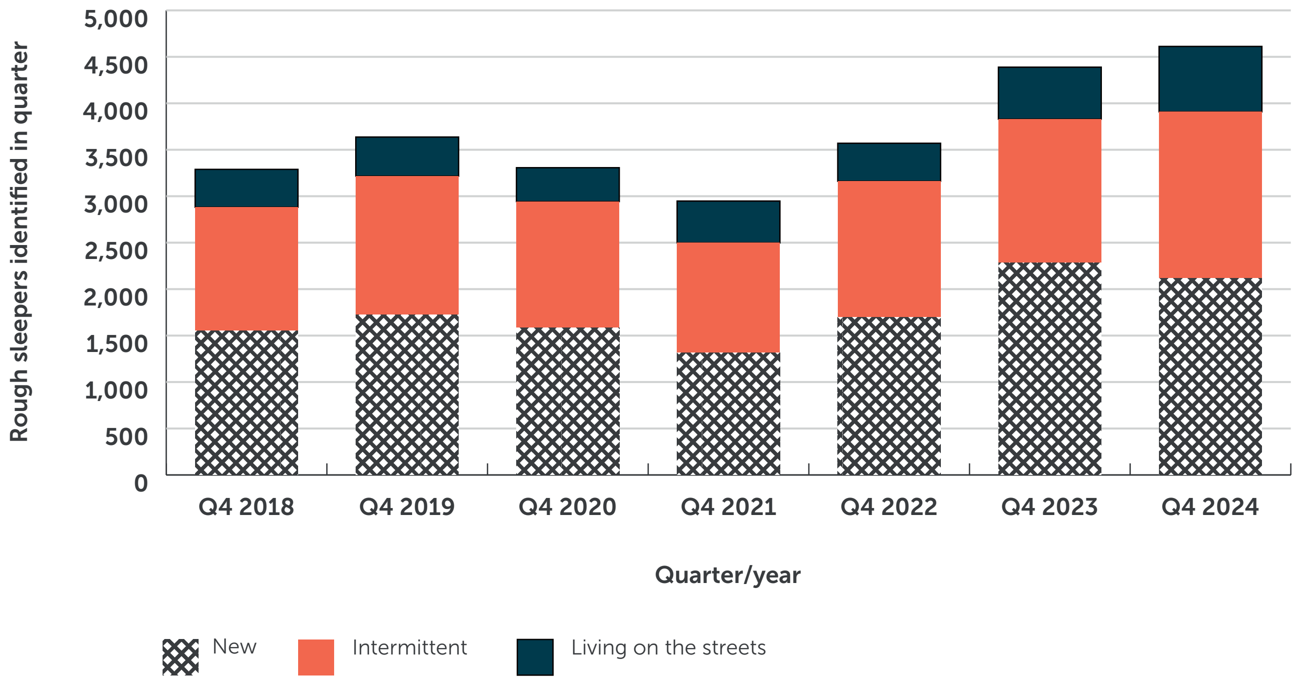
Source: MHCLG – drawn from monthly local authority monitoring data

Since 2020, the UK Government has also collected 'monthly management information' on rough sleeping from all LAs in England, including an estimate of the number of people having slept rough *during* the previous month. During November 2024, 9,256[156] people were estimated to have slept rough, around double the nightly snapshot count (see Figure 3.1). Trends in this measure (focusing on the last month of each quarter) are shown in Figure 3.2, alongside the estimated numbers of *new* rough sleepers in that month. While the patterns evident here are influenced by seasonality, they also indicate generally upward trends since 2022, with the number of people estimated as having slept rough during March 2025 68% higher than in March 2022, and 5% higher than in March 2024. The estimated number of new rough sleepers in March 2025 was 36% higher than in March 2022, but down by 2% over the previous year.

Rough sleeping numbers and trends for London are of particular interest. London accounts for just over a quarter of the official national total (see Figure 3.1), and MHCLG estimate of rough sleeping rates in London in November 2024 were 14.7 persons per 100,000 population, well above the national rate of 8.1. Rough sleeping in London is also much more

156 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *Rough sleeping data framework*, March 2025. Online: MHCLG. The discrepancy between these two figures indicates the fluidity of the population cohort experiencing rough sleeping during any given period: the number of people sleeping rough on at least one night during a given month may be about double the number identifiable on any given night.

Figure 3.3: London rough sleepers enumerated Q4 2018 – 2024: breakdown by assessed status



Source: Greater London Authority (GLA)/CHAIN. Note: 'Q4' meaning October-December.

intensively monitored than elsewhere in England, via the Greater London Authority's Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) system managed by St Mungo's. CHAIN data is collated from agencies who provide services to homeless people in London and is thus not directly comparable with the LA count/estimate data published by MHCLG.[157]

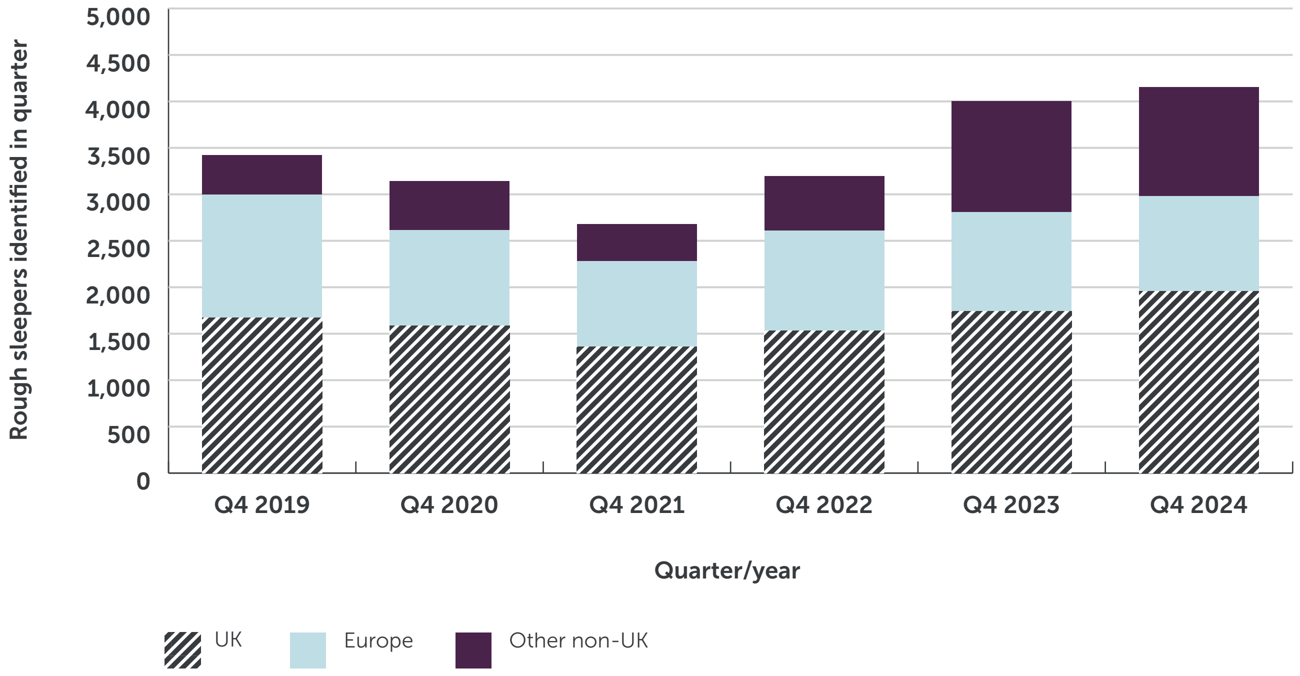
The recent CHAIN statistics trend shown in Figure 3.3, nevertheless, triangulates quite well with the MHCLG annual estimates for the past few years, albeit that the CHAIN peak year was 2019 rather than 2017 for London in the MHCLG series (Figure 3.1). Since 2019, a marked reduction in CHAIN-recorded numbers during the height of the pandemic was followed by an upward trend, with total quarterly observations in Q4 2024 27% higher than in Q4 2019, immediately prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

The overall increase in the year to Q4 2024 was 5%, but this hides a much more significant increase of 26% (to 704) in the numbers 'living on the streets' i.e. sleeping rough long-term.[158] This is consistent with a long-term increase in the numbers identified as rough sleeping in at least two

157 Because this method enumerates people who have slept rough during a given period (financial year) the resulting figures cannot be directly compared with the annual 'point in time' statistics produced under the MHCLG national monitoring methodology as described above (see Figure 3.1). Whilst more similar to the MHCLG monthly monitoring statistics shown in Figure 3.2, they are non-comparable because of the different time frames involved (monthly in the MHCLG series rather than quarterly in the CHAIN series), as well as because of likely differences in data quality.

158 Defined in the GLA/CHAIN statistics as 'Those who have had a high number of contacts over 3 weeks or more which suggests they are living on the streets'.

Figure 3.4: London rough sleepers enumerated Q4 2019 – 2024: breakdown by nationality



Source: GLA/CHAIN. Note: Figures adjusted to allow for observations where nationality is missing or not known – i.e. the numbers shown here are estimates that assume under-enumeration of each nationality is consistent with the overall incidence of nationality under-counting.

consecutive years. Only briefly interrupted by the pandemic, this number grew by 69% in the decade to 2023/24.

Non-UK nationals have accounted for the majority of those sleeping rough in London since 2022 (see Figure 3.4), following a sharp increase in the non-European cohort during 2022 and 2023 (see Figure 3.5). Highly likely to be relevant here are increases in the numbers claiming asylum in the UK since 2020[159] and Home Office efforts under the previous Conservative Government to 'clear the backlog' of decisions on asylum applications,[160] meaning higher numbers both being granted refugee status and facing eviction from Home Office accommodation and receiving negative decisions leaving them with NRPF.[161] Both types of decision fell dramatically in 2024 Q1-3 as many claims were on hold under the Illegal Migration Act 2023 but expanded sharply again in 2024 Q4, after the change of government.[162] As shown in Figure 3.4, however, in the year to 2024 Q4 it was only within the 'UK national' cohort that rough sleeping numbers rose – up by 12%.

In the core homelessness analysis presented in Chapter 5, we use a range

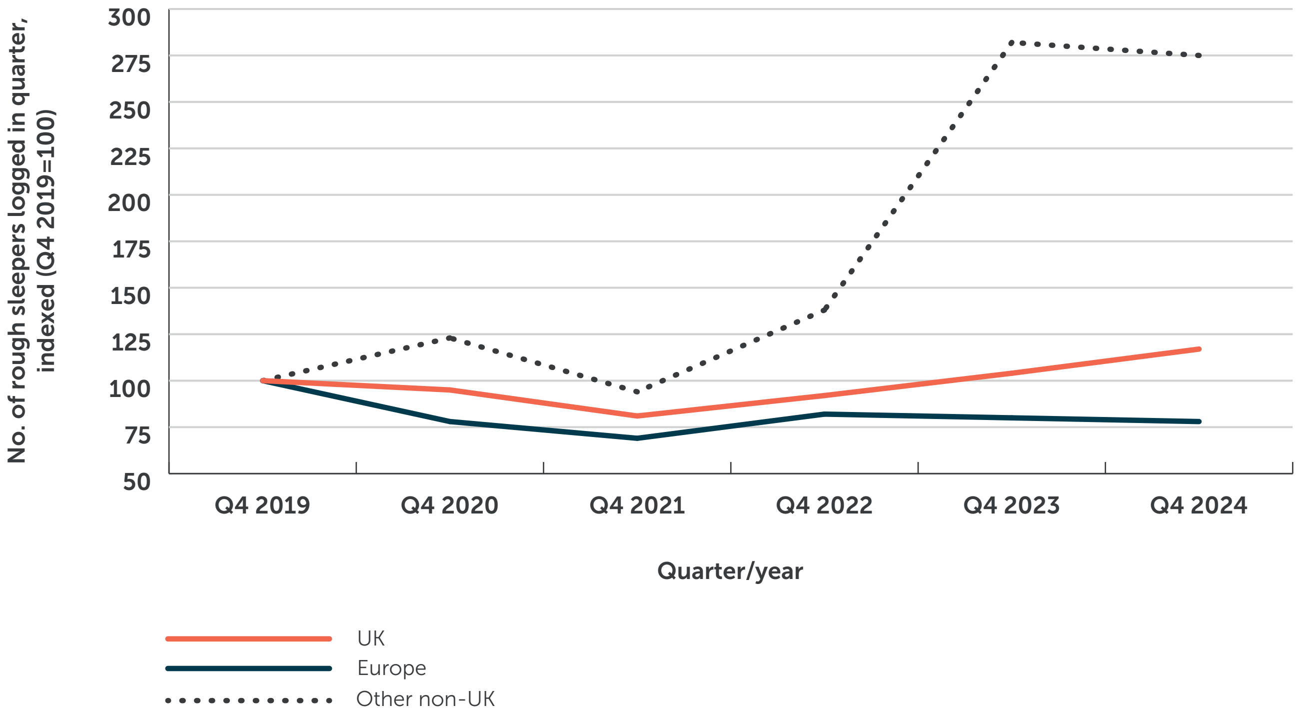
159 Home Office (2024) *Accredited official statistics: How many people claim asylum in the UK?* 28 November. Online: Home Office.

160 The Migration Observatory (2025) *The UK's asylum backlog*. Online: The Migration Observatory.

161 Home Office (2024) *Accredited official statistics: How many people claim asylum in the UK?* 28 November. Online: Home Office.

162 Ibid.

Figure 3.5: London rough sleepers enumerated Q4 2019 – 2024: breakdown by nationality, indexed to Q4 2019 (Q4 2019 = 100)



Source: GLA/CHAIN

data sources to estimate of the scale of rough sleeping in England. These include the official annual count data, alongside CHAIN data and results from the Destitution in the UK Survey funded by JRF. These other sources vary in robustness, but they do in various ways overcome the limitations of 'point-in-time' counts and estimates as rehearsed at length in previous editions of the Homelessness Monitor England.[163]

Current estimates and projections for rough sleeping in Chapter 5 show a rise from just under 12,000 in 2022 to 15,700 in 2023 and 16,500 in 2022. This follows a sharp rise between 2020 and 2022, and parallels rises estimated for other key elements of core homelessness, namely unsuitable TA and sofa surfing.

Factors driving these increases include the cost of living crisis and its particularly adverse effects on the lowest income groups, taken in conjunction with the limitations of the welfare benefit system in covering these costs, not least in the PRS. Additionally, the record international migration numbers in the period 2021-24, including pressures and changes in the asylum system, have been significant in London and some other areas.

Developments in rough sleeping policy

Tackling rough sleeping was a high priority for respective Conservative-led Governments in the pre-2024 election period, with a target to 'end rough sleeping' by 2027 introduced by Theresa

163 See https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-monitor/

May in 2018 and then accelerated (to 2024) by Boris Johnson, supported by two iterations of a Rough Sleeping Strategy and significant investment via the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) programme.[164] Despite this and the very significant gains on rough sleeping made thanks to 'Everyone In' measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen in the prior section that Johnson's target was (on any measure) missed by a very significant margin.

In February 2025, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee published the findings of its inquiry into rough sleeping over winter 2024/25, concluding that:

"We are in a rough sleeping emergency right now, with people who previously weren't at risk of sleeping rough becoming vulnerable. It is a source of national shame that the number of people sleeping rough is not only high, but has increased in recent years."[165]

The committee made 19 recommendations, including taking measures to help people to sustain their tenancies (by ending Section 21 eviction among other means); reviewing the welfare assistance available to those on low incomes (ensuring UC payments cover essentials, ending the 5-week wait); building more social and genuinely affordable housing; restoring Supporting People-type funding for supported housing services; making the trial extension of the move-on period for asylum seekers to 56 days permanent; and reviewing the guidance LAs have regard to in fulfilling their statutory homelessness duties, in particular as this relates to the impact of the priority need and intentionality tests that ration access to the full rehousing duty under homelessness legislation and local connection rules that determine where that duty sits.

Some of these actions are already underway, notably the ending of Section 21 evictions via the Renters' Rights Bill and substantial investment in the Affordable Homes Programme (see chapter 2). In response to the Committee's recommendations, the Government stated that it would *"consider the issues… raised and make any changes to the guidance as necessary following publication of our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy"*. Other recommendations appear to have been rejected already. Most notably, the Government has decided to end the pilot trialling an extension in the time newly granted refugees are given to find accommodation before they are evicted from Home Office asylum accommodation from 28 to 56 days (albeit with some exemptions),[166] despite recognition that rough sleeping among this group was higher prior to the pilot and that the pilot evaluation is yet to be published.[167]

More broadly, it remains to be seen what approach to rough sleeping the new Labour Government will take, including

164 For a fuller review see Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., McMordie, L., Pawson, H., Watts-Cobbe, B., & Young, G., (2023) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2023*. London: Crisis.

165 UK Parliament (2025) *Correspondence: Rough Sleeping*. Online: Parliament. p.3

166 These being families, single pregnant women, people over 65 and people with disabilities.

167 Delahunty, S. (2025) Member bodies 'appalled' and 'disappointed' by Home Office plan to halve time asylum seekers given to find accommodation. Online: *Inside Housing*; Taylor, D. (2025) Home Office plans to halve time asylum seekers given to find accommodation. Online: *Guardian*.

whether it will adopt rough sleeping reduction or 'ending' targets as previous administrations have. The Labour Government have already, however, made a range of funding decisions on rough sleeping. Their first Budget consolidated the RSI and Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme into the 'Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant', which was allocated £185.6 million. A budget allocation of £10 million to the Winter Pressures Fund was subsequently increased twice, ultimately to £60 million in total,[168] targeting 295 areas facing the highest homelessness pressures.[169] Asked about these developments, most LAs (63%) saw the continuation of RSI funding, albeit under a new name, as 'very important' in enabling them to prevent and relieve homelessness in their area:

"The Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant, now the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant has been very important to trial new ways of working to help tackle the causes and incidents of rough sleeping across [name of authority]."

(LA, North)

But some were also clear that the funding allocated was far from sufficient to meet demand or even cover the cost of current services:

"The sums allocated... have been a stopgap funding measure only, and... do not reflect the current pressures in [name of area]."

(LA, North)

While welcoming additional funds to cover winter pressures, LAs were frustrated – and sometimes scathing – about the *"shambolic"* (LA, South) way in which announcements had been made and the short time periods within which they were required to spend the funding:

"The rough sleeping winters pressures money would have been a fantastic addition had we not got it so late and to be used within a month of receiving the uplift."

(LA, North)

"The [way the] Winter Pressures fund was allocated [in], 3 separate payments... was extremely challenging. It felt like a headline grabber, rather than a considered and sustainable source of funding."

(LA, South)

The current Government's forthcoming strategy should also reveal the extent to which Housing First approaches will form part of their response to rough sleeping. The previous Government sought to test the role of Housing First via three regional pilots in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Liverpool, supported by an initial £28 million of funding in 2018

168 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Rushanara Ali MP (2025) *Emergency homelessness fund boosted to £60 million*. Online: GOV.UK.

169 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Rough sleeping winter pressures 2024-25 funding allocations*. Online: MHCLG.

followed by £13.9 million in 2022. Since then funding for Housing First has come from other funding streams, including RSI, Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme and Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme.[170] The final evaluation of the Housing First pilots, published in 2024, reported that over 1,000 people had been accommodated via the programme, with very high tenancy sustainment rates (92%) recorded after a year and a cost-benefit analysis indicating that the pilots had secured benefits (comprising reduced costs and enhanced wellbeing) equal to their costs in just one year, with expected benefits anticipated to be 2:1 in the long-term.[171]

According to key informants, these regional pilots had had different impacts across the country. In the West Midlands, it was suggested that while housing providers had *"really adapted and do it"*, more generally the programme had *"largely just been dumped"* now that there is no specific programme or funding for the support element (Key informant voluntary sector). In Greater Manchester, by contrast, the Housing First 'philosophy' was reported to have *"become really fundamental in terms of an overall approach to housing and homelessness"* albeit that the Combined Authority and services within it are *"still grappling with what that means strategically"* (Key informant statutory sector).

In London and other non-pilot areas, we heard about models that sought to provide self-contained, longer-term accommodation with flexible and personalised support focused on harm reduction and community integration to people with experience of rough sleeping and complex needs, but that fell short of high-fidelity Housing First:

"We've got an accommodation scheme for rough sleepers that we did as part of the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme ... which we operate on Housing First methodology. It's not true Housing First, but we don't require people to be sober."

(Key informant statutory sector sector)

"We don't have anything that we would describe as meeting the full Housing First principles. We do have... properties, which we've actually seen some really good success from... [that] give people that direct access to accommodation from sleeping rough, but yes, it's not quite Housing First."

(Key informant statutory sector)

The London Mayor's Plan of Action to end rough sleeping in the capital by 2030 includes a strong emphasis on *"delivering rapid, sustainable routes away from the streets"*, including by increasing the capacity of the Clearing House model (now Homes off the Streets) of long-term housing and support by renovating 500

170 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots Final synthesis report*. Online: MHCLG.

171 Ibid.

empty social homes.[172] One key informant the expansion of such approaches as a *"good step"*, cautioning against getting *"caught up"* in the idea that *"unless it's high fidelity [Housing First], it's not of value"*:

"What it provides is scope to get closer to the kind of support model that Housing First has, the kind of conditions around housing that Housing First has, the separation between landlord and support provider."

(Key informant statutory sector)

Key informants suggested a range of barriers, however, to the effective implementation of rapid rehousing responses to rough sleeping, like Housing First, including a lack of recognition that Housing First represents good value; political barriers; and – crucially – a lack of Government funding:

"It is [expensive] upfront, but not if you're considering the fact that that person probably won't come back around the system again... we desperately need government to come on board... to fund the revenue side for that in such a way that recognises the total benefit to public services."

(Key informant statutory sector)

"It would be very useful to have more [Housing First], due to the multiple layers of complexity that some of our residents have... [but] historically Housing First is only ever fully funded for a short period of time... [and] as soon as you lose that support, Housing First becomes an absolute disaster... It's also quite politically sensitive as well... accommodating someone that has high levels of substance abuse, really chaotic person, high levels of mental health problems... [it] can be a bit of a political tinderbox really."

(Key informant statutory sector)

Homeless Link and Crisis continue to call for a national Housing First programme[173] and in exchanges with Government following their inquiry into rough sleeping, the Housing, Communities and Local Government pushed the government:

"To clarify what funding, if any, will be available for councils looking to set up Housing First programmes from 2026 onward, and what guidance and other support will be available... for ensuring these programmes can replicate the successes identified in the evaluation of the pilot schemes."[174]

In stark contrast to such housing-led responses to rough sleeping, historically, dormitory style shelters, often run during winter or cold-weather periods only and by church or faith-based groups have been a dominant response to rough sleeping in England. This is despite the manifold physical health, wellbeing and psychological harms, as well as societal costs, associated with them.[175] The COVID-19 pandemic marked a critical juncture for night shelters globally, as it brought into sharp relief the public health hazard of such 'shared air' provision.[176] In England, this resulted in the closure of shelters as part of the 'Everyone In' response.[177]

In 2022, the Government announced the three-year £10 million Night Shelters Transformation Fund, administered in partnership with Homeless Link and Housing Justice and later extended to 2025/26 with £3.5 million additional funding. The programme aimed to improve the quality of, and outcomes associated with shelters, with a strong focus on transitioning to single room provision and ensuring sustainable move on. One key informant emphasised the responsiveness of shelter providers to this funding, stressing that the shift it had engendered towards single room accommodation (where building-type allowed) had been *"really, really valuable"* (Key informant voluntary sector).

Wider key informants painted a highly variable picture in terms of current shelter provision across the country. In some areas, shared air night shelters no longer operate and there is a clear ambition to avoid this form of provision. In Greater Manchester for example, Mayor Andy Burnham's A Bed Every Night programme offers single room accommodation to people who would otherwise be sleeping rough, including people with NRPF. Elsewhere, there is a focus on ensuring that shared-air provision is operated in partnership with LAs and on a strict triage basis, accessible to individuals for one or two nights while alternative arrangements are made. In others, despite the preferences of local decision makers, faith-based organisations continue to run traditional night shelter models:

"We have a winter night shelter that the church group runs... [in] a different premises available each night. We used to fund that pre-COVID... I've never been a huge fan... You give someone a bed during the night, in the morning they're back out on the street again, and at the end of the winter

172 Mayor of London & London Assembly (2025) *The Mayor's Rough Sleeping Plan of Action 2025*. Online: London Assembly.

173 Homeless Link (2024) *Building a case for Housing First: Regional Pilots final evaluation report*. Online: *Homeless Link*.

174 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee (2025) Letter: Rough Sleeping Inquiry: follow-up to Government response. Online: Parliament.

175 Watts-Cobbe, B., Fitzpatrick, S., & McMordie, L. (2025). Beyond Shelters: Unpacking Global Lessons from Scotland's Journey Towards Housing Justice. *International Journal on Homelessness*, 3(3), 1–26.

176 Fitzpatrick, S., Busch-Geertsema, V., Watts, B., Wood, J., Haj Ahmad, M.-T., & McIntyre, J. (2022). *Ending Street Homelessness in Vanguard Cities Across the Globe: An International Comparative Study*; Story, A., & Hayward, A. C. (2020). *Public Health Rationale for NOT Opening/Re-Opening Communal Airspace Sleeping Facilities for Homeless People during the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic*. London: Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion health, UCL Collaborative Centre for Inclusion Health.

177 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B., & Sims, R. (2020) Online: Crisis.

they haven't particularly got them an outcome in all cases."

(Key informant statutory sector)

Elsewhere, for example in London, shelters are seen as an important part of the service landscape, not least because they are an important source of shelter for migrants with NRPF who have very limited other options:

"In London it's seen as a continued really important part of the puzzle, because there is so much of it, and it caters to people that are ineligible and have no recourse. I think that element of it is seen as really critical in London."

(Key informant statutory sector)

Looking ahead, a key development in rough sleeping policy is set come into force in spring 2026, when the Government has committed to finally repealing[178] the Vagrancy Act, nineteenth century legislation that made both begging and rough sleeping criminal offences, punishable by fines of up to £1,000.[179] This comes after a decades long campaign emphasising that its antiquated approach is out-of-step with current evidence on how best to provide support to people experiencing rough sleeping.[180] The Government has committed to repeal the Act following the passing of the Crime and Policing Bill.

Significant progress had been made on this matter under previous-Conservative Governments, including via commitments made in the 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy to review the legislation.[181] Following the review, in 2021, Robert Jenrick, then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, called the Act an *"an antiquated piece of legislation whose time has been and gone"*.[182] In 2022, Parliament supported the repeal of the Act via an amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which received Royal Assent in April 2022. However, no commencement date was included in the amendment, so the Vagrancy Act remained in force.

In Autumn 2023, the then Government consulted on measures to replace it via the Criminal Justice Bill.[183] Proposals to introduce provisions replicating key elements of the Vagrancy Act prompted shock and concern from the sector,[184] but the legislation ultimately failed to progress into law prior to the election. Post-election, the Kings Speech included a new Crime and Policing Bill which includes provisions to address anti-social behaviour including street drinking through the introduction of new 'Respect Orders', but does not include provisions to criminalise rough sleeping.[185] The Bill was introduced in February 2025, and is currently making its way through Parliament.[186]

3.3 Funding commitments

Further to the changes in rough sleeping funding discussed in the previous section, a range of other funding announcements and changes have been made on homelessness. In November 2024, in her first Budget since Labour came to power, the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, announced £233 million for 2025-26 for LAs to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, taking total spending from £767 million to £1 billion in 2025-26.[187] This includes a £192.9 million increase to the Homelessness Prevention Grant, bringing it to £633 million, the largest share of homelessness funding. Over two thirds (69%) of LA survey respondents felt this increase in funding was very important to preventing/minimising homelessness in their area.

Alongside the consolidation of previous funding streams into Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (see above), the £1bn announcement included £37 million for the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme, which funds longer-term supported housing for rough sleepers (almost matching the £39.4 million allocated in the final round of the previous programme); £58.7 million for the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant; £10 million for the Changing Futures Programme; £7.6 million for the voluntary sector through Sector Support Grants (previously the Voluntary & Community Sector Capacity Fund); and £5 million for 20 councils with the highest usage of B&Bs to implement Emergency Accommodation Reduction Pilots.

LA survey respondents were clear that this overall increase in funding was vital in supporting current prevention and relief activity, as well as trialling new approaches:

"The additional money will help with additional staff to support the private rented sector and to increase staff presence in community hubs."

(LA, North)

"These funding streams directly fund prevention and relief activities and are vital for us."

(LA, South)

But LAs were also clear that these announcements did not resolve some of the fundamental and systemic challenges limiting the effectiveness of LA homelessness responses, including a lack of affordable housing and TA subsidy loss (Chapter 4):

"The money is very important… but the lack of move-on [accommodation] means that money is not the answer to everything."

(LA, Midlands)

178 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Home Office, Rushanara Ali MP and The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP (2025) *Press release: Rough sleeping to be decriminalised after 200 years*. Online: GOV.UK.

179 See https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo4/5/83

180 See, for example: https://homeless.org.uk/news/scrap-the-vagrancy-act/

181 See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) *Rough Sleeping Strategy*. Online: MHCLG p. 10; and Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2023) *Consultation outcome: Review of the Vagrancy Act: consultation on effective replacement*. Online: GOV.UK.

182 Hansard – 25th February 2021, House of Commons Debate on Rough Sleeping. Robert Jenrick MP, p. 1138.

183 Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2023) *Consultation outcome: Review of the Vagrancy Act: consultation on effective replacement*. Online: GOV.UK.

184 See, for example: Basran, J. (2024) *Why the Criminal Justice Bill presents as much danger to people sleeping rough as taking away tents*. Online: Crisis; Homeless Link (2023) Why homelessness services should be concerned about the Criminal Justice Bill. Online: *Homeless Link*; CIH (2023) CIH response to Criminal Justice Bill. Online: CIH.

185 Prime Minister's Office (2024) *The King's Speech 2024*. Online: GOV.UK.

186 See https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3938

187 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rushanara Ali MP and The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP (2024) *Largest ever cash boost to turn the tide on homelessness*. Online: GOV.UK.

"All funding is welcome… however this will not help alleviate the underlying fundamental problem which is lack of access into good quality social housing."

(LA, North)

"This is nothing in comparison to the council's subsidy loss against TA."

(LA, London)

In December 2024, the Cabinet Office announced £100 million for 'test and learn' projects as a part of a new approach to public service reform, giving teams of policy makers and frontline workers *"the freedom to experiment and adapt - adopting the 'test and learn' mindset of Silicon Valley"*.[188] One initial focus will include reducing reliance on TA. This continues work under the previous government, which commissioned the Centre for Homelessness Impact to carry out a systems-wide evaluation of homelessness services, which remains in progress.[189]

December also saw the introduction of a new limitation on how the Homelessness Prevention Grant can be spent, requiring LAs to spend at least 49% on prevention, relief and staffing, and no more than 51% on TA.[190] The decision has provoked some criticism from some LAs in the context of inadequate broader funding arrangements for TA (see Chapter 4):

"[It] was extremely unhelpful… without any prior warning or consultation … to double ringfence the HPG [homelessness prevention grant] so that no more than 51% can be spent on TA. This decision alone could push some LAs over the financial precipice."

(LA, South)

The June 2025 Spending Review[191] saw funding levels for homelessness maintained and additional announcements of £950m to support LAs with TA and remediation cost and £100m of support for homelessness prevention via the new £3.2bn Transformation Fund. The latter also included £100m of support for adults with complex needs focused on the development of new community partnerships. Key informants saw the review as generally positive:

"There wasn't much money to go around… [but] homelessness funding was protected. Our baseline is maintained, which… is a positive thing, because we got a big increase last year."

(Key informant statutory sector)

188 Cabinet Office and The Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP (2024) *Pat McFadden vows to make the state "more like a start up" as he deploys reform teams across country*. Online: GOV.UK.

189 See https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/test-and-learn and Bishop, M. (2024) *The promise of Test and Learn: what I've learnt tackling homelessness*. Online: Future Governance Forum. Preliminary findings are available here: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *Systems-wide evaluation of homelessness and rough sleeping: preliminary findings*. Online: MHCLG.

190 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *Homelessness Prevention Grant 2025-26: technical note*. Online: MHCLG.

191 HM Treasury (2025) *Spending Review 2025*. Online: GOV.UK.

"The spending review has gone largely as we hoped… we're all happy with the amounts that are coming our way, but it's just what MHCLG does with it… that's going to be really key… the devil is all in the strategy."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

But Homeless Link has made clear that the Spending Review represented *"a missed opportunity to lay the foundations for the fundamental change in funding and approach"*, in particular in relation to support costs.[192]

Further funding changes are expected in 2026/27, including to how the Homelessness Prevention Grant is allocated between LAs.[193] The government also plans (following the results of the Fair Funding consultation) to consolidate all homelessness and rough sleeping revenue funding into one grant, except TA funding which will be rolled into the overall LA Revenue Support Grant. The Government hopes that this will *"will end the current tension that forces local authorities to choose between investment in prevention and meeting current TA costs"*.[194] It remains to be seen the extent to which these changes will address calls for a fundamental reset on homelessness funding made by key sector organisations, to ensure that funding enables sustainable, long-term, and strategic investment in effective and preventative responses.[195]

3.4 Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness among women in England, with many survivors forced to leave their homes, often with children and without the means to secure safe, stable housing.[196] A key shift in responses to domestic abuse with central relevance to homelessness responses came in the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which introduced the first statutory definition of domestic abuse, covering emotional, psychological and economic abuse, and coercive or controlling behaviour, as well as physical violence. The Act recognised children as victims in their own right,[197] and established the Domestic Abuse Commissioner with statutory powers to monitor and improve responses.[198]

Importantly, the Act also introduced automatic priority need under homelessness legislation for most victims seeking housing assistance, addressing past inconsistencies in the treatment of domestic abuse survivors without children and failures to account for the risks posed by domestic abuse. This should mean that

192 Homeless Link (2025) *Comprehensive Spending Review: Welcome news and missed opportunities*. Online: Homeless Link.

193 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *Funding arrangements for the Homelessness Prevention Grant from 2026-27 onwards*. Online: GOV.UK.

194 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *The Fair Funding Review 2.0*. Online: MHCLG.

195 UK Parliament (2025) Correspondence: Rough Sleeping. Online: Parliament; https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/fragmented-funding-report; McCabe, J (2024) An opportunity to do better on homelessness services. Online: *Inside Housing*; Cuffe, G. (2025) Government's homelessness strategy must include AHP focused on social housing, charities say. Online: *Inside Housing*; Chandler, M. (2025) The instability caused by short-term homelessness funding could lead to a crisis of trust with our service users. Online: *Inside Housing*.

196 Kendrick, A. (2024). Domestic Abuse and Homelessness: What Works Evidence Notes. Centre for Homelessness Impact.

197 HM Government (2021) Domestic Abuse Act: Factsheet. Online: GOV.UK.

198 Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2021) *Role and Powers of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner*. Online: GOV.UK.

most survivors will now be able to access the main rehousing duty should (priority-need blind) prevention and relief efforts fail.[199]

Part 4 of the 2021 Act introduced new duties on LAs[200] to provide safe accommodation and support for survivors, with B&Bs and shared, mixed sex accommodation not considered safe under relevant regulations/guidance.[201] LAs are also required to assess the need for accommodation based support, publish a domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy, commission appropriate services, and report annually to central government.[202] These measures are supported by ring-fenced funding to cover additional administrative and service costs.[203]

Almost three quarters of respondents to our LA survey (71%) reported an increase in demand from survivors of domestic abuse in the last year, with one Midlands authority describing the rise as *"off the scale."* Over half of responding LAs (55%) expected further increases in the coming year. Several LAs linked these changes in demand directly to measures in the 2021 Act:

"This measure has been on the increase since the Domestic Abuse Act and the granting of automatic priority need to this group."

(LA, London)

"Increased publicity around the issue of domestic abuse and support available has resulted in more victims coming forward for support, which is a good thing, but this has resulted in an increase in demand on services."

(LA, Midland)

Some identified improved reporting and recording practices as also relevant:

"There has been an increase in presentation from people fleeing DV [domestic violence], this could be since the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 being implemented and more cases being recorded."

(LA, Midland)

"Also, improved reporting and support services for survivors has led to more individuals seeking homelessness assistance."

(LA, London)

The Act appears to have widened access to statutory homelessness assistance for survivors, and a recent evaluation of part 4 of the act – introducing a statutory duty to provide support within safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children – found that government funding had enabled improvements in delivery, with increases in the numbers of survivors able to access safe accommodation. The evaluation also highlighted increasing numbers being *unable* to access such support, however, as well as significant variations in provision across localities and that demand continues to outstrip resources in some areas.[204] Persistent gaps in provision were also identified for children, survivors with additional needs, and minoritised groups, albeit with progress in broadening the range of provision, survivor-informed planning, and multi-agency working.[205]

Domestic abuse has been a major focus for the new Labour Government, reflecting a manifesto pledge to halve VAWG within ten years.[206] Since taking office, the government has introduced 'Raneem's Law' embedding domestic abuse specialists in 999 control rooms,[207] piloted Domestic Abuse Protection Orders,[208] and committed to tackling femicide.[209] In February 2025, coercive control was brought under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements,[210] followed by a £53m programme in July 2025 to target high-risk perpetrators[211] and proposals in August for geographic restriction zones for violent offenders.[212] These steps sit alongside wider reforms being pursued through the Crime and Policing Bill[213] and initiatives to improve women's safety in public spaces and transport.[214] Finally, in 2025 new Social Housing Allocations Guidance removed the local connection tests for survivors, opening access to social housing beyond their LA area (see Chapter 2).[215]

Despite these initiatives, advocacy organisations such as End Violence Against Women have warned that cuts to Home Office budgets could undermine the Government's overall ambition,[216] and the absence of the promised cross-government VAWG strategy, due

199 APPG (2019) *A Safe Home: Breaking the Link between Homelessness and Domestic Abuse*. Online: Crisis; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) *Guidance: Homelessness priority need for domestic abuse victims: New burdens assessment*. Online: GOV.UK.

200 The duty applies to tier 1 LAs, with tier 2 LAs required to cooperate with tier 1 LAs in the delivery of the duties.

201 Ibid. point 331.

202 Home Office (2022) *Domestic Abuse: Statutory Guidance*. Online: GOV.UK.

203 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *Guidance: Homelessness priority need for domestic abuse victims: New burdens assessment*. Online: GOV.UK.

204 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *Evaluation of the Domestic Abuse Duty for Support in Safe Accommodation: Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021*. Online: GOV.UK.

205 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025) *Evaluation of the Domestic Abuse Duty for Support in Safe Accommodation: Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021*. Online: GOV.UK. See also House of Commons (2025) *Committee of Public Accounts: Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls*. Online: House of Commons.

206 Keating, M. (2025) *Violence against women and girls in 2025*. Online: House of Commons Library.

207 Home Office, Jess Phillips MP and The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP (2025) *First domestic abuse specialists embedded in 999 control rooms*. Online: UK Government.

208 Courts and Tribunals Judiciary (2024) *Pilot starts for Domestic Abuse Protection Orders*. Online: Judiciary.

209 Topping, Alexandra (2024) 'Labour will tackle "scourge of femicide" to hit manifesto target, says minister Jess Phillips', 25th December, London: *The Guardian*.

210 Ministry of Justice, Home Office, Jess Phillips MP and Lord Timpson OBE (2025) *Better protection for victims from domestic abusers*. Online: UK Government.

211 Home Office, Jess Phillips MP and The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP (2025) *Landmark package to pursue domestic abuse perpetrators*. Online: UK Government.

212 Ministry of Justice and Alex Davies-Jones MP (2025) *New 'restriction zones' to boost protection for victims*. Online: UK Government.

213 Home Office (2024) *'New Powers for Police to Tackle Neighbourhood Crime'*

214 Prime Minister's Office 'PM Pledges Joint Action to Keep Women and Girls Safe at Night' (Press Release, 8 November 2024).

215 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England. Online: GOV.UK; The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) and Persons Subject to Immigration Control (Housing Authority Accommodation and Homelessness) (Amendment) Regulations 2025

216 End Violence Against Women, 2025) *Spending Review Fails Women and leaves Survivors at Risk*. Online: EVAW.

before summer 2025 recess,[217] has also raised doubts about the translation of commitments into concrete action.

A recent NAO report reinforced these concerns, highlighting the limited effectiveness of earlier VAWG strategies, noting that the Home Office has consistently struggled to secure cross-departmental buy-in, apply learning from previous initiatives, and establish a consistent definition of VAWG against which progress could be measured.[218] The NAO also pointed to significant underspending of allocated budgets (around £22 million between 2021–24), limited oversight of wider departmental spending, and insufficient emphasis on prevention, with most efforts focused on victim support.[219] Stakeholders have stressed the need to embed evaluation, strengthen accountability, and engage meaningfully with specialist organisations if the current Government's ambition is to be realised.[220]

Key informants we spoke to lamented a lack of focus on preventing homelessness for victims of domestic abuse, rather than relieving it once it has already occurred. An important factor here was social security policy, seen to leave survivors unable to retain existing housing after separation or secure alternative accommodation without statutory assistance. The Benefit Cap, for example, was seen to force women affected to choose between TA or continued cohabitation with their abuser:

"It's the household Benefit Cap… in [many] local authority areas you can't even afford a social rent home if you're capped, and that… [is] basically deterring some women from leaving… because they know they'll inevitably be homeless in temporary accommodation."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

Key informants also stressed challenges seeking to assist women to remain safely in their own home, where this is their preference, rather than default to a crisis-driven 'victim moves' response.[221] Current approaches such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) provision were seen as valuable but under-resourced:

"From a prevention perspective… there is stuff in place, but I think it just needs way more resource, and more upstream focus, so that the response to escalating domestic abuse doesn't get to the point of households needing to leave… There is really good practice… Things like MARAC and IDVA support… [but] it's under-resourced and we're not able to get in early enough, and we don't have enough tools at our disposal."

(Key informant statutory sector)

In July 2025, the Government announced a £53 million investment over four years to expand perpetrator-focused interventions,[222] which could help prevent homelessness among domestic abuse survivors. This includes the national roll-out of the Drive Project, which combines intensive one-to-one case management with disruption tactics, dedicated victim support, and the use of alternative accommodation for the perpetrator.[223] Drive pilots have reported significant reductions in abusive behaviours, with physical abuse falling by 82% and stalking by 75%.[224] Up to 15 new areas will go live by March 2026, with full expansion across England and Wales to follow. Ministers have framed the investment as a central element of the Plan for Change and forthcoming VAWG strategy.[225] Key informants noted the practical and ethical complexities associated with approaches that require an accommodation pathway for perpetrators:

"It's obviously a really tricky one because everybody wants and thinks that it would be helpful to do something which is about removing the perpetrator instead of moving the family. That comes with really tricky moral questions about prioritising those individuals when it comes to rehousing"

(Key informant statutory sector)

3.5 Supported exempt accommodation

Previous editions of the Monitor have tracked concerns about very poor quality 'exempt accommodation' in some parts of the country, that is, supported housing targeting marginalised groups with support needs that is not commissioned by the LA but funded via Housing Benefit under exemptions normally limiting the level of benefit paid. Some such accommodation has been exposed as unsafe and dangerous, and run by rogue and unscrupulous providers.

Various actions have been taken by the UK Government to address these issues, culminating in August 2023 with the coming into law of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act.[226] The legislation requires LAs to create local supported accommodation licensing schemes, and will introduce National Supported Housing Standards covering the property and the support provided. It also places strategic planning duties on LAs, which will include an assessment of current need, a forecast of future need,

217 https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/mp/jess-phillips/debate/2025-05-07/commons/commons-chamber/oral-answers-to-questions

218 National Audit Office (2025) *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls*. London: NAO.

219 Keating, M. (2025) *Violence against women and girls in 2025*. Online: House of Commons Library.

220 Rape Crisis England & Wales (2025) *Rape Crisis responds to new report from public spending watchdog*. Online: Rape Crisis England & Wales; Victims' Commissioner (2025) Victims' Commissioner: NAO VAWG report highlights critical lack of understanding. Online: Victims Commissioner.

221 Welker, D., Fitzpatrick, S., & Watts-Cobbe, B. (2025). Shared Domestic Abuse Refuge in the Age of Housing First: An Outdated Model? *International Journal on Homelessness*, 3(3): 1-22.

222 Home Office, Jess Phillips MP and The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP (2025) *Landmark package to pursue domestic abuse perpetrators*. Online: GOV.UK.

223 See https://drivepartnership.org.uk

224 Home Office, Jess Phillips MP and The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP (2025) *Landmark package to pursue domestic abuse perpetrators*. Online: GOV.UK.

225 Ibid.

226 See: https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3195

and the production of a delivery plan.[227] The Act also provides that a person who leaves accommodation which does not meet National Supported Housing Standards should not be considered intentionally homeless.

More than two years on from receiving Royal Asset, however, the Act remains unimplemented.[228] The consultation on regulations closed in May 2025, with the results currently being *"carefully consider[ed]"* by MHCLG[229] and yet to published at the time of writing.[230]

Data gathered from our LA survey and key informant interviews suggests optimism that when introduced, these regulations will reduce levels of poor quality supported accommodation. Over half (57%) of LAs who recognise issues of poor quality provision in their area thought that regulations would achieve this outcome albeit that a quite high proportions (36%) 'didn't know' whether they would do so or not (an understandable result given uncertainty about the shape and content of the regulations):

"There are some accommodation providers in the area that are providing the bare minimum of support. Claiming to do more than they actually are. So I welcome the changes & the ability to prevent enhanced HB being paid to those that are not delivering a professional service."

(LA, South)

"It is too easy to set up supported schemes that are not regulated, or provide the needed support. Staff are not automatically DBS [Disclosure and Barring Service] checked and the accommodation [is not] subject to safety checks... most providers give the same support to all clients rather than a tailored support plan. The proposed changes should address all these issues."

(LA, Midlands)

LAs involved in the 2020-22 Supported Housing Oversight Pilot, testing enforcement measures to improve quality and value for money in supported housing,[231] consistently spoke highly about its impacts and were optimistic about the impacts of new regulation too:

"We have seen very good changes from the project. It will ensure supported accommodation meets the needs of the clients."

(LA, Midlands).

227 See: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/26

228 House of Commons (2025) *Committee of Public Accounts: Tackling Homelessness*. Online: Parliament UK.

229 Cuffe, G. (2025) Government responds to 'significant' risks posed by supported housing proposals. Online: *Inside Housing*.

230 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions (2025) *Supported Housing regulation: consultation*. Online: GOV.UK.

231 Kantar Public and Imogen Blood Associates (2022) *Evaluation of the Supported Housing Oversight Pilots*. Online: MHCLG.

Our survey also indicated a prevalent view that the implementation of new regulations would have wider impacts: 12% of responding LAs felt these wider impacts would be positive, 13% negative and 26% mixed. Possible positive unintended consequences mentioned by LAs included current HMOs returning to use as family homes and closer working relationships between LA Housing Benefit teams and the wider LA to ensure that proposed accommodation schemes are designed and set up appropriately. But the most often cited concerns oriented around the impacts of a reduction in 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 run:

"Expect an increase in demand as Supported Exempt Accommodation providers evict people if they lose their SEA [supported exempt accommodation] status."

(LA, London)

"[We have] concern that the regulations could lead to a reduction in available placements, increased costs for providers, and potential difficulties for councils in fulfilling their legal duties to support vulnerable individuals."

(LA, South)

For some there was a specific concern that reputable providers may be driven out of the market due to the onerousness of new standards. Key informants were of the view that this was already happening:

"Homelessness has increased significantly in terms of being made homeless from exempt accommodation, that's already gone up... landlords are getting out... what you're seeing already is really good providers getting out."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

One LA reported having already received enquiries from some providers about shifting their accommodation model, e.g. to nightly paid TA.

An additional concern for LAs is the cost of implementing the regulations.[232] They emphasised that *"trained staff"* will be needed to facilitate implementation alongside *"significant additional"* resources (LA, Midlands) in a context where services are already *"very stretched"* (LA, London). This new administrative burden was especially vexing where LAs viewed there to be no existing problems of poor provision in their area. Key informants lamented the length of time it had taken for regulations to be introduced, not least because existing providers have been forced to respond to varying standards introduced by LAs prior to them being set nationally.[233] Social housing providers have cautioned that the regulations could require them acting as 'quasi-regulators'

232 See also The Kerslake Commission (2023) *Turning the Tide on Rising Homelessness and Rough Sleeping*. Online: Rough Sleeping Commission.

233 Homeless Link (2024) Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act – Update. Online: *Homeless Link*.

of third parties providing support within their properties, with significant resource implications.[234]

Recognising the importance of promised regulation but also the potential for unintended consequences, key informants above all else called for a *"managed transition"* and swift exit from the current *"liminal zone"* in which *"the old rules won't quite work, and the new ones aren't quite formed yet"* (Key informant, housing sector). They also emphasised, alongside LA survey respondents, that the growth of supported exempt accommodation, including poor quality provisions, had only occurred because of chronic and long-term underinvestment in support provision:

"Poor quality exempt accommodation only ever came about because of the woefully inadequate supply of supported accommodation in the first place... We can only hope that the ability for LHAs to commission supported housing will be looked at."

(LA, South)

Two key informant expressed deep concern that the impending new regulatory framework does not address this issue directly:[235]

"The elephant in the room... is [that] the standards are measuring the support that you provide. You need to meet the standards to get a licence, the licence then enables you to access enhanced housing benefit, which does not pay for the support that you are being regulated on. So [UK Government] are saying we're going to mark you on this, but we're not going to pay you for it... no one is paying for [it] at the moment... [there] is a real misunderstanding of what supported accommodation is and who is paying for it. It is just absent from the conversation; the support element of supported accommodation has just not been consistently paid for... coming up 20 years."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

In April 2025, led by the National Housing Federation, 150 cross-sector organisations, public bodies and charities which together provide 18% of supported housing in England – for people experiencing homelessness, but also for young people leaving care, veterans and older people, people with learning disabilities and survivors of domestic abuse - wrote to the Prime Minister and Chancellor calling for urgent action to increase funding for the supported housing sector. The letter called for at least £1.6bn to be allocated annually to LAs for housing-related support in England as part of its long-term housing strategy.[236] The National Housing Federation estimate that the supported housing sector in England currently saves an estimated £3.5bn every year in public spending.[237]

3.6 The forthcoming cross-governmental homelessness strategy

In pursuit of its manifesto commitment to *"put Britain back on track to ending homelessness"*, the current UK Government established the Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, chaired until her resignation by the Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner.[238] Attended by eight key departments, including MHCLG, the Home Office, DWP, the Department for Health and Social Care and HM Treasury,[239] the Group is supported by an Expert Group, chaired (until her resignation) by the Minister for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Rushanara Ali with membership from across local government, academia and the third sector. A Lived Experience Forum convened by Revolving Doors, Justlife and Groundswell also feed into the Inter-Ministerial Group. The intended outcome is a cross-government strategy on homelessness. Initially expected in Spring 2025, and now in Autumn 2025, there remains no clear timeline for publication at the time of writing (October 2025), nor clarity on the impact of recent ministerial leadership changes on these plans.

We asked LAs and key informants what they hoped would be prioritised in the strategy. Four themes emerged especially strongly. The first concerned increasing the supply of housing, in particular social and 'genuinely affordable' housing:

"Exponential increase in the provision of social housing."

(LA, South)

"More Social Rented Properties (NOT affordable [i.e. Affordable Rent] properties)."

(LA, North)

Within this theme, some LAs called for support to scale up acquisitions and the end of the RTB. Ensuring that new supply is appropriate for and targeted at homeless households was also stressed as crucial, by ensuring a focus on one-bed property development and providing greater clarity about the role of housing associations:

"More statutory duties on RP's [registered providers] and developers (planning) to provide one bed accommodation and accommodation for homelessness households."

(LA, South)

While key informants agreed that greater investment in social rent is a key component of any homelessness strategy, some voiced concerned that the Government may not have fully appreciated the wider elements required for any such strategy to be effective:

234 Cuffe, G. (2025) Government responds to 'significant' risks posed by supported housing proposals. Online: *Inside Housing*.

235 See also Homeless Link (2025) Homeless Link's response to the supported accommodation regulations consultation. Online: *Homeless Link*.

236 National Housing Federation (2025) *Supported housing crisis: 70,000 homes at risk of closure*. Online: NHF.

237 National Housing Federation (2025) *The benefits of Supported housing: NHF research briefing*. Online: NHF.

238 Ali, R. (2024) *Inter-Ministerial Group on Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures 2024/25* Funding Statement made on 6 November 2024. Online: Parliament.UK.

239 See https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46770/documents/240762/default/

"They put a lot of energy, to their credit, in[to] winning arguments and getting the resources to do the house building that they wanted to... but... they just see homelessness as a consequence of housing shortage. It is [that], but it's not only [that]. [And they are] maybe then going hang on a minute, now you're telling me this won't end it, we need to do loads of [other] stuff... we don't have money for... [and] haven't planned?"

(Key informant voluntary sector)

The second priority to emerge very strongly from LA survey responses was that the upcoming strategy should be genuinely cross-governmental. Very strong emphasis was placed on the role of Government policies driving homelessness risk and the need to address this head on:

"Being TRULY cross-governmental would be a good start. Ensuring that any planned policies have a robust EI [Equality Impact] assessment on possible homelessness impacts, particularly on DWP initiatives."

(LA, South)

Particular stress was placed on the impacts of DWP social security policy in both causing homelessness and radically curtailing LAs ability to prevent and relieve it, with caps on LHA receiving most attention, but other welfare reforms also in focus, including the Benefit Cap, Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35 year olds and Direct Payments of the UC housing allowance to households rather than landlords:

"Increase to LHA rates; Remove child Benefit Caps; Reduce single room rates to increase options for single people

(LA, London)

"Revert back to [UC] payment direct to landlord. Review of LHA model, PRS is no longer a viable option for prevention of homelessness and in some cases it's arguable whether it's reasonable to continue to reside in PRS at market rent for households on low incomes."

(LA, Midlands)

A number of LAs also stressed the impact of Home Office decision making on homelessness pressures in their area and sought recognition of this at the policy level:

"Improve access to data and communication from Home Office and promote joint policy decision making."

(LA, London)

"Refugees will be the biggest homelessness challenge in the next 10 years so some clear guidance and strategy on this cohort is needed."

(LA, Midlands)

On this point, key informants were *"disheartened"* that there had been a lack of willingness to consider those seeking asylum *"as a separate cohort"* (Key informant voluntary sector) in the development of the strategy, given the particular needs and circumstances of the group and the scale of the issues being faced.

For other LAs, the focus was on public sector partnerships at the local practice level. There was a palpable sense that LA homelessness teams were left to 'carry the can' where other public services had failed and/or where a collaborative response was clearly required:

"Too often the housing authority is left to react to an emergency presentation... there are often many underlying long term support needs that have contributed to this situation and they will not be met purely by a placement in temporary accommodation. The housing authorities should be supported by relevant departments as required (eg health, social services etc) rather than being left to find solutions."

(LA, South)

"Housing is not just about providing a roof, there needs to be more partnership work in addressing complex needs, mental health as well as care and support needs."

(LA, South)

Special emphasis was placed on the need for enhanced contributions from social care, health services – and in particular mental health services - and housing associations, and a number of LAs called for the introduction of legal duties on public bodies to co-operate in the prevention and relief of homelessness, an approach already being pursued in Wales and Scotland:

"Force other organisations such as health, children's and adult services to support the local housing authority to prevent and relieve homelessness. Where the LHA needs assistance, they must assist."

(LA, South)

"[We need] a duty to cooperate rather than to just refer from public bodies."

(LA, North)

Several LAs also made the point that such efforts would ultimately benefit wider public services:

"Housing can relieve so many pressures that other departments are feeling... so often social services, mental health, health, education, police waste significant funds managing the outcome of people not being suitably housed."

(LA, North)

Key informants also saw cross-governmental action on homelessness as critical to the success of the strategy, agreeing with the analysis that government policy itself has been a key driver of recent homelessness pressures, with the *"disconnect"* between government departments described as having *"created a perfect storm over the last ten years"* that LAs have borne *"the brunt of"* (Key informant statutory sector). Stakeholders were concerned that such a holistic, cross-governmental response was unlikely, however, partly reflecting their analysis that there is insufficient power and leadership in the right parts of government to achieve this and also reflecting that wider policy developments in areas separate from but highly consequential to homelessness are already well underway and have not been shaped or informed by the delayed strategy:

"To prevent homelessness it has to be a strategy in every government department. Instead we've created [a] department, who's quite junior, [and] doesn't have the power to say DWP, you're driving homelessness… or you're stopping us ending homelessness, you need to do this. DWP is far more powerful than the homelessness minister."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

"Sector confidence in MHCLG's ability to advocate for the kinds of policies that are needed to end homelessness… is quite low, in part… because of some of the leadership, but also… there are so many other things that are going on that almost swallow what the strategy itself would be capable of doing… increasing devolution… What the local government settlement looks like. What the AHP [Affordable Housing Programme] looks like. Home Office policy on asylum… those things are super significant… and they're all being negotiated now… The strategy… needed to… set the parameters for those things… I'm worried now that it… [will] have to be watered down."

(Key informant statutory sector)

The third priority to emerge from the LA survey concerned prevention. Some emphasised the need for greater funding to support preventative interventions, such as mediation, whilst others saw a need to focus on particular at risk groups, including victim of domestic abuse and young people leaving care:

"More funding towards early intervention rather than waiting until people are in crisis before we can help."

(LA, North)

"Earlier work within Leaving Care to support care leavers not to have to consider homelessness."

(LA, South)

Others emphasised the need for legal reforms to the statutory homelessness system, including the introduction of a duty to cooperate to compel public services to contribute to act to prevent homelessness where they can (see above) and the closure of holes in the statutory safety net that perpetuate homelessness:

"Legislation change to remove priority need and intentional homeless decisions."

(LA, South)

"Local connection means individuals get bounced around from one authority to another where this cannot be established. Clearer funding and guidance should be designed and authorities rewarded for being proactive in this area."

(LA, Midlands)

For other LAs, the emphasis was on the need for upstream efforts to address the root causes of homelessness, including poverty, unemployment, economic stagnation, a lack of social support and health and addiction issues:

"Needs to be linked into reducing poverty-economic growth, employment & skills, addressing the causes of child poverty."

(LA, London)

"Moving families out of poverty will mean that they can assist each other and will reduce applicants made homeless… Moving people generally out of poverty will improve their mental health and ability to maintain a tenancy, mean that they are less likely to turn to drugs or alcohol to self medicate."

(LA, Midlands)

Such forms of upstream prevention were also a priority for key informants:

"We know why people approach as homelessness… people can't afford to find their own accommodation and they have to approach local authorities to help to resolve that… we need a poverty strategy that sits above a homelessness strategy, because fundamentally 80 per cent of our homelessness is as a result of ongoing poverty, which is often government caused and driven."

(Key informant statutory sector)

Highly relevant to this theme of prevention was a very strong emphasis on the need for the upcoming strategy to include a core focus on support. Respondents stressed the need for much greater provision of floating support to enable people to sustain their accommodation and thus reduce demand on crisis services:

"Increase in low level community Tenancy support."

(LA, South)

"Bring back floating support."

(LA, South)

And supported accommodation options for people with complex needs, with some participants explicitly calling for the scaling up of Housing First provision and/or linking this to rough sleeping prevention:

"Support for people with complex needs move on into and maintain independent tenancies."

(LA, South)

"Increase funding for complex needs supported accommodation."

(LA, Midlands)

Key informants were confident that prevention would be a major focus in the upcoming strategy, though concerned that it may fall short of the vision of upstream, cross-government prevention they see as necessary:

"Prevention will be a theme in the new strategy… but I don't think it's going to be worth much if it's not backed by DWP saying, 'Yes, we've got a role in preventing homelessness.' Home Office saying, 'Yes, immigration system's a massive driver of homelessness.' Department for Health saying, 'Yes, the consequences of our not meeting need is driving homelessness.' All that happens is you're preventing crisis, not preventing homelessness. You're preventing someone from ending up on the streets, fine, you're not preventing homelessness."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

The fourth major priority articulated by LAs concerned TA. A range of specific points were made here, including calls for more investment (including capital funding and to support leasing schemes), better regulation (including of nightly paid accommodation and out of area placements), but the strongest emphasis by far was on addressing the costs of TA for LAs and the impacts of setting the TA subsidy at 2011 LHA rates (see Chapter 4):

"In the immediate term we need the TA subsidy to be uprated, otherwise we will have no resources to continue addressing homeless, and will be forced to look for cheaper and cheaper TA, which is self-defeating and has a huge human cost."

(LA, South)

"Dealing with the TA HB subsidy issue to create fairness."

(LA, South)

Beyond hopes for the substantive content of the strategy, key informants reflected on the process of its development. Several were positive about the inter-ministerial scope of strategy development and the central role of the then Deputy Prime Minister:

"Departments [have worked] collaboratively and constructively together on papers… then considered… [by] Ministers [who] are able to discuss and prioritise a bit across government, which is very helpful. It really helps that it's chaired by the deputy prime minister, because it's taken very seriously."

(Key informant statutory sector)

Others were positive about the role of the Expert Group in developing robust proposals swiftly:

"The expert group set up was good… it gave the opportunity for really sensible and robust recommendations to be put to government, and do a lot of the thinking that they needed to do, to outsource that quite quickly."

(Key informant statutory sector)

But overall, key informants were downbeat about both the process and timing of the strategy's development, as well as its capacity to really change the landscape on homelessness in England. Several commented that after contributions made within unreasonably short time-scales, the strategy had disappeared into a *"black hole"* (Key informant voluntary sector). There was widespread disappointment about the much delayed and still at the time of writing uncertain timeline for the strategy's publication:

"The main thing… is that it's late… They might even wait for the autumn budget … but that's then a year and a half after they came into government. That's almost half of your term of governance… we're losing time on a strategic response that could be bringing everyone together."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

"You've been in government over a year. You're meant to be a Labour Government. Homelessness is surely one of the things you should be bothered about."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

There was a near universal sense among key informants that the process of contributing to the strategy's development had been a *"slightly deflating"* one (Key informant voluntary sector) during which initial *"hope and optimism"* (Key informant voluntary sector) had given way to a radical lowering of expectations:

"When it was first announced... that it was going to be chaired by the deputy prime minister... we were really encouraged... we want that accountability... but from what I understand, that optimism has dwindled significantly."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

This drop in expectations had been driven by a shift in tone from the Government from a focus on the need for transformative, systems-level change, to the pursuit of lower-cost and quick wins:[240]

"At the beginning it was... we need to rethink this system... it's around wholesale change... bringing different departments together... do[ing] something different... I'm cautious now... we're not going to see something that we had hoped... because it's going to cost money... LHA rates and the Benefit Cap and the two child benefit, the 2011 housing benefit subsidies... we can list the things that everybody knows would change a lot for LAs and people who are becoming homeless, but those are not the things that they're looking at doing because they don't want to spend the money."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

Key informants saw this shift as self-defeating given the costs associated with current levels of homelessness: *"there's a nice line of, 'Money is tight.'... that is an excuse, because... we're spending quite a lot of money, just not very well"* (Key informant voluntary sector).

240 See also Birch, J. (2025) 126,000 families and counting: the scale of the temporary accommodation crisis. Online: *Inside Housing*.

4. Statutory homelessness trends

Key findings

In 2024, 330,000 households applied to LAs as homeless or at risk, up 4% year on year, and 21% over three years. While the numbers judged at risk of homelessness within 56 days increased by 1% in the last year, those already affected increased by 6%. Increases in London have been much steeper (7% and 27% respectively). In line with these official trends, 70% of LA survey respondents perceived that homelessness service 'footfall' had increased in the year preceding the 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%). Homelessness due to domestic abuse has also been on an upward trajectory, with numbers 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 is declining, with an 'accommodation secured' outcome falling from 47% of cases closed 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.

TA placements also remain on a rapid upward trajectory, standing at 128,000 households in late 2024. Most TA placements involve self-contained accommodation, but around one in six are in B&B hotels or hostel rooms. As at 31st December 2024, 8,000 households with children were residing in B&Bs. Concerns about the TA quality, suitability and cost have reached acute levels. New (2025) data showed that between 2019 and 2024, 74 children died with TA listed as a contributing factor to their vulnerability, ill-health, or death. TA now represents a critical financial risk for many LAs, with over half (61%) of LA survey respondents reporting that so called 'subsidy losses' resulting from an outdated funding model are 'very challenging' for their authority's overall finances. In some cases, this funding shortfall risks forcing LAs into bankruptcy.

LAs report routinely struggling to meet their duties and provide an effective response under statutory homelessness legislation. Many now offer face-to-face assistance only on request or to particular groups, are forced to prioritise urgent cases and thus missing prevention opportunities. Phone or online access by default may also create a barrier for people to apply for homelessness assistance when in need of it.

Only 4% of LAs see the duty to refer as 'very effective' in assisting them in their prevention duties. Limitations include referral agencies providing insufficient information, LAs 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. There is substantial scope to improve broader partnership working especially in relation to health services, children's and adults social care services, DWP/ Jobcentres and in particular the Home Office. LAs are also hamstrung by the inadequacy of floating housing-related support provision. Almost half (47%) of LAs report that many of those who need such support lack access to it.

LAs report very frequently struggling to meet their statutory homelessness duties to families, single people and those with complex needs. These challenges are most acute in relation to the latter group, with 79% of LAs reporting struggling to meet the main rehousing duty for those with complex needs all or most of the time. Key issues include risk aversion on the part of landlords, alongside inadequate support provision, in particular for people affected by mental ill health and substance use. Half (51%) of LAs struggle to meet prevention duties for single person households all or most of the time, with key contributory factors including the shortage of one-bedroom accommodation, and the inadequacy of LHA rates for under 35s. Many LAs also report struggling to meet their duties towards families, with key challenges including the lack of suitable homes for large families and those with medical or accessibility needs. LAs 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.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on trends in statutory homelessness in England, drawing on official statistics alongside findings from our survey of LAs and key stakeholder interviews. In Section 4.2, we explore the extent to which LAs are offering face-to-face homelessness assistance to households at risk of facing homelessness. Next, in Section 4.3 we review the structure of the HRA and present national case processing statistics to give a sense of the relative incidence of the various case decisions logged by LAs during 2023 and 2024. We then focus on the changing incidence of statutory homelessness, shifts in the immediate causes of homelessness, the origin of referrals to LAs for housing assistance and the effectiveness of the current 'duty to refer'

In Section 4.4, we analyse MHCLG statistics on the profile of statutory homeless applicants, and their support needs, using LA survey data to better understand these trends and their implications. Section 4.5 focuses on the use of TA, an essential proxy for homelessness stress as this bears on LAs and an important factor determining households' experiences of the statutory homelessness system. Section 4.6 analyses the distribution of outcomes that result from statutory decisions taken under HRA in relation the prevention, relief and the main rehousing duties. Finally, Section 4.7 draws on LA survey data to explore the extent to which LAs are struggling to meet their statutory duties under homelessness legislation and the role of partnership arrangements in enabling them to do so effectively.

4.2 Accessing homelessness assistance

In 2022, Crisis published research exploring people's experiences of the HRA based on longitudinal surveys and in-depth interviews involving almost 1,500 individuals in total. The study highlighted shifts in the ability of households facing homelessness to access face-to-face assistance from their LA, and raised concerns that remote working may reduce the effectiveness of the assistance offered.[241] To explore this further, we asked LAs whether they have a face-to-face housing options service that homeless applicants can access. Only 7% of respondents reported that they *do not* operate a face-to-face service. Such respondents explained that assessments are conducted and assistance delivered either by phone, or online:

"There is no face-to-face access to the service currently, telephone or internet referral and assessment carried out and video link in place for those in custody."

(LA, North)

"Housing Options not currently forward facing due to staff."

(LA, North)

Several respondents explained that face-to-face appointments are available *"for those that need it"* (Local authority, South), while acknowledging that this was *"rare"* (LA, North).

But, while our headline survey findings indicate that 93% of LAs offer a face-to-face service, their qualitative comments indicate that barriers to accessing face-to-face support may be higher than this figure suggests. Some LAs were clear that face-to-face contact was typically an option, with for example a drop-in service available staffed by a 'duty' team or housing officer:

"We typically have at least one duty officer present in the office each day to deal with emergencies and face-to-face meetings."

(LA, South)

Several such LAs stressed the value of seeing applicants face-to-face, including as a means to support better outcomes:

"You can gain a better relationship with an applicant seeing them face-to-face so therefore increases engagement and their chances of succeeding going forward."

(LA, North)

In a great many LA areas, however, initial triage was always conducted by phone or online with face-to-face contact arranged only where it was deemed appropriate or requested by the household:

241 Sutton-Hamilton, C., Allard, M., Stroud, R. & Albanese, F. (2022) *'I hoped there'd be more options' Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018-2021*. Online: Crisis.

"Since the Covid-19 pandemic the Housing Advice Centre has operated remotely with the option for face-to-face interviews where needed / requested."

(LA, North)

"We do initial triage by phone or email - if a customer needs a face-to-face this can be facilitated for the full homeless assessment."

(LA, North)

Some areas highlighted that as well as offering face to face options, they would also do home visits or meet with clients elsewhere (e.g. in hospital) if required. One authority conducted home visits as standard in the case of 'family evictions' (i.e. where a person is asked to leave by their family).

Some LAs prioritised face-to-face appointments for particular groups. In some larger urban LAs, particular groups could access a tailored face to face service, for example young people or domestic abuse survivors. Elsewhere, face to face contact was prioritised based on urgency of need, for examples where *"someone is homeless on the day"* (LA, South). In some cases, it was clear that these choices were driven by acute pressure on services:

"The sheer caseload numbers mean hybrid working is essential and there is no longer capacity within services to interview everyone face-to-face (caseloads nearly 100 when ideally should be 30)."

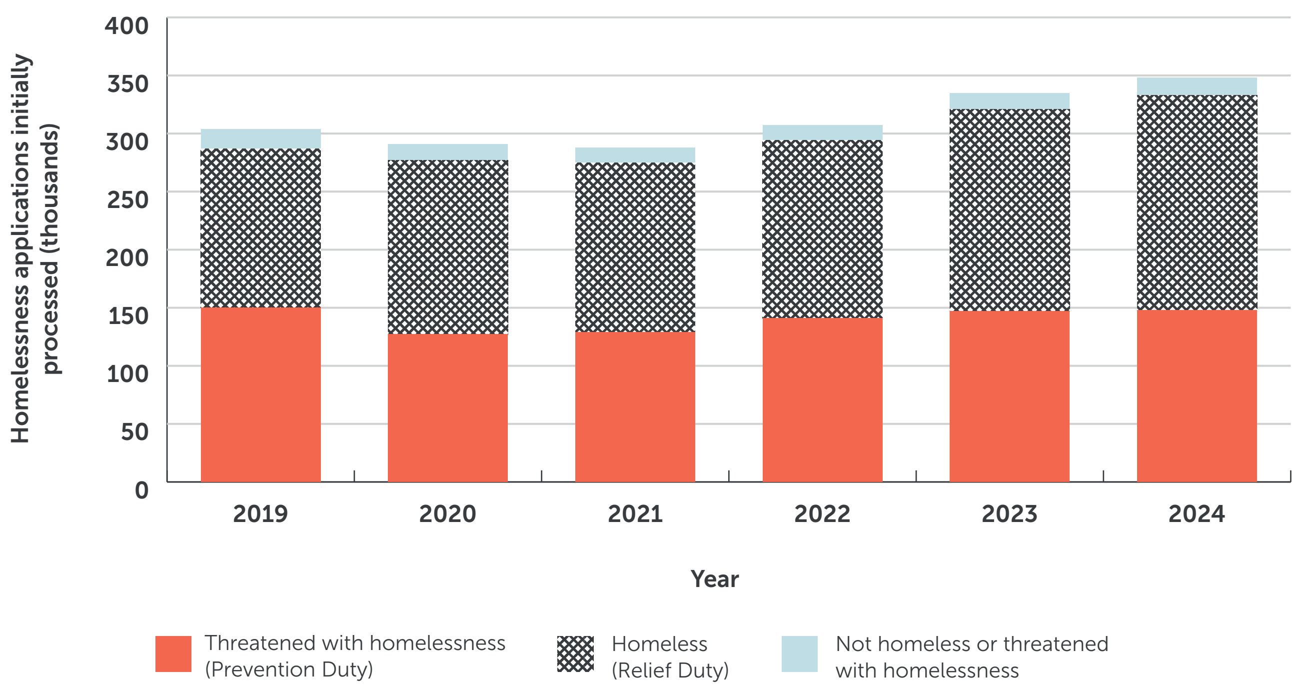
(LA, South)

One LA was clear that the prioritisation of households in urgent need had limited their capacity to effectively prevent homelessness:

"We offer F2F appointments... for anyone who is homeless imminently and offer appointments for people who are at risk of homelessness. However, due to the high number of people presenting each day who are already homeless... We are mostly only able to work with people at the relief stage... [and] are unable to assess at an earlier stage the cases where we might be able to intervene and prevent homelessness. We are hoping to develop a triage service soon to improve our prevention offer."

(LA, South)

Figure 4.1: Eligible[242] homelessness applications 2019 – 2024: breakdown by initial decision



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics. Note: Excludes applications withdrawn before assessment (13,160 in 2024) and applications deemed ineligible (2,670 in 2024).[243]

4.3 The changing incidence of statutory homelessness

As shown in Figure 4.1, total recorded applications for homelessness assistance rose by 4% in 2024, up by 21% over the previous three years. However, it is the already homeless rather than 'threatened with homelessness' cohort which has continued to expand fastest. The former group (already homeless and owed the 'relief duty') increased by 6% in 2024 and by 27% since 2021 (see Figure 4.2). The latter group (threatened with homelessness and owed the 'prevention duty') increased by 1% in the last year and 15% since 2021.[244]

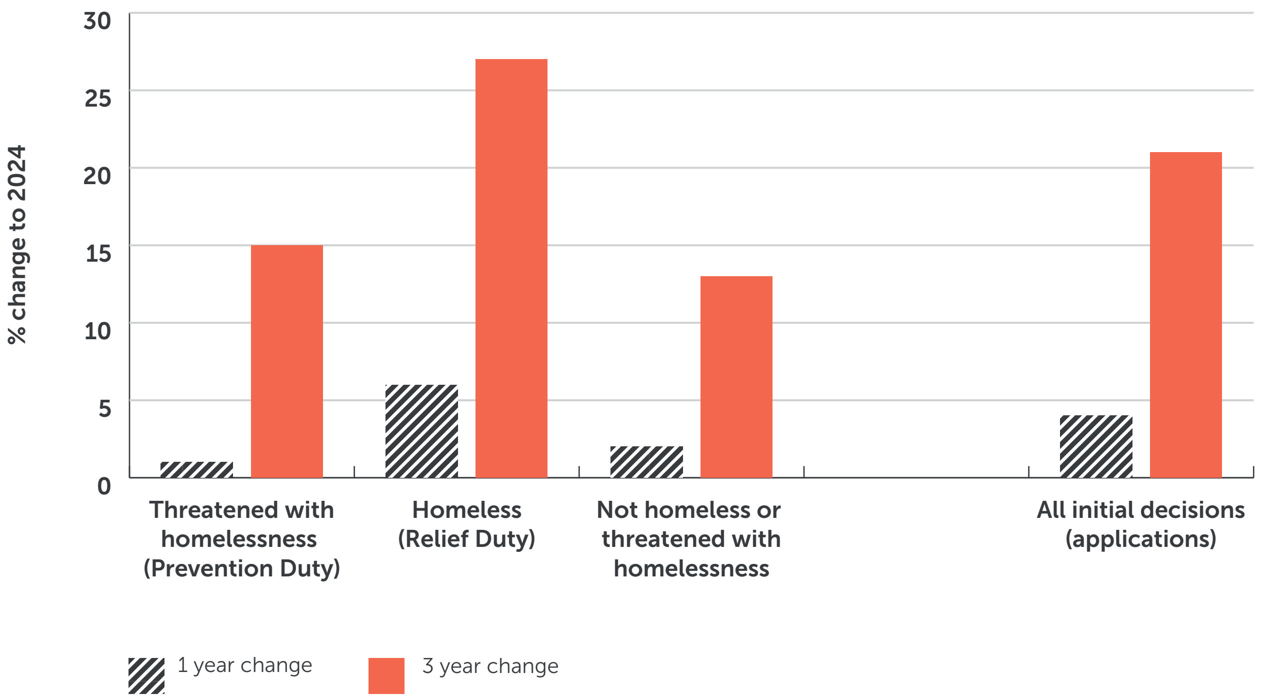
Figure 4.3 explores regional differences in these trends, showing that during 2024 applicants initially judged 'homeless' by London boroughs – and therefore owed the 'relief duty' – grew by 22% (compared to 6% across England), while those deemed 'threatened with homelessness' at this stage increased by

242 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.

243 Because such applications have been recorded only since 2023, no 2019-24 trend over time analysis would be possible

244 For those not well acquainted with the duties LAs owe to households facing homelessness, the statutory homelessness system flow chart set out in Appendix 3 may aid interpretation of this chapter. It shows the relationship between the various local authority duties specified by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and the numbers of each specified statutory homelessness decision recorded in 2023 and 2024.

Figure 4.2: Initial application decision outcomes, percentage change 2021 – 2024 and 2023 – 2024



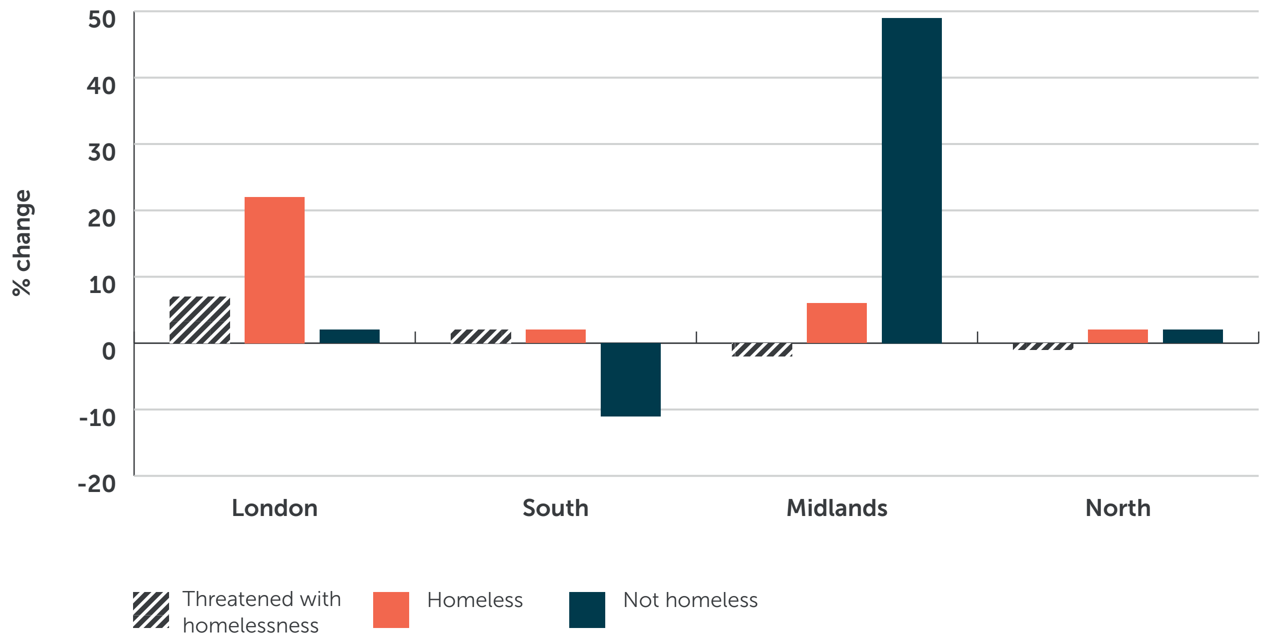
Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

7% (to 1% across England). Also striking is the substantial increase in the numbers judged 'not homeless' in the Midlands in 2024. On closer investigation, however, this is entirely accounted for by two large metropolitan authorities (Dudley and Wolverhampton) reporting very large (and hugely increased) numbers of such decisions in 2024.

Under the HRA regime, many households have been assisted under prevention or relief duties, meaning that fewer applicants progress through the system to a main rehousing duty decision. In 2019, 61,000 households progressed to this stage – equating to only 21% of the 287,000 applications judged homeless or threatened with homelessness at the initial stage – see Appendix 3 and Figure 4.4. By 2024, however, with main rehousing duty decisions having rapidly increased in the previous two years, 109,000 passed through to this final stage, equating to 33% of initial applications deemed 'homeless' or 'threatened with homelessness' (333,000).

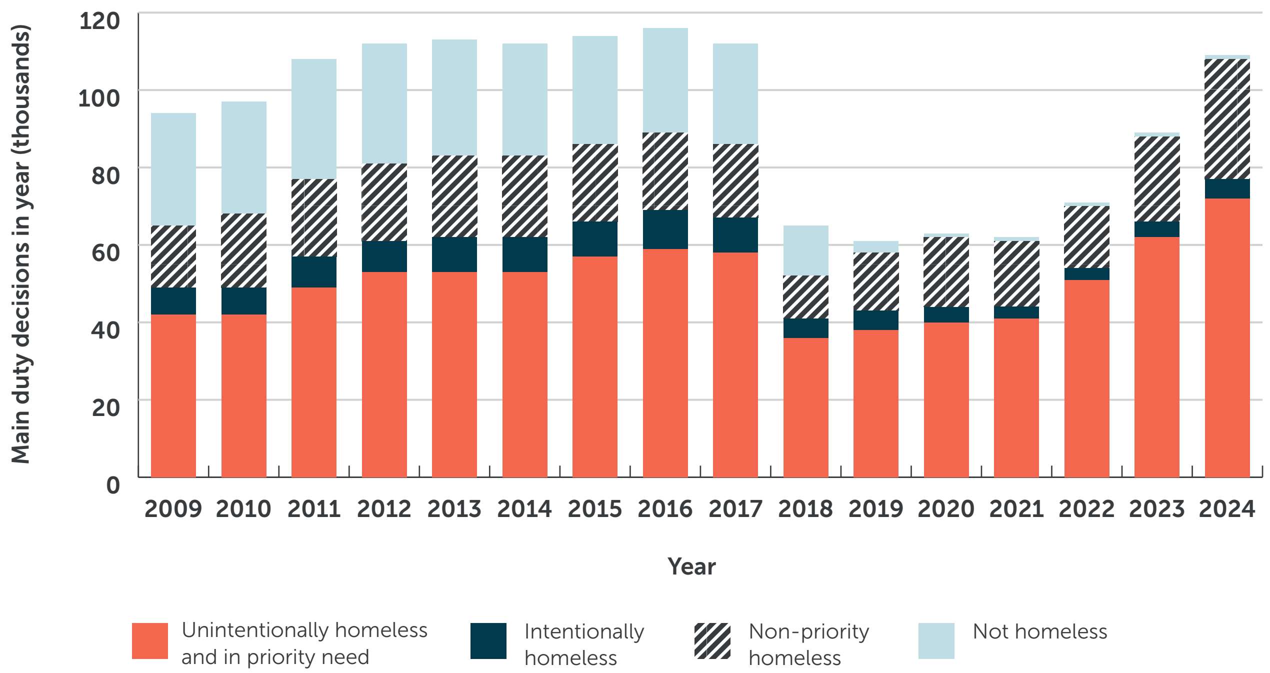
By 2023, the number of households owed the main rehousing duty had exceeded the numbers recorded in 2017, the final (calendar) year of the Housing Act 1996 regime. To a degree, this reflects the growing numbers of households seeking LA assistance in recent years (see Figure 4.1), but also the declining success rate of homelessness prevention and relief efforts (see Section 4.6 below), as housing market conditions have become increasingly challenging for both people experiencing homelessness and LA housing options staff. In other words, these conditions now mean that one of the primary aims of the HRA, to stem the flow of applicants reaching the main rehousing duty by preventing or relieving their homelessness, is increasingly unfulfilled.

Figure 4.3: Initial application decision outcomes, percentage change 2023 – 2024 by broad region



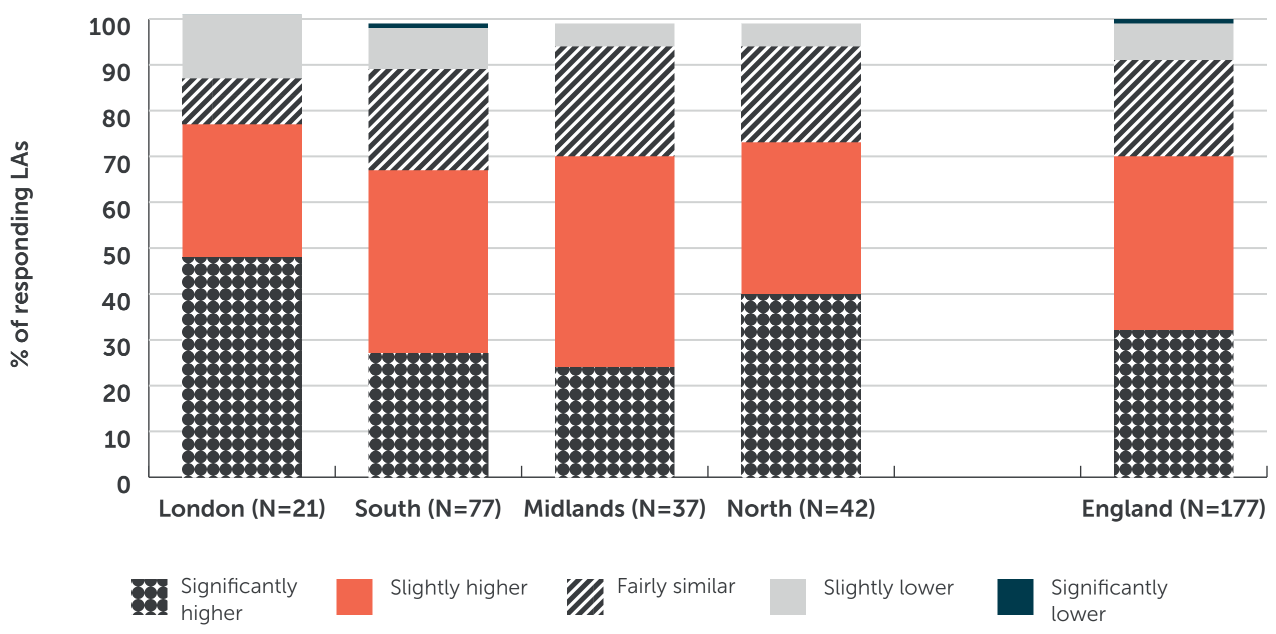
Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

Figure 4.4: Main rehousing duty decisions, 2009 – 2024



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics. Note: the Housing Act 1996 regime was replaced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 framework from April 2018.

Figure 4.5: Change in number of households seeking homelessness assistance in 2024/25 compared with preceding 12 months (% of responding LAs)



Source: Authors' survey

In line with these trends in official statistics, 70% of LA survey respondents perceived that homelessness service 'footfall' had increased in the year preceding the survey (see Figure 4.5), ranging from 67% in the South to 77% in London. Variations in those reporting 'significantly higher' demand were starker, reaching 48% of responding London Boroughs, and 40% of LAs in the North of England compared to 24 and 27% in the Midlands and South respectively.

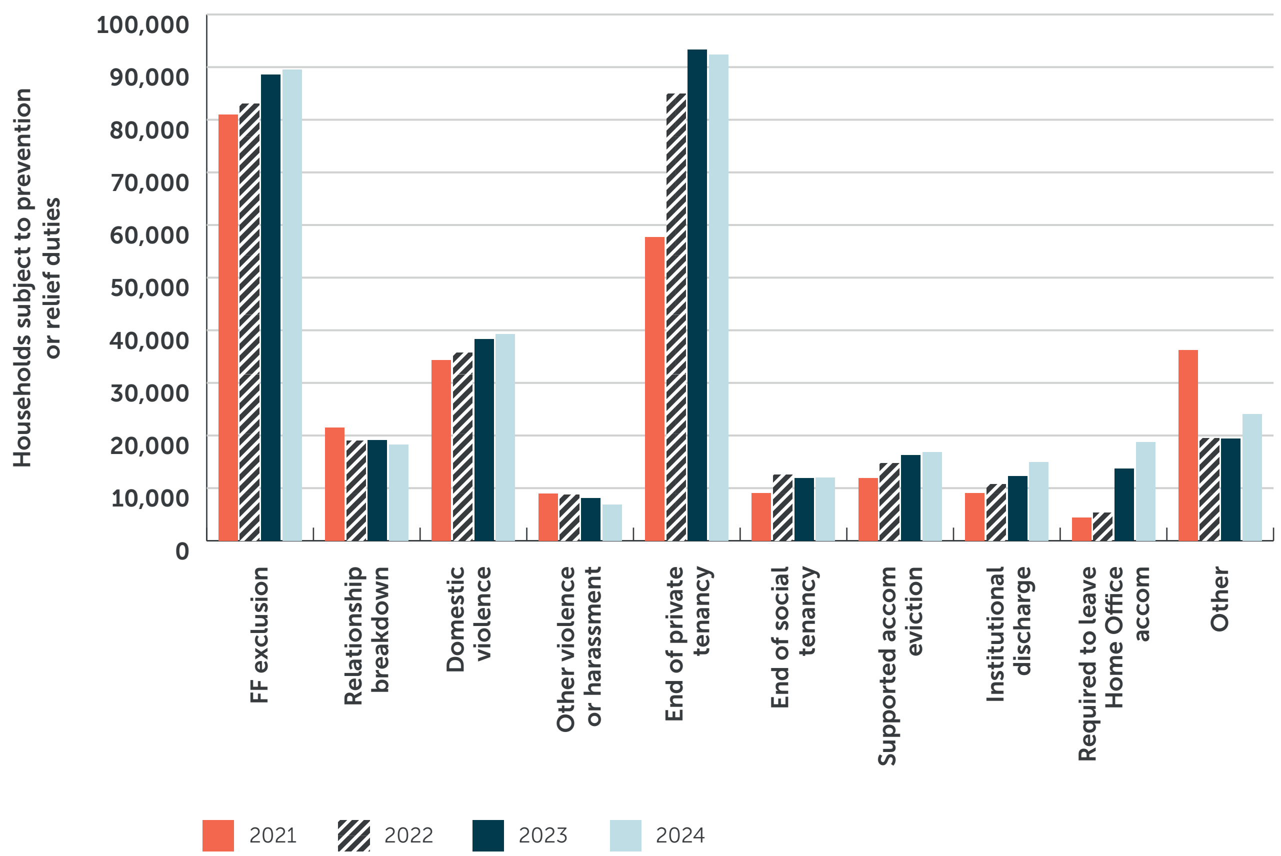
Reason for homelessness

Official statistics and our LA survey responses afford insights into the drivers of these increases in statutory homelessness demand. Looking across both the 'prevention duty' and 'relief duty' cohorts, the most commonly reported immediate reason for being threatened with or experiencing homelessness in 2024 was the ending of a private tenancy, accounting for 28% of the combined total.

Being asked to leave the home of a family member or friend was the immediate cause for 27% of households. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 show some quite significant changes in the prevalence of these immediate causes over the past three years and last year respectively.

Perhaps most striking in Figure 4.6 is the sharp increase in the number of households made homeless due to the loss of a private tenancy in 2022. This will reflect in very significant part the unusually low levels of homelessness triggered in this way in 2021, given the pandemic-related eviction restrictions in place. The ending of private tenancies continued to increase in importance in 2023, but then – as shown more clearly in Figure 4.7 fell back very slightly in the last year. This is in some tension with LA survey respondent comments, which emphasised growing numbers of private tenants making a statutory homelessness application as a result of landlord property sales. LAs

Figure 4.6: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties, main immediate cause of homelessness 2021 – 2024



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics
Note: 'FF exclusion' is a shorthand for 'Asked to leave by family or friends'.

often attributed this to landlord concerns around impending changes under the Renters' Rights Bill:

"The anticipated enactment the Renters (Reform) Bill, is still driving demand as owners seek to evict their tenants before the act abolishes no-fault evictions."

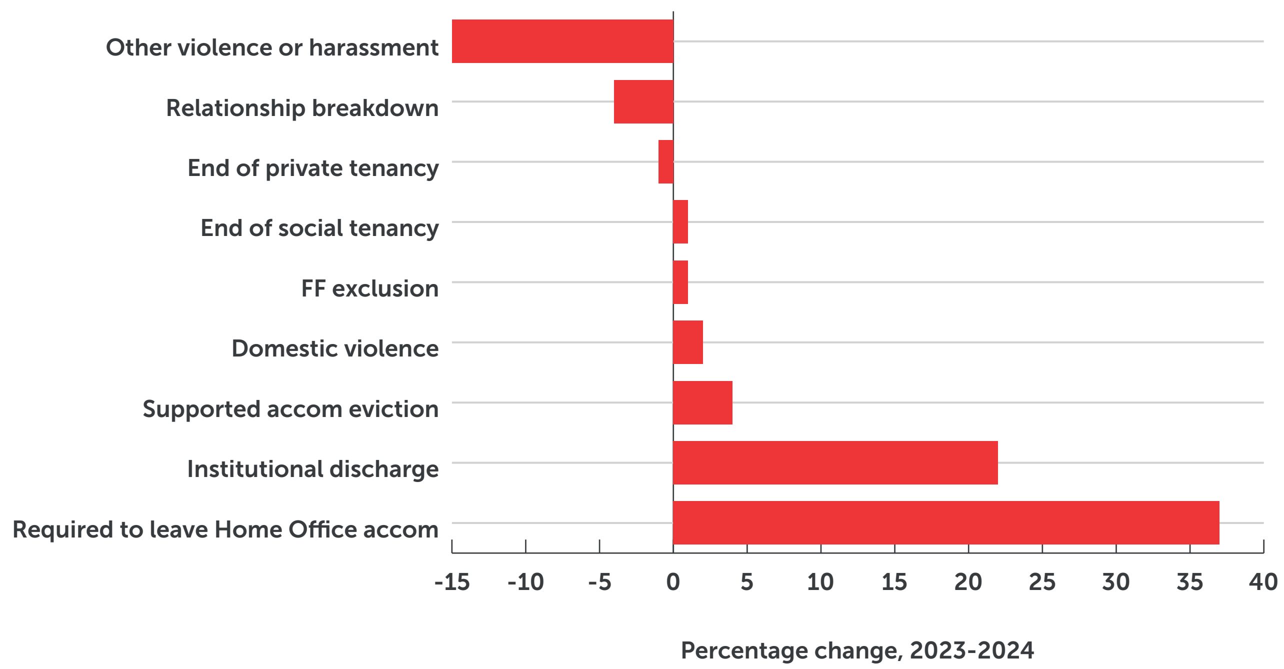
(LA, London)

"We have seen an increase in private sector presentations due to landlords selling their stock, this is possibly due to increase in mortgage rates or panic selling due to the renters' rights act."

(LA, North)

Indeed, more detailed scrutiny of official statistics shows that displacement from a privately tenancy due to property sale accounted for some 10% of all households owed the prevention or relief duty in 2024 (or 34% of all cases involving homelessness due to loss of a private tenancy). But homelessness due to rental property sales was not substantially more prevalent in 2024 as compared with 2023. The average quarterly total for 2024 was,

Figure 4.7: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties, percentage change in numbers subject to each main immediate cause of homelessness 2023 – 2024



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

in fact, only 3% higher than the previous year.[245]

Particularly notable from Figure 4.7 is the increased numbers made homeless in 2024 because they were required to leave Home Office accommodation (up by 37%) or discharged from institutions (up by 22%). These factors still account for a relatively small proportion of applications overall, but associated pressures appear to be unevenly spread across the country. According to our LA survey results, while overall 61% of respondents reported increased presentations from refugees in the last year, this varied from 46% in the South to 83% in the North. LAs attributed this growth to an acceleration of Home Office decision making on asylum applications:

"[We] are seeing more asylum decisions being granted which is leading to homeless applications from those who have been granted refugee status."

(LA, North)

"The biggest change for us has been the fast tracking of Asylum Claims which has put overall pressure on the system."

(LA, North)

245 However, it should be noted that changes in the MHCLG monitoring framework on private landlord actions resulting in homelessness might have contributed to this apparent finding.

The Government's recent decision to halve the time most[246] newly granted refugees are given to find accommodation prior to their eviction from Home Office accommodation from the 56 days being piloted to just 28 days has been met with great disappointment in this context, as it will make it even harder to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for this group.[247] As these LA representatives noted, preventing homelessness within 56 days (let alone 28) has been exceptionally challenging:

"For anybody, finding a home within 56 days would be nigh on impossible, let alone someone who's new to the country, no experience or knowledge of how the housing system works, how the benefit system works, hasn't got a guarantor, hasn't got a credit history of any kind in the country. They've got no chance of sourcing their own accommodation."

(Key informant statutory sector)

"It is difficult to effectively prevent households becoming homeless when leaving Home Office accommodation due to the limited amount of time a Housing Options Service has from notification. Notification periods need to go beyond 56 days to allow an applicant to adjust to their new immigration status and reciprocal entitlements."

(LA, North)

Our LA survey results would suggest a combination of factors underpinning the significant increase in homelessness precipitated by institutional discharge. Increased applications from people leaving prison under the Government's early release scheme introduced to ease pressures in the prison system,[248] alongside failures to address prison leavers' housing needs prior to release, were seen to be driving demand in many areas:

"Prison leavers – significant increase reflects the increase in numbers being released from prisons, lack of reintegration programmes and the lack of housing for ex-offenders upon release."

(LA, London)

"Changes in prison release protocols."

(LA, South)

246 Families, single pregnant women, people over 65 and people with disabilities are exempt from the change.

247 Delahunty, S. (2025) Member bodies 'appalled' and 'disappointed' by Home Office plan to halve time asylum seekers given to find accommodation. Online: *Inside Housing*; Taylor, D. (2025) Home Office plans to halve time asylum seekers given to find accommodation. Online: *The Guardian*.

248 Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service, Youth Custody Service and The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP (2024) *Lord Chancellor sets out immediate action to defuse ticking prison 'time-bomb'*. Online: GOV.UK.

Growing numbers facing homelessness following hospital discharge was also identified as a challenging trend and linked to inadequate access to appropriate accommodation with the necessary supports in place and increasingly restrictive responses from social care teams:

"Hospital discharges with social care pushing back on respite or residential care placements. We are inundated with complex hospital discharge applications."

(LA, South)

"Hospital discharges to the street for people with little or no capacity over housing or tenancy matters and the need for supported accommodation [are] now commonplace and the [inadequate provision of] supported housing ... gives no access for these clients."

(LA, South)

It is also worth noting that several LAs reported improvements in hospital discharge protocols and joint working with health services that were reducing this form of demand.

Cases where the applicant is facing homelessness because of domestic abuse are up 14% on 2021 levels. As discussed in Chapter 3, this trend was attributed to the granting of automatic priority need to domestic abuse survivors via the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and more generally increased attention to and understanding of the issue.

Finally, and cutting across the immediate reasons for application categories reported in official statistics, LA comments also highlighted the ongoing inadequacy of LHA rates and that this shortfall between actual rents and the support available via the social security system to low-income households restricts people's ability to resolve their own housing situation:

"Govt failing to keep LHA rates in step with market rents has left people with fewer options to resolve their own situation."

(LA, South)

"The Private rented sector has rents which can be three times the local housing allowance levels for larger family homes and no property exists within the district which is anywhere near LHA levels."

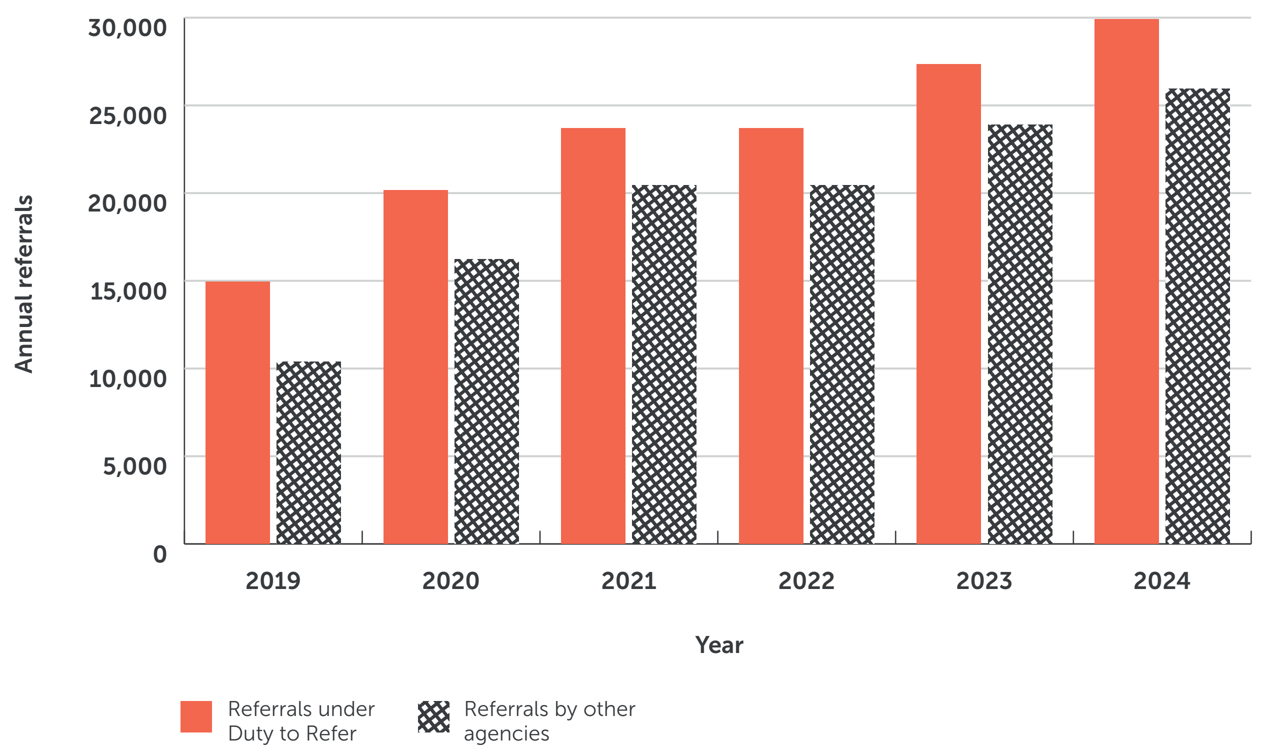
(LA, South)

Referrals for homelessness assessment

The HRA introduced an obligation on specified public agencies to notify the relevant LA where someone they support or work with is at risk of homelessness and in need of assistance – the 'duty to refer'. The agencies concerned include prisons, youth offender institutions, social services and hospitals.

Duty to Refer notifications have doubled since 2019, to 30,000, closely paralleled by increases in referrals from agencies not covered by the legal duty – see Figure 4.8. In 2024, by far the largest single referral source was probation and community rehabilitation services, followed by Social

Figure 4.8: Referrals — under 'Duty to Refer' and other (2019 – 2024)



Source: MHCLG statistics

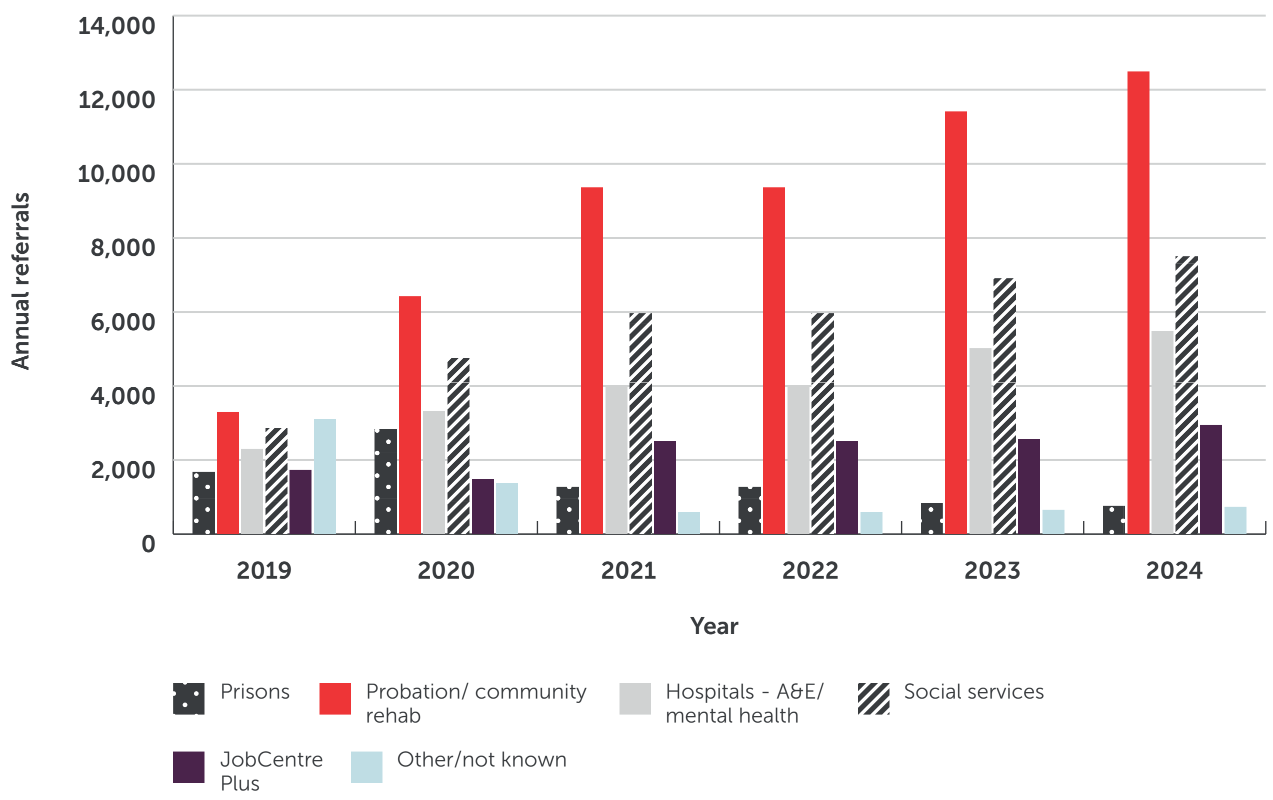
Services departments (see Figure 4.9). The diminishing number of prison referrals appears somewhat in conflict with the growing flow of applications resulting from prison early release reported by LAs (see above). This might reflect a decline in the use of such notification systems in the context of early release schemes.

We asked LA survey respondents how effective the Duty to Refer is in assisting them in meeting their prevention duties – see Table A.7 in Appendix 2. This data suggests that the majority of LAs see the Duty to Refer as only somewhat (49%) or moderately effective (32%), with one in six (16%) describing it as not effective at all. Almost none (4%) describe it as very effective.

Key issues limiting the effectiveness of the duty included agencies providing insufficient information during the referral process, sometimes making it impossible for LAs to contact households or effectively triage cases. Agencies referring people too late for prevention to be possible was also a concern. While the performance of agencies appeared to vary by area, multiple respondents highlighted Job Centres/DWP, probation and prisons engaging relatively well with the Duty to Refer, and hospitals and adult social care less well:

"The timing of referrals varies greatly between organisations and often are made too late for there to be meaningful engagement ahead of a crisis presentation. There are also huge variations in the amount of information [given] that can

Figure 4.9: Referrals under ‘Duty to Refer’ 2019 – 2024



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics. Notes: 1. ‘Prisons’ includes Youth Secure Estate; 2. Social services includes adult social services, children’s social services and ‘Nil Recourse’ team. 3. ‘Other’ includes not known.

mean time is lost in following up on this in order to just be able to contact the client being referred.”

(LA, North)

“We have great protocols with some agencies like prison and probation and no protocols with others - adult social care and hospitals.”

(LA, Midland)

Many LAs also stressed their lack of capacity to respond to referrals as a key limitation on the duty’s effectiveness, so too the lack of resources and housing options available to effectively prevent homelessness even where early and appropriately detailed referrals are received:

“We do not have the staffing resources to do effective prevention work... We have reviewed duty to refer referrals received in February 2025 and by the end of the March 2025 only 50% ...had been contacted... Often people are then presenting to us in crisis when their circumstances have escalated and where they are now homeless or... very close.”

(LA, South)

“Its effectiveness depends upon factors beyond the Duty itself, primarily the lack of resources available to effectively prevent homelessness.”

(LA, North)

“Where we get a timely duty to refer, it still doesn’t change the absolute crisis in available housing options.”

(LA, South)

Several LAs felt that referring agencies see the duty as a tick box exercise and called for a bolder duty to cooperate that would require effective partnership working and substantive contributions to homelessness prevention.

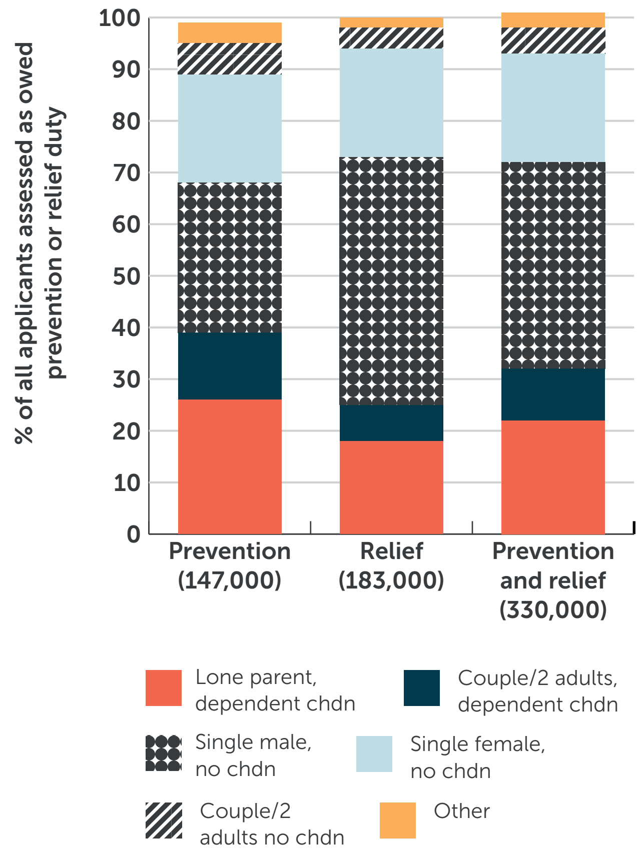
4.4 Profile and support needs

Profile

Most of those assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in 2024 (61%) were single adults (see Figure 4.10(a)), though the proportion was higher in the case of those owed the relief duty (69%) compared to those owed the prevention duty (50%). This difference entirely reflects single men’s stronger representation in the relief duty cohort – the representation of single women was identical across the two groups.

Figure 4.10: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties: household type profile

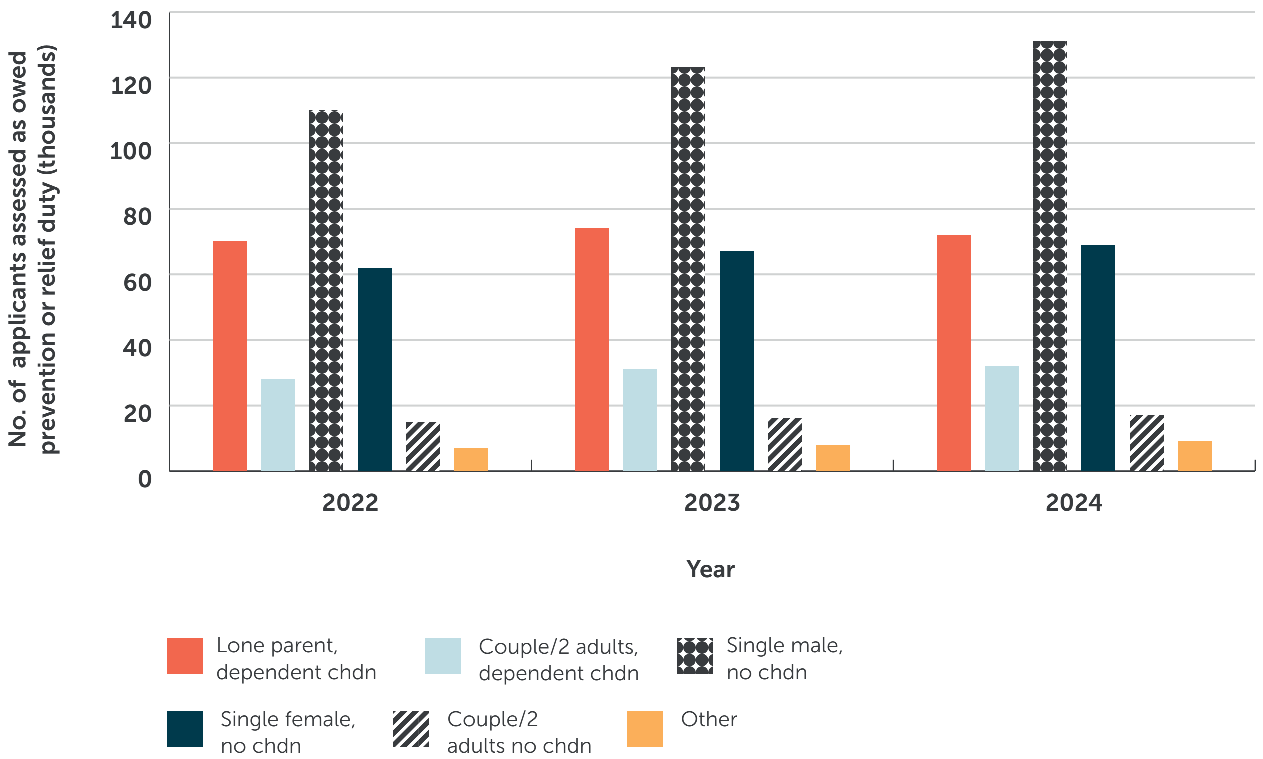
(a) Prevention duty’ and ‘relief duty’ applicants, 2024



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

The number of single male applicants increased markedly, by 20%, in the two years to 2024 (from 110,000 to 131,000), compared with the 13% increase across all household types. Over the past year alone, the single male cohort grew by 7% compared with 4% across all household types (see Figure 4.10(b)). This profile of people assisted under the statutory homelessness system marks a very major departure from that seen in the pre-HRA era, during which only around a third of those owed the main rehousing duty were single adults.

(b) All prevention and relief duty applicants, 2022 – 2024: households (thousands)



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

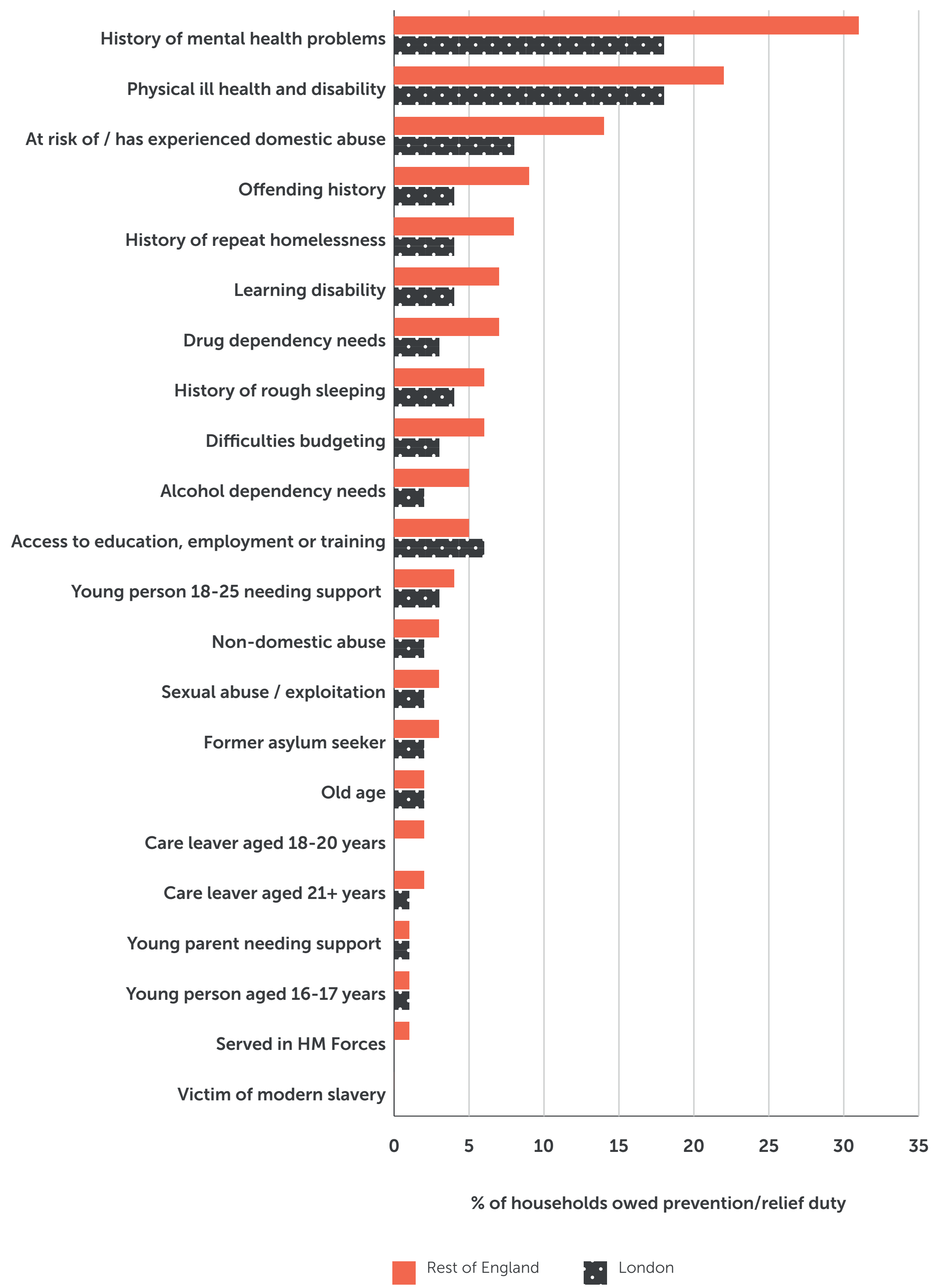
Recent research has shown the highly disproportionate risk of homelessness faced by Black and Minority Ethnic households, as well as the links between racism and experiences of homelessness. The final report from a Heriot-Watt University mixed-methods study, including new analysis of c.750,000 household-level H-CLIC records, found that Black people are almost four times as likely to face statutory homelessness as White people and Pakistani-Bangladeshi and Black-headed households six to seven times more likely than White-headed households to be overcrowded.[249]

This report and others published by Crisis and Shelter have detailed widespread experiences of structural and overt racism and discrimination among Black and wider minoritised groups, and argued that the causes of disproportionate homelessness risk for these groups lies in a combination of the cumulative impact of historic disadvantage, higher rates of poverty and other forms of exclusion among minoritised groups, as well as current discrimination, including from private landlords and in homelessness and other public services.[250]

249 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., McIntyre, J., Ayed, N., & Watts-Cobbe, B. (2025). *Race, Ethnicity and Homelessness in the UK: Final report of a knowledge and capacity building programme*.

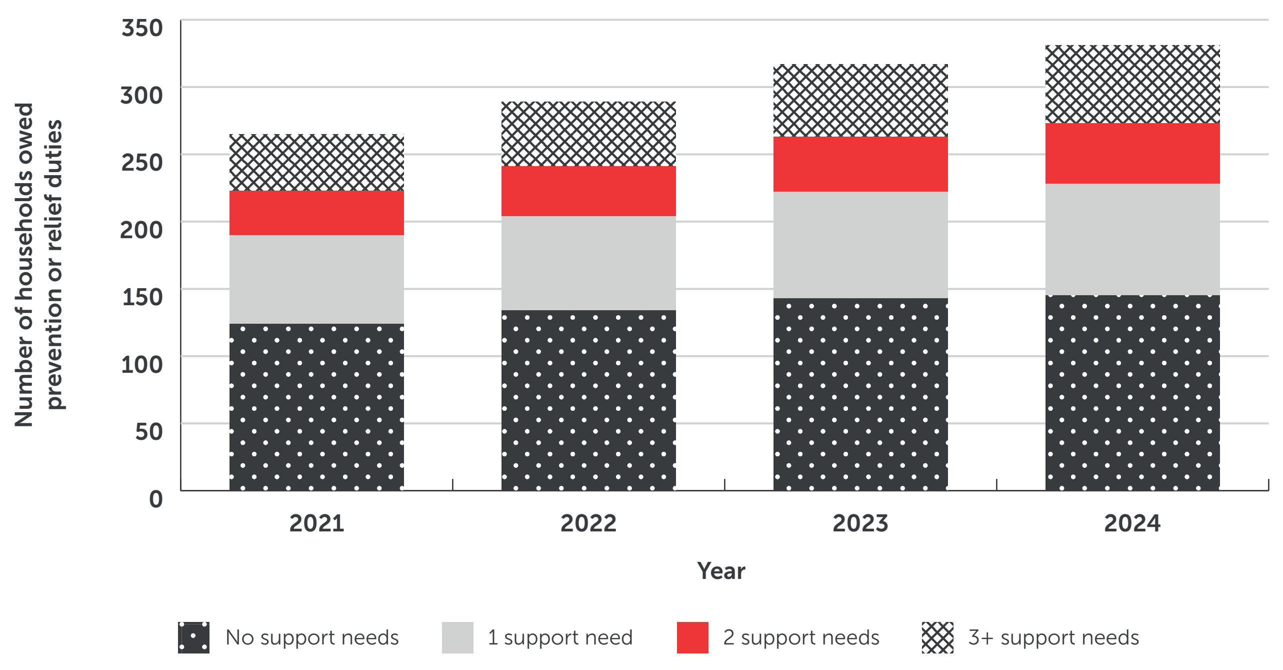
250 Allard, M., D'Souza, S., and Leith, G. (2024). *'Where do I belong, where is home?': Experiences of racism and homelessness*. London: Crisis; Shelter (2025) *My Colour Speaks Before Me: How racism and discrimination affect Black and Black Mixed heritage people's access to social homes in England*. Online.

Figure 4.11: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties Q4 2024: incidence of applicants with assessed support needs



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics.

Figure 4.12: Households owed prevention or relief duties, 2021 – 2024: breakdown according to number of identified support needs (thousands)



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

Support needs

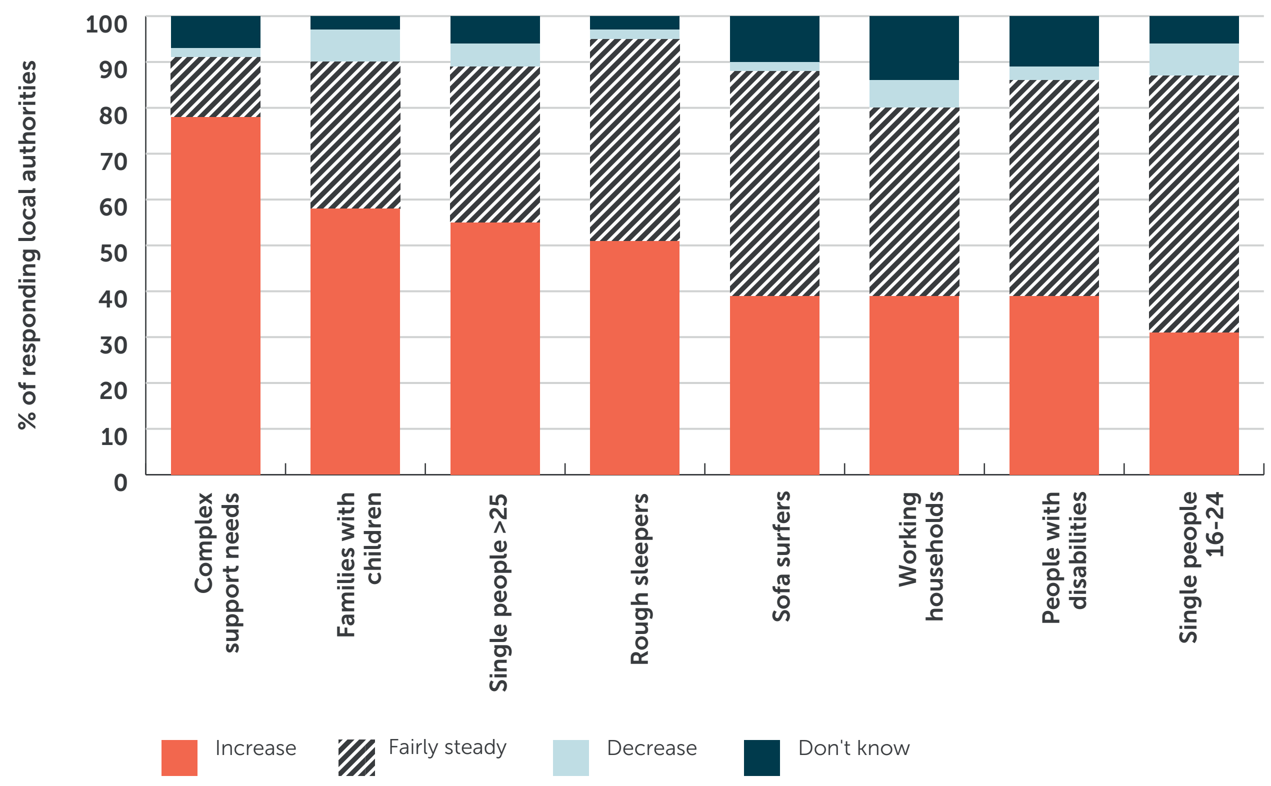
Among households judged as owed a prevention or relief duty in 2024, 56% (186,000) were assessed as containing one or more persons with support needs (up from 52% in 2021). The majority of these were households (103,000) with two or more support needs. The support needs most frequently identified relate to mental ill health (26% of households in Q4 2024 across the whole of England), physical ill health or disability (20%) and experience/ risk of domestic abuse (14%). Much smaller proportions of households were assessed as having support needs associated with drug problems (5%) and alcohol dependency (4%).

As shown in Figure 4.11, rates are very substantially lower among London households, probably reflecting the role of the city's especially pressurised housing market in placing a wider cohort of the population at risk of homelessness than is true elsewhere.

In 2024 more than half of all homeless households owed a duty were assessed as including at least one member with support needs, with more than half of this cohort involving person(s) with two or more support needs (see Figure 4.12).

Related to these issues, we asked LAs about perceived change in demand from particular groups (see Figure 4.13) and 78% of survey respondents reported increased applications from those with complex needs in the last year. One key informant acknowledged that these trends may in part be explained by better recording of support needs by LAs, though emphasised that LAs' recording practice remains inconsistent. The consensus explanation for these trends, however, was that they reflect the impact of pressures within and challenges accessing a range of statutory support services:

Figure 4.13: Change in number of households seeking homelessness assistance in 2024/25 compared with preceding year, as perceived by housing options staff (% of responding local authorities)



Source: Authors' survey

"People are just falling through the cracks of all the systems... Now... that system is so stripped bare... the cracks are much bigger and far more people are falling through."

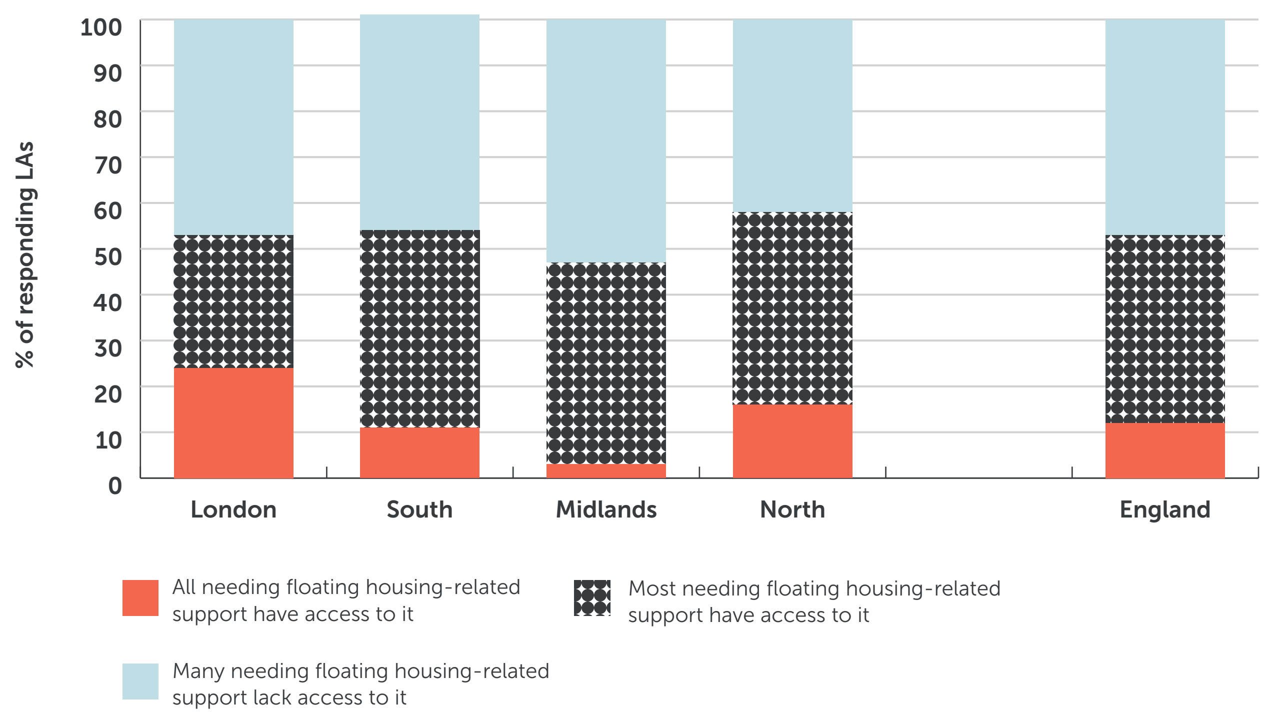
(Voluntary sector key informant)

"[These trends reflect] the challenges and the pressures in the health and social care system, people are not getting the help they need... It is untreated health needs, mental health needs, social needs... that might have been years in the making [and...] the ultimate consequence is homelessness... The number of people who are falling out of support, that they should be able to access, is growing rapidly and... is a massive factor."

(Voluntary sector key informant)

Another factor highlighted was the decline in housing-related support available to sustain people's tenancies:

Figure 4.14: In your view, is floating housing-related support available to all those who need it in your area to sustain their tenancies? (% of responding LAs)



Source: Authors' survey
Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

"So much of that housing-related support, floating support… infrastructure [has been] progressively stripped away… it's… gone in most areas now… the infrastructure… is nowhere near, doesn't match the need."

(Independent key informant)

We asked LA survey respondents about the availability of floating housing-related support to help people sustain their tenancies in their area. Almost half (47%) reported that many of those who need such support lack access to it, rising to 53% in the Midlands (see Figure 4.14). Only 12% of LAs reported that all those who need such support have access to it, though this varied substantially between the regions from 3% (one responding LA) in the Midlands compared to almost a quarter (24%) in London.

Some LAs reported that there was no floating housing-related support provision in their area whatsoever: *"It simply does not exist"* (LA, South). In many other areas, LAs described available services as *"unable to cope with demand"* (LA, Midlands), or available only to narrowly defined groups (e.g. people with experience of sleeping rough, using substances, new tenants or those accommodated in the PRS on condition of support being provided) and not offering the intensity or duration of support required:

"Whilst we do commission a floating support service it does not go far to meet the needs of all who could benefit for it and focusses in setting up new tenancies."

(LA, North)

"Floating support is only available to specialist groups such as rough sleepers and prison leavers as grant funding is available to commission services for these groups."

(LA, London)

In other areas, support available was only available to those with lower-level support needs:

"A lot of housing support is not available to individuals with high needs, meaning the most vulnerable are without, who are then unable to move on from TA or are at risk of becoming homeless as they cannot sustain a tenancy."

(LA, North)

This lack of floating support was seen as especially problematic in the context of a lack of and/or decline in support available from other sources. For example, while some LAs noted that housing associations provide such support to their tenants, several reported reductions in their offer, and many LAs highlighted the inaccessibility of support through adult social care and mental health channels:

"Registered Social Landlords have reduced the support that they offer their tenants."

(LA, North)

"There is a cohort of people… who are too high need for general needs living, but they do not meet the criteria for any formal support from ASC [Adult Social Care]. This leaves a gap which often means that people aren't able to sustain accommodation."

(LA, North)

Key reasons for this lack of support provision were a lack of funding and the lack of a duty on LAs to provide such support:

"Floating housing support is not statutory funded so although we are able to fund some, given the cost pressures our local authority is suffering we have to focus on statutory duties."

(LA, Midlands)

"Limited funding to provide floating support against competing priorities."

(LA, London)

Tier two/district councils appeared to be in a particular challenging position, often suffering the consequences of tier one LA-level decisions to disinvest:

"Floating support has not existed in our area since supporting people money was un-ringfenced. As we are a two tier authority, the money was

left with the authority who didn't have responsibility for homelessness."

(LA, Midlands)

"Floating support services were cut entirely by our county council a number of years ago as they needed to make savings."

(LA, South)

LAs were clear that the gap in floating support provision directly drives homelessness and undermines prevention efforts:

"Services are overstretched and have long waiting times. We have seen many clients struggle and lose accommodation due to lack of specialist support."

(LA, South)

"Floating Support funding has been pulled this week in our area, which means we will struggle to prevent complex cases and get support in place to resolve."

(LA, Midlands)

4.5 Temporary accommodation

Since 2010 TA placements have more than doubled (see Figure 4.15). In late 2022, placements exceeded 100,000 for the first time in 18 years and 2023 and 2024 saw a further acceleration in placement growth – see Figure 4.15.

Well over half (70,000) of England's 128,000 TA placements (56%) are the responsibility of the 33 London boroughs and the rate of TA placements for London in 2024 was more than seven times that of the rest of England (19.25 per 1,000 (resident population) households compared to 2.71 nationwide).

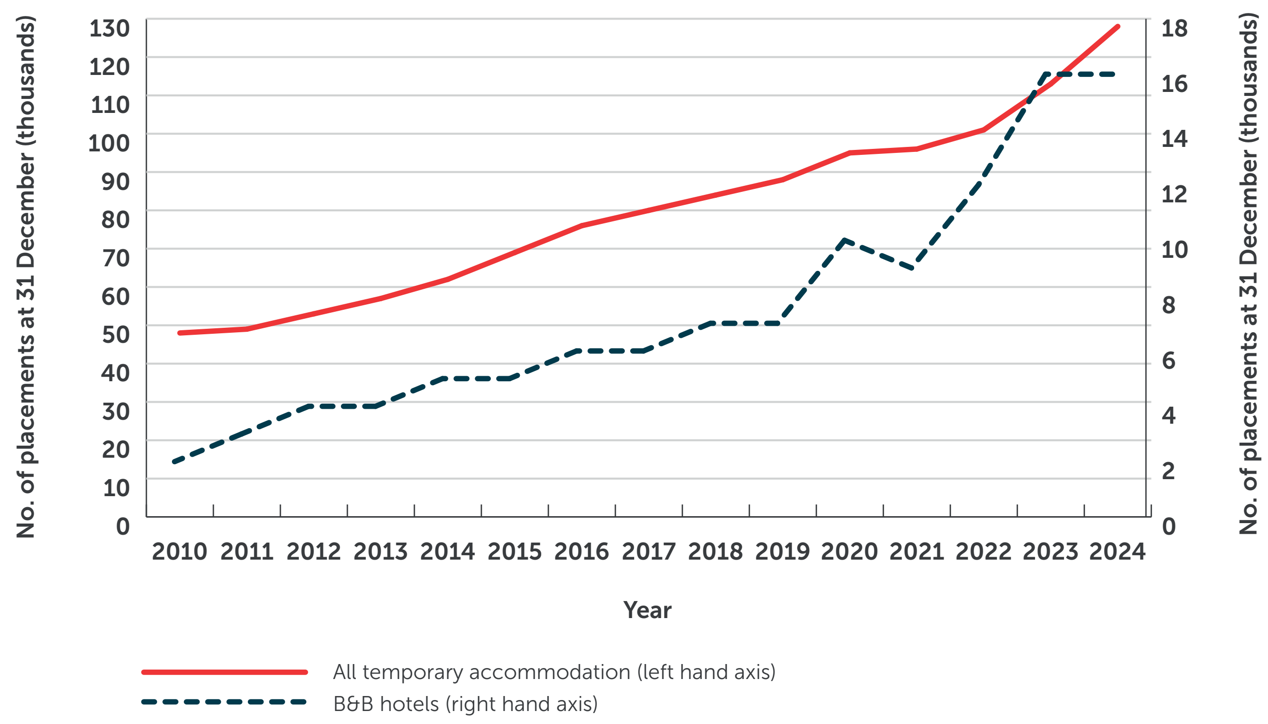
The bulk of TA placements involve self-contained units (see Figure 4.16), but around one in six placements (17%) at 31 December 2024 were in B&B hotel or hostel rooms – accommodation in which units often lack cooking facilities and where sanitary facilities may be shared. On this date, the number of B&B placements stood at 16,000 – around eight times their level in 2010 (see Figure 4.16). Deviating from the pattern of near relentless growth seen over the previous 14 years, there was a small reduction in B&B placements in the second half of the 2024.[251]

Although B&B hotels and hostels are mainly used for childless households, the 31 December 2024 cohort included some 8,000 households with children (34% of all households in these forms of accommodation).

Concerns about TA have reached acute levels and orient around 1) the quality and suitability of TA and 2) its cost. There has been a particular focus in the last year on the suitability and impacts of TA

251 For simplicity, the graph records only placement numbers on 31 December each year. For this reason, the 2024 mid-year peak and modest subsequent decline is not visible.

Figure 4.15: Local authority homelessness temporary accommodation placements 2010 – 2024



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

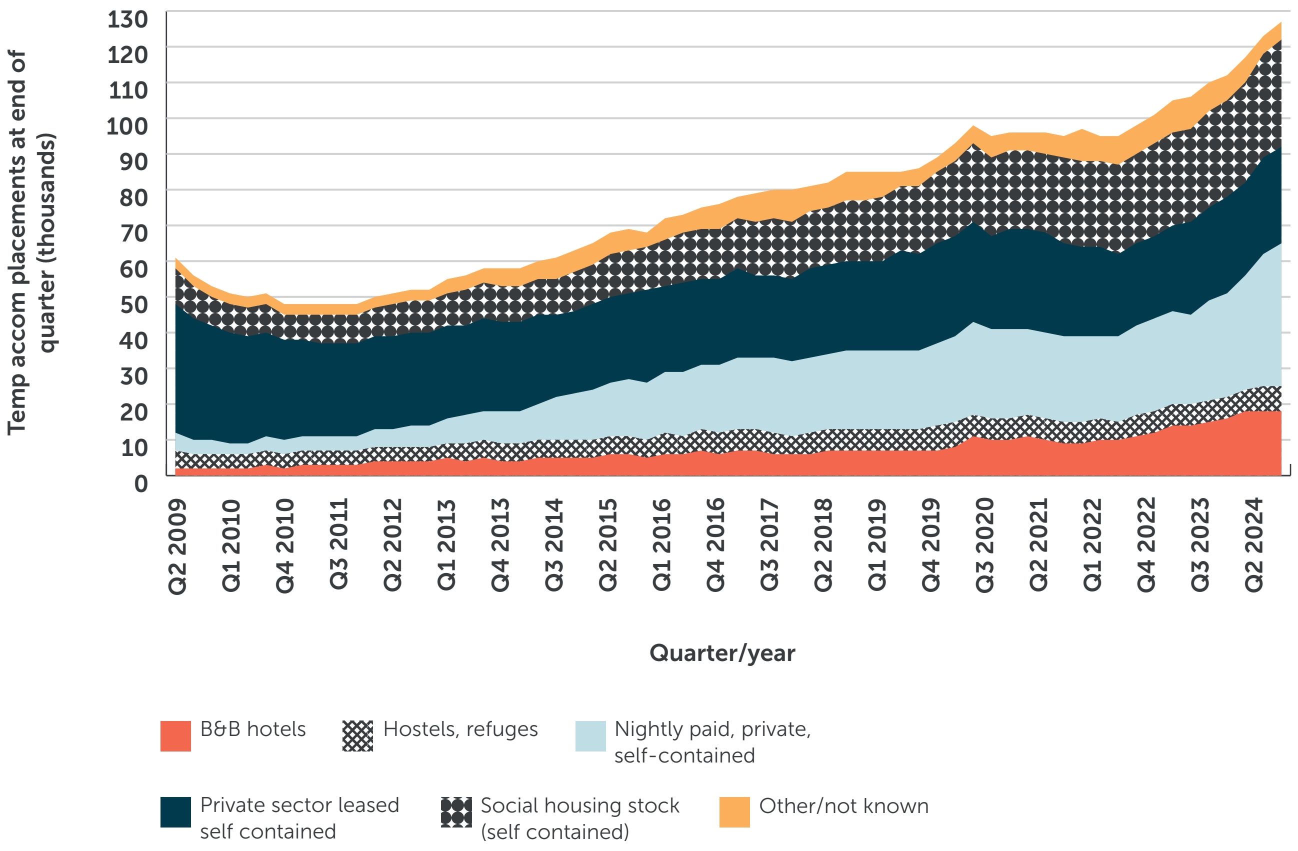
for the record number of children living in it, which stood at 164,000 in 2025.[252] The House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry into children in TA published in March 2025 highlighted the very poor conditions some families with children face:

"We were concerned to hear cases of temporary accommodation provision which was completely unsuitable for families, with egregious hazards including serious damp and mould, excessive cold, and mice infestations. Temporary accommodation is frequently overcrowded. Older children must share beds with their parents or siblings, and babies do not have space to crawl or learn to walk due to lack of floor space. Some temporary accommodation sourced by local authorities is of such poor quality that it may pose a severe risk to children's health."[253]

252 House of Commons (2025) *Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee: England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation*. Online: Parliament. UK.

253 Ibid, p.1

Figure 4.16: Temporary accommodation placements, Q2 2009 – Q4 2024 (Quarter by Quarter): type of temporary accommodation



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

The Inquiry highlighted new data showing that between 2019 and 2024, 74 children died with TA listed as a contributing factor to their vulnerability, ill-health, or death.[254] The inquiry also detailed concerns about lengths of stay in TA, including B&B accommodation among families and safeguarding concerns arising when families are forced to share facilities with domestic abuse perpetrators.[255] In their latest 'Dying Homeless' project report, the Museum of Homelessness documented 1,611 people who died while homeless in 2024 across the whole of the UK (1,142 in England), up 9% on the previous year. Most of whom were residing in temporary, supported or emergency accommodation at the time (12% were sleeping rough when they passed away), with the most common suspected causes of death being drug or alcohol related, physical health related or suicide.[256]

Other issues raised by key informants contributing to this year's monitor included the rise in reliance upon nightly paid accommodation, with doubts about its suitability and appropriateness for households (as well as its cost, see below):

"We've seen a big growth in the nightly-paid [TA, which]... is described as self-contained... but actually, in a lot of cases, that's a self-contained room where there isn't enough room for everyone to have a bed of their own... you've got children sharing beds with parents and siblings, even teenagers sharing beds with parents. The cooking facilities... will be a little kitchenette a couple of feet away from your bed. Then you have a tiny shower room... you're incredibly confined... it's the mental impact... and indeed physical impacts of not having any other space that you can go to, especially in the winter when you can't get outside."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

Key informants also stressed concerns about increases in out-of-area placements, which official statistics show accounted for 32% of the national placement total at 31st December 2024, having risen markedly in 2023 and 2024. In 2010 out-of-borough TA placements totalled some 6,000 households, or 11% of total placements.[257]

"We've seen a big increase in the last year... in people being accommodated out of area. Sometimes that [is]... within an urban area, so going from one London borough to another... but... we've seen people being offered accommodation in the Northeast, who are London families. So it's going that far now."

(Key informant voluntary sector)

A lack of statutory data on the distance between household's home authorities and where they are placed was a particular concern:

"We don't have very good data from government... around not just... how many households are placed out of area, but where are they placed out of area?... What do we know about how that impacts communities?"

(Key informant voluntary sector)

Recent research conducted by the University of Nottingham using Freedom of Information requests from the 85 LA areas placing the highest number of households out of area in 2022/23 has identified the highest gross and net placers and receivers of out of area placements, revealing that some areas are high net placers (including Lewisham, Manchester and Lambeth) while others are net receivers (including Walsall,

254 Shared Health Foundation (2025) *Child Mortality in Temporary Accommodation 2025*. Online: SHF.

255 House of Commons (2025) *Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee: England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation*. Online: Parliament. UK. The Government's response can be read here: House of Commons (2025) Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee: *England's Homeless Children: The Crisis in Temporary Accommodation: Government Response*. Online: Parliament. UK.

256 Museum of Homelessness (2025) *The Dying Homeless Project 2024 Findings*. Online: Museum of Homelessness.

257 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Statutory homelessness live tables, England*; Table TA1.

Gravesham and Sheffield) with important potential impacts on local services in the latter areas.[258] Their research has also highlighted the over-representation of Black and minoritised households amongst those subject to out of area placements.[259] There are concerns that LAs are not currently meeting their duties to notify receiving LAs of out of area placements.[260]

In addition to these issues of quality and suitability, key informants stressed that TA now represents *"critical financial risk"* (Key informant statutory sector) threatening to *"bankrupt"* local authorities (Key informant voluntary sector). Pressures on London Boroughs are such that the Inter Borough Accommodation Agreement in place to avoid price competition for TA in the capital has reportedly *"disintegrated"*:[261]

"Housing directors are very aware that they've not been able to keep to it... it's now no longer achievable."

(Key informant statutory sector).

In 2024/25, LAs spent £2.8 billion on temporary accommodation, up 25% in just one year,[262] which may itself be an underestimate, as there is evidence that LAs under-report their TA spending.[263] A 2024 National Audit Office inquiry concluded that *"dealing with homelessness is creating unsustainable financial pressure for some local authorities,"*[264] and recommended the development of a *"genuinely cross-departmental approach"* and a long-term strategy, including a review of homelessness funding.[265]

Analysis by Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) showed that in 2023/24, £700 million of local government spending went towards private sector B&Bs and hotels, amounting to a major financial transfer from the public to the private sector. This, alongside the impact of TA has on availability of settled housing stock, led CHI to conclude that TA does not represent value for money.[266] They have called on the Government to introduce TA reduction targets and review TA funding to ensure its effective use and the sustainability of LA finances.

One especially controversial element of the TA funding system is that LAs are only able to claim Housing Benefit at 90% of LHA rates from 2011 for some types of TA. As a result of the inflation of rental prices since 2011, 'Temporary Accommodation Subsidy loss' now costs LAs hundreds of millions of pounds[267] and shifts the financial burden of funding TA from central government to LA general funds.[268] We asked LA survey respondents how challenging TA subsidy loss was for their LAs overall finances. Well over half of respondents (61%) reported that levels of subsidy loss were 'very challenging' for their authority's overall finances (see Appendix 2 Table A.16), rising to 94% of London Boroughs.

For the 11% of LAs only slightly challenged or challenged at all by these issues, the main protective factor was owning their own TA stock:

"We are fortunate that we are still a stock holding authority and we utilise some of the housing stock for TA so the impact of subsidy is minimal."

(LA, Midland).

Areas affected voiced deep frustration, verging on anger, that what they saw as a nonsensical – or *"utterly ludicrous"* (LA, London) - funding rule had continued to operate with such significant consequences for so long. The impacts are particularly severe for many London boroughs:

"The... losses are not sustainable and if things do not change the council is likely to be bankrupt in 2027/28."

(LA, London)

"The freeze is effectively a cost shift from central to local government placing an undue burden on London councils particularly."

(LA, London)

But areas well beyond the capital also faced *"significant financial challenge[s]"* [Local authority, South] as a result of subsidy loss:

"I find it staggering that knowing the numbers in TA and financial pressure this has placed LAs under, that Govt has not addressed this severely outdated formula as a matter of utmost urgency."

(LA, South)

Many respondents made the point that these challenges divert attention and funding away from early intervention and homelessness prevention:

"A formula based on LHA in 2011 is completely out of date... and diverts funding away from prevention activities with the local housing authority having to heavily subsidise TA placements."

(LA, South)

258 Iafrati, S. and Clare, N. (2024). Out of Area housing in England: Where do the households go? Interim findings. University of Nottingham; Iafrati, S. (2021). *'Out of area housing by local authorities in England: displacement of vulnerable households in a neoliberal housing crisis,'* *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 29(2), 137-153.

259 Iafrati, S., Clare, N., & Lawrence, H. (2025). 'Moving on: The overrepresentation of Black and minoritised households in out of area housing placements in England,' *Critical Social Policy*, 45(3), 406-425.

260 House of Commons (2025) *Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee: England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation*. Online: Parliament. UK.

261 See also: London Assembly, Housing Committee (2024) *London's Temporary Accommodation Emergency*. Online: London Assembly.

262 The data is available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2024-to-2025-individual-local-authority-data-outturn. See also Shelter (2025) *'Bill for homeless accommodation soars by 25%, hitting £2.8 bn'*. Online: Shelter; District Council's Network (2024) *'Most of our council tax is spent on temporary accommodation'*. Online: DCN.

263 Centre for Homelessness Impact (2024) *Spending on Temporary Accommodation: Is it Value for Money?* Online: CHI.

264 National Audit Office (2024) *The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness*. Online: NAO p. 12.

265 Ibid, p. 13

266 Centre for Homelessness Impact (2024) *Spending on Temporary Accommodation: Is it Value for Money?* Online: CHI p.39

267 Whittingham, A. (2024) *LGA calls for temporary accommodation subsidy rates to be uprated to 90% of current LHA*. Online: *Inside Housing*; Centre for Homelessness Impact (2024) *Spending on Temporary Accommodation: Is it Value for Money?* Online: CHI.

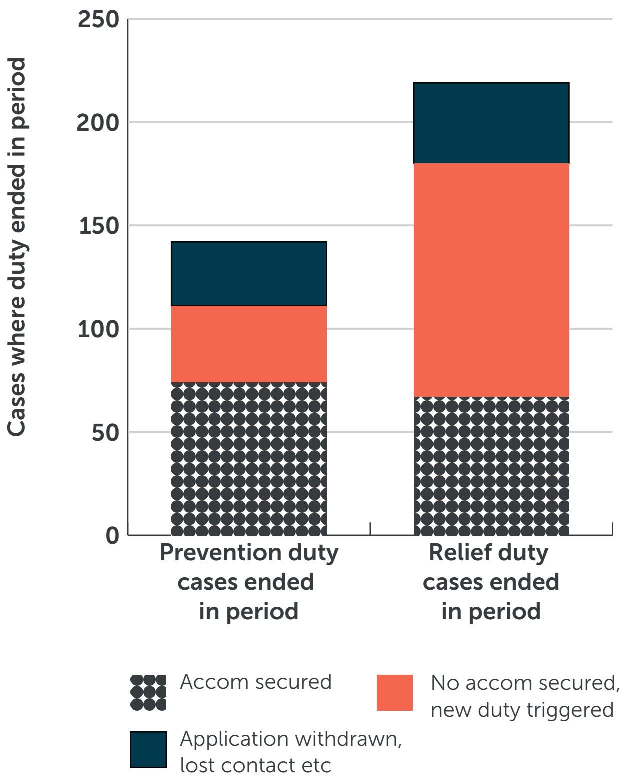
268 Centre for Homelessness Impact (2024) *Spending on Temporary Accommodation: Is it Value for Money?* Online: CHI p. 11

> **"The cost to... is huge. This money could be spent much better elsewhere to prevent homelessness."**
>
> (LA, North)

4.6 Statutory homelessness outcomes

In 2024, 39% of prevention and relief actions ended with accommodation having been secured, i.e. households being able to retain their existing or obtain new accommodation (see Figure 4.17), down from 47% in 2021 (see Figure 4.18). Accommodation was secured for more than half (52%) of prevention duty cases in 2024, but only 31% of relief cases that ended in the period. In prevention cases, positive outcomes more often involved securing new accommodation (33% of the 142,000 prevention cases logged as 'duty ended' during the year), than assisting households to retain existing accommodation (19%). Figure 4.18 also shows that the numbers of prevention and relief cases ending with the triggering of a new duty (because homelessness was not prevented or relieved successfully) increased by 74% in the three years to 2024, from 86,0000 households to 150,000.

Figure 4.17: Outcomes of prevention and relief activity in 2024 — cases where associated duties ended in period (thousands)



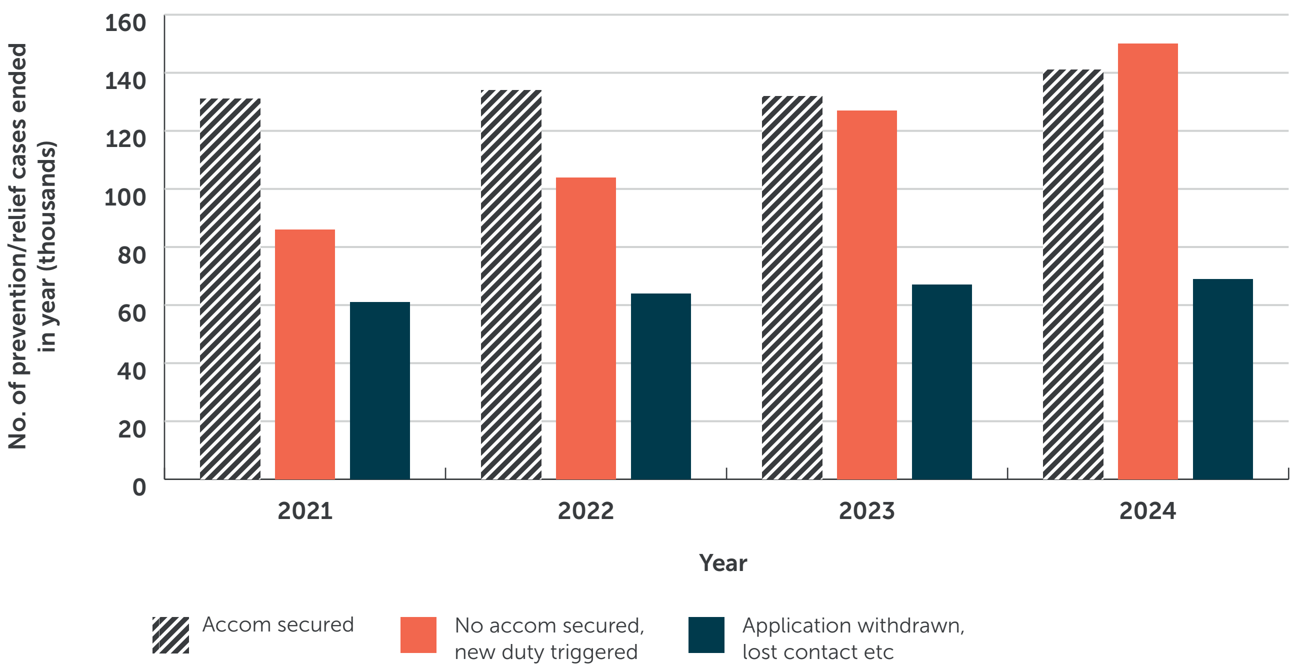
Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

Figure 4.19 shows the types of accommodation secured where this is achieved at the prevention or relief duty stage. Private tenancies are the most common outcome in both cases, followed by social rented accommodation.[269] In the case of relief duties, supported housing is almost as common. This can involve diverse arrangements, ranging from secure tenancies in self-contained supported accommodation models, to placements in congregate hostel accommodation in which residents have very little security of tenure[270] (albeit that the HRA framework requires said accommodation to be available for six months). This category also presumably encompasses supported exempt accommodation over which there are considerable concerns about quality (see Chapter 3).

269 MHCLG published statistics do not differentiate cases where an existing tenancy was secured versus a new one offered in the case of prevention duty discharges.

270 Indeed, households in some forms of supported accommodation would still be counted as 'core homeless'. See Chapter 5.

Figure 4.18: Outcomes of prevention and relief activity 2021 – 2024 — cases where associated duties ended in period (thousands)



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

In many cases, prevention and relief duties end without accommodation having been secured or a new duty being triggered (see Figure 4.19). This was true for 31,000 prevention cases and 39,000 relief cases in 2024. Figure 4.20 breaks down outcomes in these instances. Only in a relatively small number of cases (740) did LAs discharge their prevention or relief duty on the grounds of applicant non-cooperation. Far more common was contact being lost or the application being withdrawn.[271] In prevention duty cases it is common for the 56 day period to elapse and for no further action to be taken, which may reflect that the threat of homelessness within 56 days had not materialised. The substantive outcomes for the cases shown in Figure 4.20 are unknown.

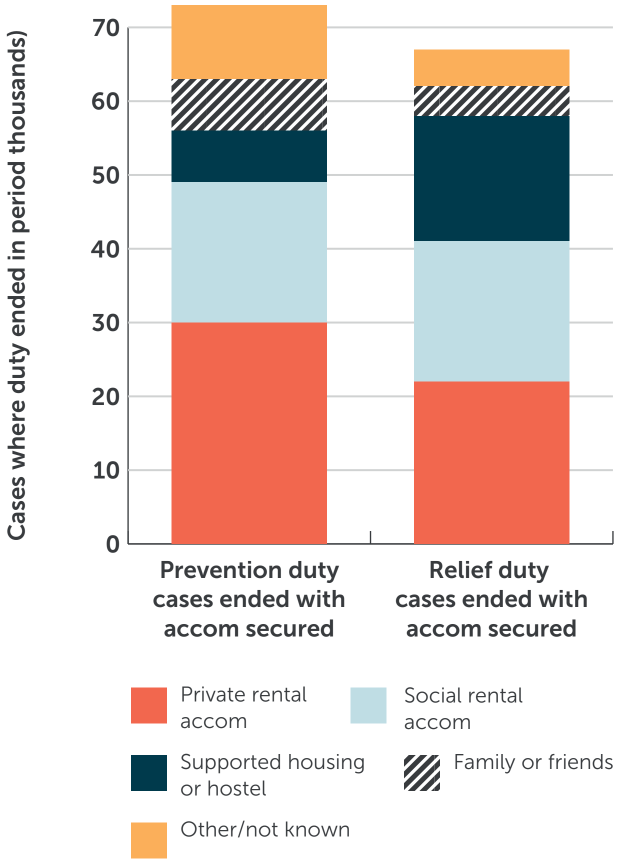
Main rehousing duty outcomes

Some 50,000 applications with a 'Main Duty owed' decision were ended in 2024. In 78% of cases the outcome was a tenancy offer accepted, and in the vast majority of cases (71%) this was a social tenancy (see Figure 4.21). This outcome is somewhat less common in London (64%), where private tenancy outcomes are more common (15% compared to 7% nationally).

It should be borne in mind that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants exit the statutory homelessness system without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them. In 2024, some 35,000 homeless households were deemed either not to be in priority

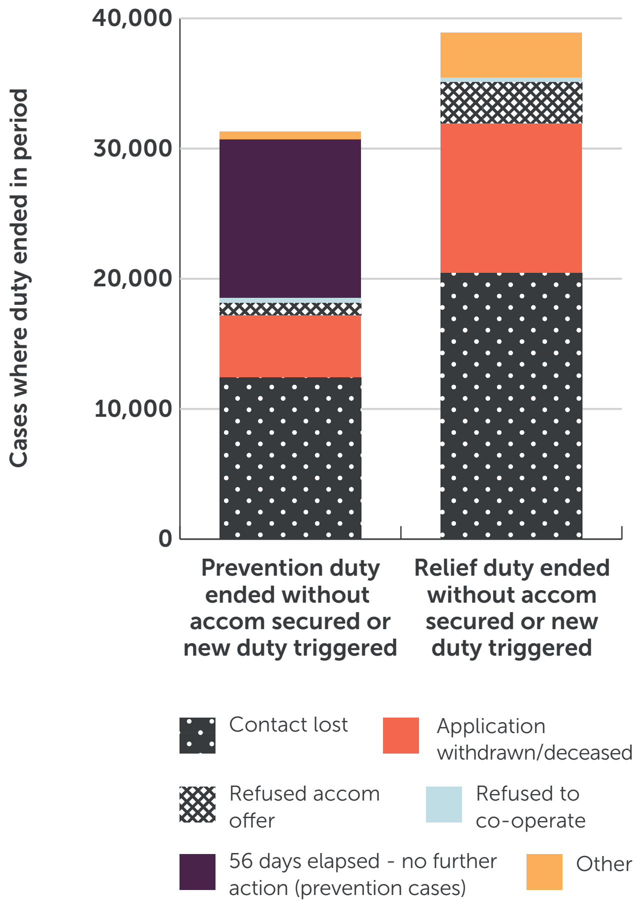
271 It is also worth noting that such exits from the statutory homelessness system were also significant under the pre-HRA framework. For example, in 2017/18 only 75% of the 40,040 households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need subsequently accepted a social or private rental tenancy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

Figure 4.19: Outcomes of prevention and relief activity in 2024 — cases where associated duties ended in period with accommodation secured (thousands)



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

Figure 4.20: Outcomes of prevention and relief activity in 2024 — cases where associated duties ended in period without accommodation secured or new duty triggered



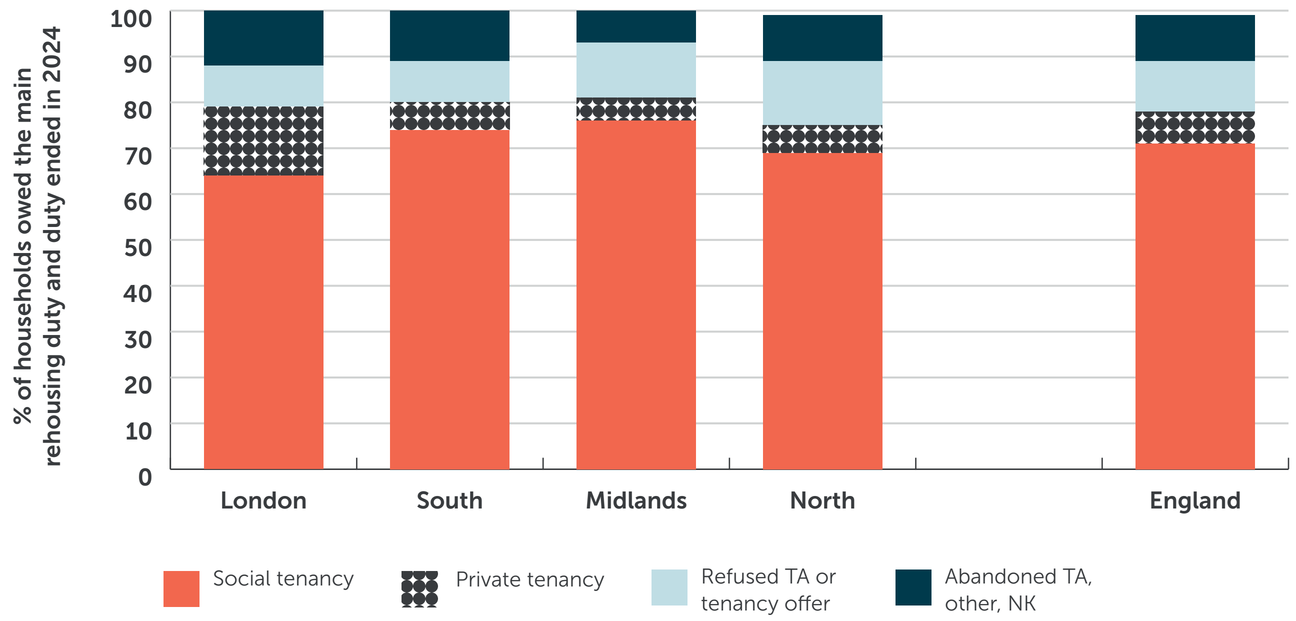
Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics

need or to be intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty (see Appendix 3).

New research exploring the links between race and homelessness has shown significant disparities in the outcomes achieved under the statutory homelessness system for minoritised and migrant-headed households compared to white-headed and UK-born households. Analysis of H-CLIC records showed that minoritised families were substantially less likely than White families to gain access to social housing via the statutory homelessness system (24% of White families gained social housing compared to only 10% of Black families) and that migrant-headed households accepted as homeless were less likely than non-migrant households to gain a social tenancy (11% of migrant-headed households accessed social housing versus 17% of UK-born-headed households).[272]

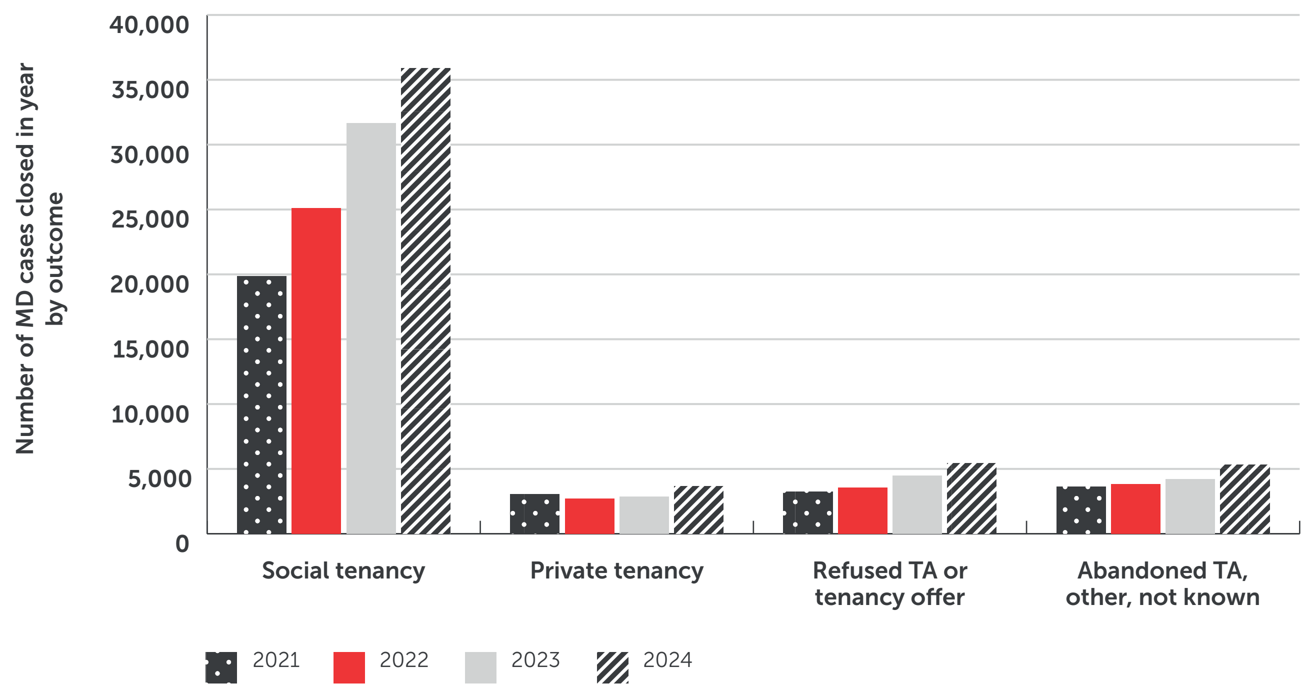
272 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., McIntyre, J., Ayed, N., & Watts-Cobbe, B. (2025). *Race, Ethnicity and Homelessness in the UK: Final report of a knowledge and capacity building programme*. Online: Heriot Watt University.

Figure 4.21: Housing (and other) outcomes for households owed the main duty, where duty ended in 2024 — by region



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics. Note: Abandoned TA includes 'became intentionally homeless from TA'

Figure 4.22: Housing (and other) outcomes for households owed the main duty, where duty ended 2021 – 2024, England



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Statistics. Note: Abandoned TA includes 'became intentionally homeless from TA'

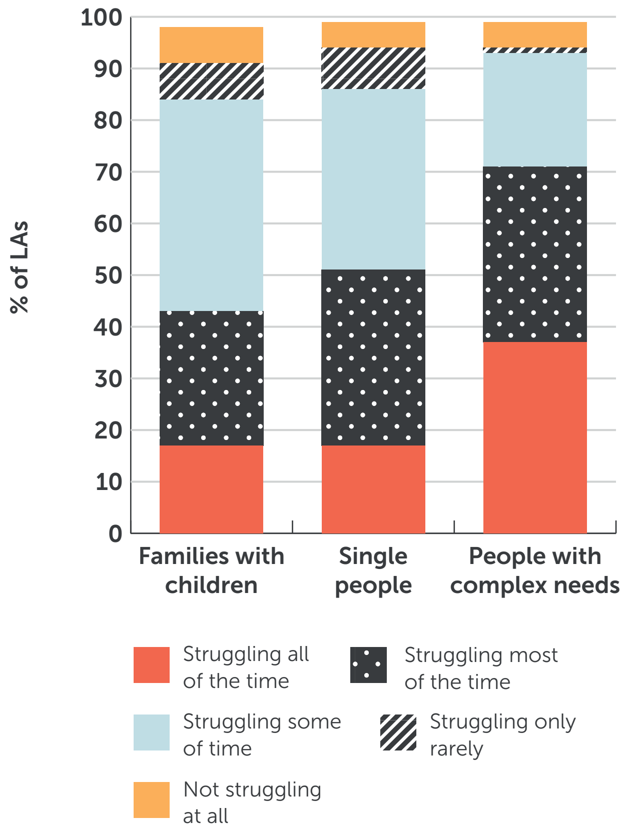
4.7 Meeting statutory duties under homelessness legislation: local authority perspectives

We asked LA survey respondents a suite of questions about their ability to meet their duties under statutory homelessness legislation. Figures 4.23-4.26 present the findings, broken down by duty - prevention, relief, TA and main rehousing - and by group – families with children, single people, and people with complex needs.[273]

It is clear that LAs very often struggle to meet their statutory duties. These struggles are most acute in relation to the rehousing and prevention duties and for single people and those with complex needs.

Perhaps the most striking finding is the extent to which LAs struggle to meet the duties owed 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 TA duty. This suggests that individuals with complex remain acutely underserved by the Homelessness Reduction Act. LAs explained that these challenges result from a lack of suitable accommodation for this group (both temporary and settled), often due to a lack of support provision and risk aversion on the part of landlords, combined with insufficient contributions from wider public services to meet the needs of this group, in particular mental health, substance use and social care services:

Figure 4.23: To what extent ... is your LA struggling to meet its statutory duties to *prevent homelessness* for the following groups? (% of responding LAs)



Source: Authors' survey
Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

"Those with complex needs (dual diagnosis or history of ASB [anti-social behaviour], MH [mental health] issues, substance misuse, rough sleeping issues) present huge issues as to what might be deemed 'suitable' and housing providers are extremely risk averse and want to understand what mitigation is in place before they will consider clients... We... rely on other professionals to do their bit and often this is where it falls down - insufficient MH [mental health] provision, not quite meeting ASC care act duties, etc."

(LA, South)

Over half of LAs report struggling to meet prevention and rehousing duties for single people all or most of the time (51% and 52% respectively) and significant proportions also struggle most or all of the time in the case of relief and TA duties (44% and 39% respectively). Here the key issues highlighted were a lack of one-bedroom accommodation, the inadequacy of LHA rates and the Shared Accommodation Rate facing most under 35 year olds:

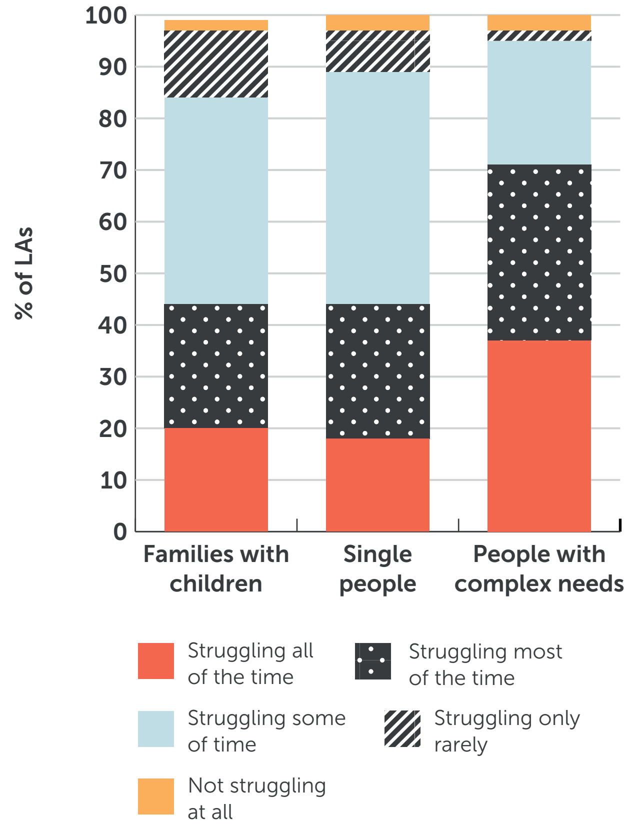
"It is extremely difficult to find shared accommodation for those under 35, plus a lot of them are not willing to share, even when told what help they will get to pay their rent."

(LA, London)

"There is a huge shortage of 1 bed properties being developed by both RPs [registered providers] and the private sector, as well as very few to rent in the private rented sector."

(LA, South)

Figure 4.24: To what extent ... is your LA struggling to meet its statutory duties to *relieve homelessness* for the following groups? (% of responding LAs)

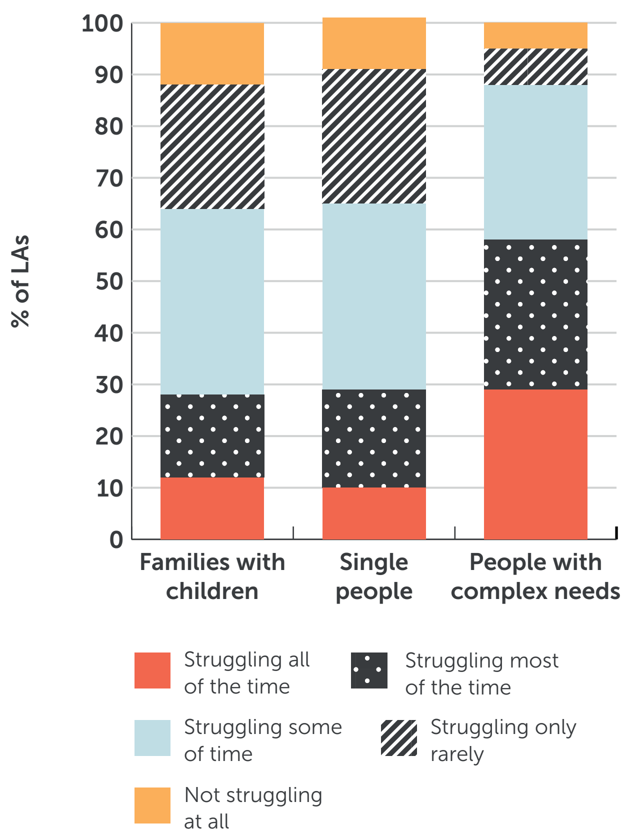


Source: Authors' survey
Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

LAs 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 TA duties. LA comments suggest that securing appropriate settled housing for large families is a particular pressure point:

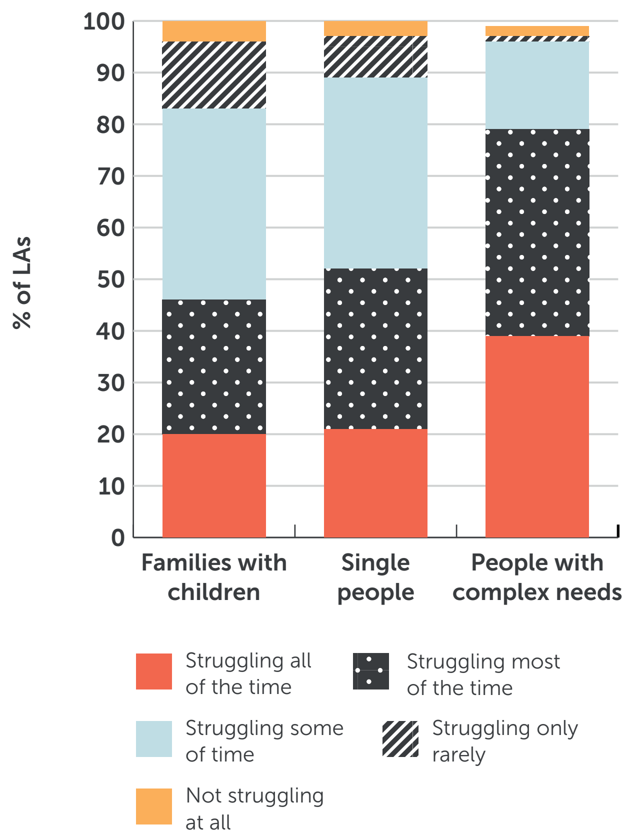
273 Note that LAs owe these duties to distinct groups of households. While prevention and relief duties are owed to all eligible households who are homeless or at risk within 56 days, the TA duty is owed only to those for whom prevention and relief duties have failed and whom the LA believes are in priority need. The main rehousing duty is only owed to households who are eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Figure 4.25: To what extent ... is your LA struggling to meet its statutory duties to *provide temporary accommodation* for the following groups? (% of responding LAs)



Source: Authors' survey
Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Figure 4.26: To what extent ... is your LA struggling to meet its statutory duties to *secure settled rehousing* for the following groups? (% of responding LAs)



Source: Authors' survey
Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

"Larger households (3 and 4-bedroom housing need) are likely to have a significant wait for a longer-term housing offer."

(LA, London)

"[We] struggle especially with large families, being a non-stock holding authority and not having enough social housing as well as living in an area which has a significant amount of 2nd homes meaning PR [private rental] options are extremely expensive and sought after."

(LA, South)

LAs 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:

"Benefit Cap: Continues to restrict options for larger families, limiting access to affordable private rent."

(LA, South)

"Lack of affordable family sized accommodation for those reliant on welfare benefits or in low paid work."

(LA, London)

Securing accommodation for families with medical/accessibility needs, a history of arrears or anti-social behaviour was also noted as particular challenging.

Some LAs highlighted difficulties finding appropriate TA for families, and reported having to use nightly paid and B&B accommodation, out of area placements or leave families in TA for very long periods:

"Lack of TA across the district is sometimes an issue when trying to keep households near their support network... [we] have had to place applicants outside of area until a suitable TA unit becomes available in the district."

(LA, South)

"We struggle particularly with the larger families, we do not hold our own housing stock and therefore are very limited in TA for families."

(LA, North)

Across LA responses, it was clear that the housing market context often made providing an effective homelessness response exceptionally difficult, in relation to all duties and subgroups:

"The severe lack of suitable & available accommodation in the borough is problematic for all groups."

(LA, South)

The availability of affordable, suitable housing has obvious impacts on LAs ability to relieve homelessness, effectively rehouse households and provide TA in the interim, but access to such accommodation is an essential enabler of effective homelessness prevention:

"We can only prevent or relieve homelessness if there [are] affordable options for people, and at the moment there aren't."

(LA, South)

"The reason the LA is struggling to prevent, relieve or discharge our duties positively is the lack of settled accommodation available and demand on social housing. The private sector is too expensive and to discharge duties into the private sector the tenancy has to be for a minimum of 12 months and affordable it is near impossible to find. Preventing or relieving homelessness with 56 days is

really difficult and therefore we are now making more (main duty) decisions."

(LA, North)

Local authorities are exceptionally downbeat about recent trends in their capacity to access appropriate housing for households facing homelessness. As reported in Chapter 2, over two thirds (69%) report accessing social housing for households facing homelessness becoming 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 becoming harder in the last year and three quarters (76%) report accessing supported housing getting harder.

Partnerships

In fulfilling responsibilities on homelessness, LAs work with a variety of other public sector agencies. Effective relationships with these partners have the potential to ease some of the pressures discussed above and throughout this report. We asked LAs about the extent to which partnership arrangements with seven key actors enhance their abilities to effectively prevent and/or alleviate homelessness in their area, these being health services, adult and child social services, criminal justice/probation, DWP/Jobcentre Plus, housing associations, and the Home Office (see Figure 4.27).

In most cases, a majority of LAs report partnerships in place that 'somewhat' enhance their capacity to respond to homelessness effectively. Partnerships with housing associations appear to be strongest, with 36% of LAs reported that they significantly enhance their responses to homelessness and a further 52% somewhat enhanced them. Partnerships with criminal justice and probation are comparatively well regarded, with 23% of LAs reporting 'significantly enhancing' relationships in place and further 63% 'somewhat enhancing' arrangements.

Middle of the pack were partnership arrangements in place with health services, children's and adults social care services and the DWP/Jobcentres. Only a relatively small minority (15-19% of LAs) report relationships significantly enhancing their capabilities, but majorities (53-69%) report somewhat enhancing relationships. Regarding health services, a number of LAs noted particular difficulties working with mental health services:

"Partnership working with our mental health team needs to improve but their resources are strained."

(LA, South)

"Some partnerships are in place with health... e.g... regarding... discharge from physical health (facilities) but not mental health facilities."

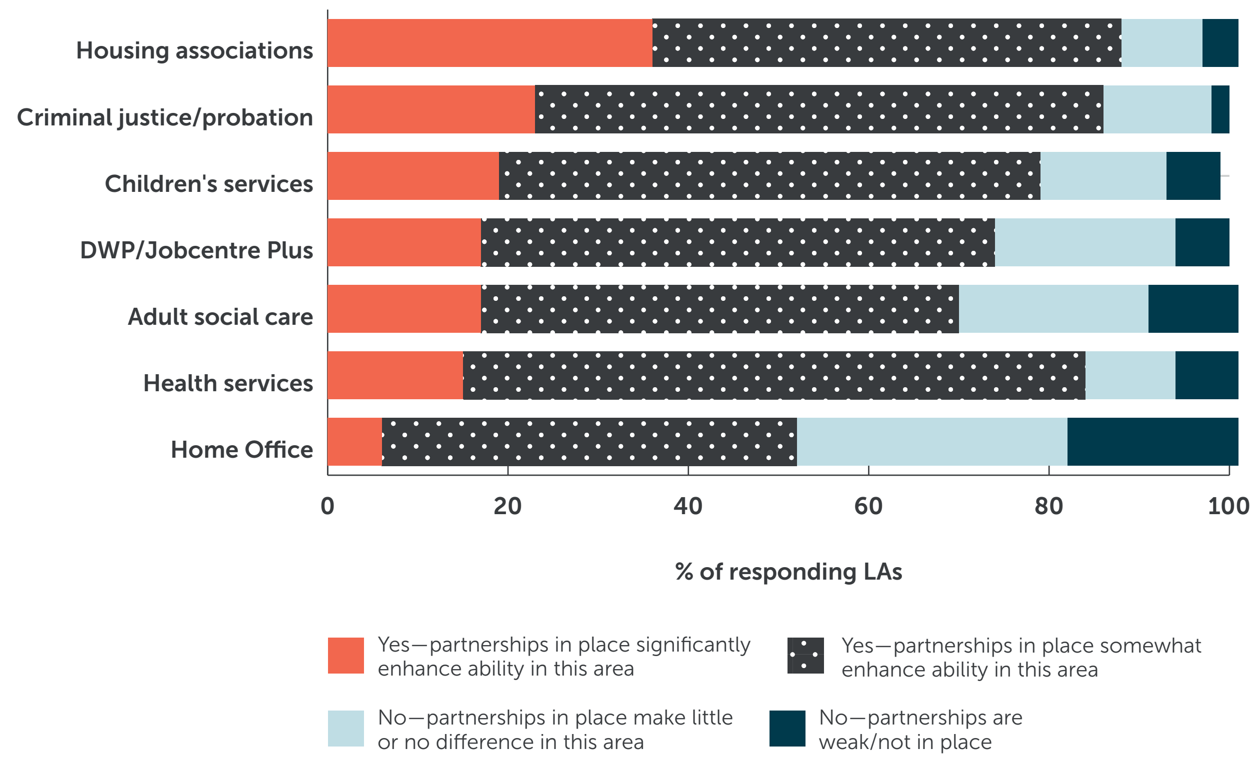
(LA, Midlands)

LAs described highly variable relationships with social care teams, both across different LA areas and different social care teams within an area:

"We have relatively close working relations internally with ASC, Children's [services]."

(LA, Midlands)

Figure 4.27: Are effective partnerships in place with relevant actors in the following fields that enhance your local authority's ability to effectively prevent and/or alleviate homelessness? (% of responding local authorities)



Source: Authors' survey
Note: Excludes 'Don't know' responses.

"There are significant safeguarding concerns and opportunities are missed by Children's services with slow turnaround times for decisions - lack of urgency to act."

(LA, South)

"Children's services are limited (we have good working relation with 16/17 and care leavers with procedures, regular meetings and dialogue) [but] for children under 16 not much joint working and often feels like a battle with them."

(LA, Midlands)

Bottom of the pack by some way were relationships with the Home Office: half of LAs (49%) reported no partnerships being in place or these being weak/making little difference. LA comments were scathing on the failures of joint working in this regard:

"Home Office and their accommodation providers do not engage, do not attend specific meetings for the

cohort, outbid us on local properties and provide minimal support to their residents."

(LA, South)

"To state the obvious, the Home Office and its contractors are not good partners and pay little regard to the effect of their actions on those hard pressed LAs in which their accommodation is concentrated."

(LA, South)

Several respondents made the general point that no matter how strong partnerships are, these cannot compensate for a lack of suitable housing options for households facing homelessness:

"We have good working relationship with all of those partners, however lack of housing is our biggest issue so even with all the support in place there are little options to prevent or relieve."

(LA, Midlands)

"Although we have joint working protocols in place with agencies, these are often ineffective due to the pressures being placed on housing and the lack of suitable available housing."

(LA, North)

Nevertheless, it clear that there is substantial scope for improvement in the contribution of key partner agencies to homelessness responses across England.

5. Core Homelessness: numbers, projections and policy impacts

Key findings

In 2024, we estimate that the number of core homeless households in England was 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 core homelessness 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 TA, rising by around 150% each since 2020. The largest element, 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 361,400 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 geared to avoiding destitution and severe poverty (e.g. ending 5 week wait for UC, minimising debt deductions, removing 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 and indexing the LHA, 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 TA, 61% in hostels and 46% in rough sleeping.

5.1 Introduction

Having examined the statutory homelessness trends in Chapter 4, this chapter considers homelessness from a different angle, presenting updated estimates of the level and composition of core homelessness in England in 2024. It reviews trends over the preceding years and assesses the core homelessness legacy of Covid-19 and the recent cost of living crisis. It discusses different estimates of key elements of core homelessness and the underlying difficulties of measurement, while also drawing out the positive value of these measures for consistent comparisons over time and space and their focus on the more extreme and immediate forms of homelessness. It then proceeds to present updated forward projections of core homelessness numbers and composition over the next 18 years, including a regional breakdown. Finally, and most importantly, this forecasting model is used to examine the impacts of a range of recent and potential policy and practice changes on likely levels of core homelessness, as well as key numbers in the wider statutory homelessness system.

The chapter is structured as follows. In Section 5.2, we define the elements of core homelessness and explain the rationale for the concept. Then in Section 5.3 we go on to present estimates of the main elements of core homelessness over the period 2012 to 2024, with a particular focus on the last 2-3 years. Section 5.4 introduces the forward projection model and the policy options considered. Section 5.5 presents the forward projections and discusses key drivers, while Section 5.6 looks at the impacts of broader packages of policy options in combination.

5.2 The concept of core homelessness

The core homelessness concept was first introduced in research undertaken with Crisis in 2017.[274] It was developed to enable a robust measurement framework that overcomes limitations in traditional approaches to homelessness calibration used in the UK, and in particular of statutory homelessness statistics (which track only those who actively seek LA homelessness assistance and who are eligible for it), and counts or estimates of rough sleeping (see Chapter 3). While both of these approaches are informative and important, they are also subject to shortcomings that limit their value for analytical purposes – including for cross-country (including within UK) comparison, trend over time analysis, and serving as a basis for projections on the possible future scale of homelessness. These limitations were reviewed more fully in Chapter 5 of the 2021 edition of the Homelessness Monitor England.[275]

The value of core homelessness as an addition to the statistical armoury on homelessness has gained official recognition by its inclusion in the forthcoming official Indices of Deprivation (ID25) for England, alongside indicators based on the Statutory Homelessness data reviewed in Chapter 4. The indicator, which will be available at LA level and is essentially based on the analysis underlying this chapter, provides a contrasting perspective on the geography of homelessness from some of the indicators based on the statutory system.

Core homelessness is made up of five component sub-categories covering the most acute forms of homelessness, these being rough sleeping, unconventional accommodation, hostels etc., unsuitable TA, and sofa surfing. Definitions of these key components are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Core homelessness categories and definitions

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 homes, tents, boats, sheds, garages, industrial/commercial premises
Hostels etc.	Communal emergency and TA primarily targeted at homeless people including hostels, refuges and shelters[276]
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	Homeless households placed in TA of certain types, viz Bed and Breakfast, 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[277]

One further point to note is that we have only counted as 'unsuitable TA' cases where the LA has placed households in fulfilment of its statutory homelessness duties. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, there has been increasing concern about the growth of part of the supported housing sector, financed by Housing Benefit under the banner of 'Exempt Accommodation', where there may be no commissioning oversight and standards are very poor. There is a strong case for counting part of exempt as an additional element of core homelessness, but hitherto there has not been a robust basis for estimating numbers so these households remain absent from our estimates at this point. We can make a rough estimate of the scale of this issue from DWP Housing Benefit data, focusing on local authorities with markedly higher rates of this form of accommodation and those which saw noticeable rises between 2020 and 2024. This suggests that the scale of the sector may be around 37,000 households (nearly all single), of which two thirds (24,000) are in Birmingham,

274 Bramley, G. (2017) [*Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*](). London: Crisis and Bramley, G. (2019) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for low-income households and homeless people*. Main Technical Report of Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation.

275 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) The *Homelessness Monitor: England 2021*. London: Crisis.

276 For the purposes of these core homeless estimates and projections, 'Everyone In' accommodation and its legacy has been treated as being part of 'hostels, etc.' Data for 2020 have been adjusted to reflect the fact that some of it was recorded by LAs as 'B&B' (part of 'unsuitable TA').

277 Since 2023 this definition was modified slightly to enable the inclusion of cases where people, who would otherwise have been homeless, had stayed temporarily with a host household, based on data collected in the English Housing Survey since 2017.

with a growth over 4-5 years of around 135%. Authorities affected appear to be larger urban centres including those with higher education institutions and seaside resorts (see our associated Technical Report for further comment).

5.3 Core homelessness estimates and trends

In this section we present evidence on the level of core homelessness in England in the period up to 2024 and including the Covid-19 pandemic. The estimates of core homelessness in the base period (2024) presented below draw on ten data sources overall, with each component triangulating between four and seven separate data sources, helping to address variations in statistical robustness in terms of coverage, definitions used and sample sizes applying to any single measure. The sources used to estimate numbers in each category of core homelessness are summarised in Table 5.2. More details on the datasets and weightings given to each component were provided in a separate 2023 Technical Report and updates in estimates/modelling are provided in the 2025 Technical Report associated with this edition of the monitor.[278]

In updating the estimates for 2024[279] we have taken account of a range of additional data sources beyond those previously used, as detailed in the Technical Report associated this report.

Figure 5.1 below shows our central estimates of core homeless in England and its composition in terms of the five main categories. In 2024, the number of core homeless households in England was about 299,100, up sharply (22%) from 246,900 in 2022 and by 37% from 217,600 in 2020 or 206,400 (45%) going back further to 2012. Core homelessness had been on a gradually rising trend until 2019, then fell somewhat in 2020. That fall was primarily attributable to the 'Everyone In' initiative responding to Covid, particularly for rough sleeping and sofa surfing in 2020, but partially offset by an increase in hostels, etc. because of the additional special provision, with additional effects from the evictions moratorium in the PRS.

In the period since 2021 there have been pronounced increases in core homeless, reflecting changes in all the main components except unconventional accommodation and hostels etc.[280] The drivers of these increases include the overall cost of living crisis, worsening poverty and deep poverty, the significant rise in house prices and then private rents, and high levels of net in-migration in 2021-23. The substantial upward movement in rough sleeping parallels official data from Local Authorities reported in Chapter 3. Unsuitable TA is the most volatile element, and increases here have reflected the general crisis in pressure on TA discussed in Chapter 4. The estimates of sofa surfing have also increased by 35% over the period since 2020 to above pre-Covid levels, reflecting both the data sources used and the model predictions based on key drivers.

278 Further detail and commentary on most of 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. New sources for 2022 base estimates are described in Bramley, G. (2023) *Homelessness Monitor Research Programme: Technical Report on Updated Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections 2023*. Online: Heriot-Watt University.

279 In this chapter, references to years such as '2020' should be taken to mean 'Financial Year 2020/21', i.e. April 2020 to March 2021, which is the normal basis for reporting homelessness statistics and many other public data.

280 The hostels etc category is treated as supply-determined in the model, and some of the extra provision associated with Covid and 'Everyone In' was scaled back subsequently.

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 2022 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, 2018/19-23/24; • Local Authority Rough Sleeper counts/estimates (annual), and associated quarterly management information, augmented in London by CHAIN and supplementary Local Authority monitoring returns, and with some imputation in non-London areas where counts were not conducted • State of Hunger survey of users of foodbanks conducted for Trussell Trust in 2018-19
Unconventional Accommodation	• Destitution in the UK 2022 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, 2018/19-23/4; • State of Hunger survey of users of foodbanks conducted for Trussell Trust in 2018-19

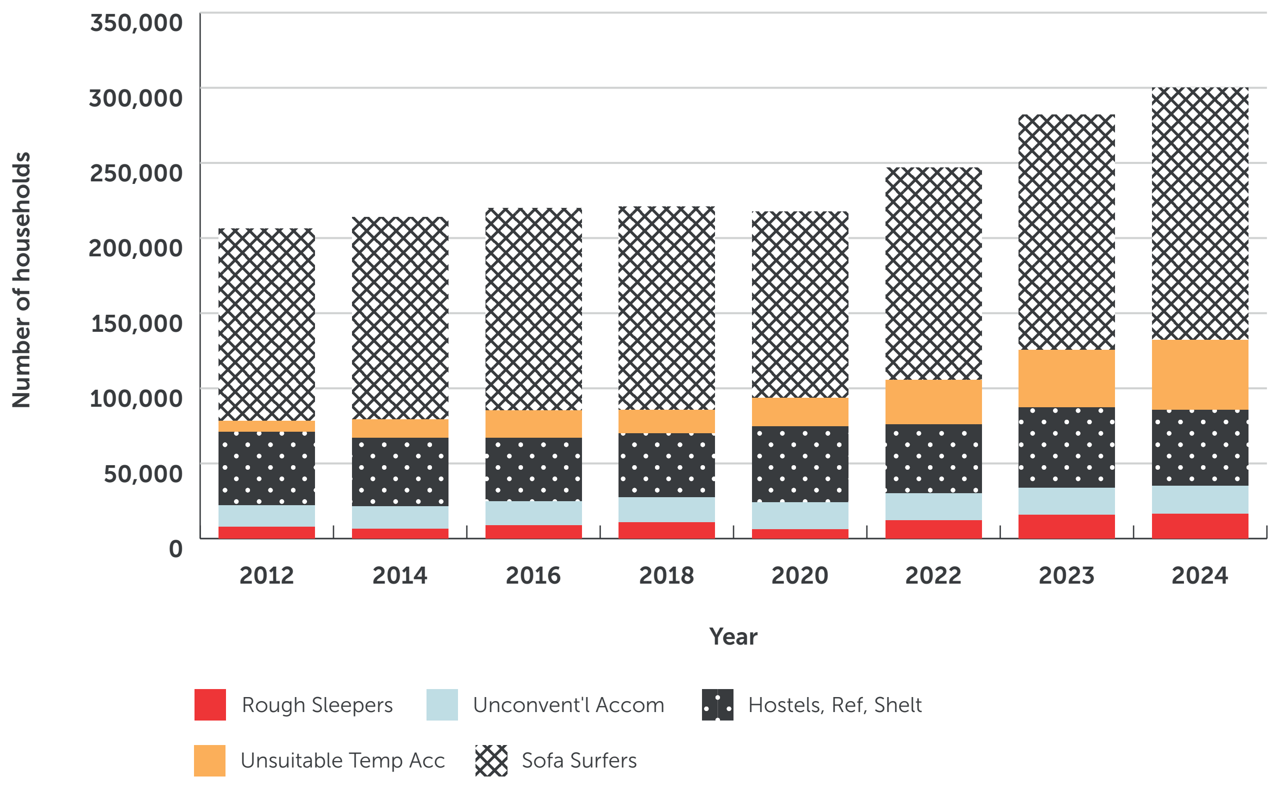
(continues on following page)

Category	Data sources
Hostels etc.	• Destitution in the UK 2022 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, 2018/19-23/24; • Homeless Link Survey of services for single homeless, 2023 • DWP Freedom of Information dataset on Housing Benefit cases in short term, emergency or transitional[281] accommodation, at intervals between 2020 and 2024 • A major national study of Supported Housing accommodation published in 2024[282] • State of Hunger survey of users of foodbanks conducted for Trussell Trust in 2018-19
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	• 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 at year end, annual to 2023/24; • DWP Freedom of Information dataset on Housing Benefit cases in selected categories of TA, at intervals in period 2020-24.
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, 2018/19-2022/3 (excluding Covid year) • UK Household Longitudinal Survey on concealed households meeting definition, annual. • ONS Labour Force Survey data on households and persons in concealed households of different types by country and year (applying factors from English Housing Survey to capture wish/ intention to move) • Opinium panel survey for Crisis of lower income households, autumn 2022

281 Adjusted to exclude estimated numbers in certain transitional rehab-type facilities, based on Blood et al (2016) study, and updated using Beatty et al (see footnote below).

282 See Beatty, C., Bimpson, E., Gilbertson, J., McCarthy, L., Sanderson, L. & Wilson, I. (2024) *Supported Housing Review 2023*. Online: MHCLG.

Figure 5.1: Core homelessness estimates by category and year, England 2012 – 2024

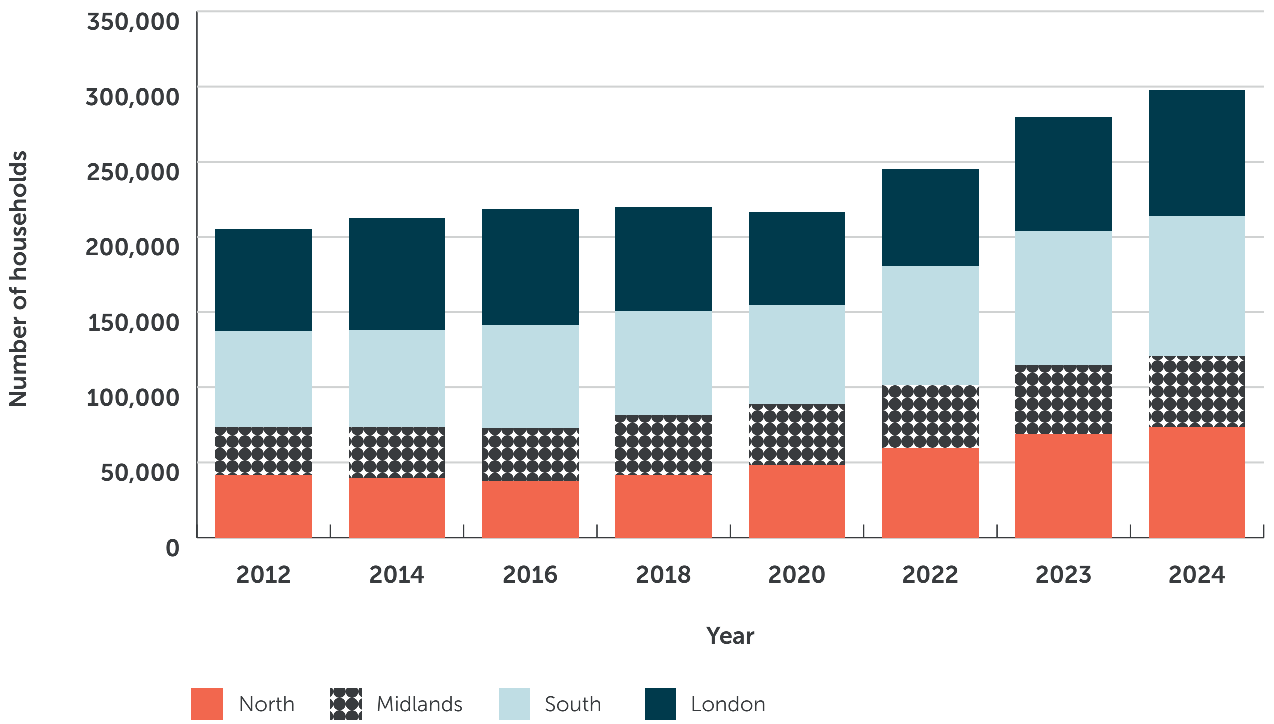


Source: Author's estimates based on sources identified in Table 5.2 using assumptions and weightings described in Bramley (2023) Homelessness Monitor Research Programme: Technical Report on Updated Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections for England 2023. (DOI): 10.17861/949n-am24, with some further inputs as described in the 2025 Technical Report

Analysis of core homelessness trends by broad region is shown in Figure 5.2. In the 2021 Monitor we noted that the coming into force of the HRA led to an increasing emphasis on addressing homelessness among single person households, and that this shifted the geography of demand somewhat, with more emphasis on the Midlands and North, particularly the more economically disadvantaged urban areas. This is reflected in Figure 5.2, which shows growth in core homelessness of 15% and 29% in the North and Midlands from 2012 to 2020, while London fell by 9% and the South was stable. It should also be noted that the 'Everyone In' initiative in 2020 may have had a bigger impact in reducing aspects of homelessness in London. Some of the same effect can be seen in the period 2020-24, with core homelessness in the North still growing strongly (51%), but growth in the Midlands slowing down (15%) at the same time as the South picked up (40%), with London also increasing (35%). Trends in this recent period have been more strongly influenced by the cost of living crisis and its aftermath (see Chapter 2).

The incorporation of core homelessness as an indicator within the official Indices of Deprivation from 2025, alongside measures from the statutory homelessness system, provides an opportunity to compare the broad geographical pattern across geographies.

Figure 5.2: Core homelessness estimates by broad region and year, England 2012 – 2024



Sources: As Figure 5.1

Specifically, we can compare rates of core homelessness (at a point in time),[283] with the proportion of households applying to their LA as homeless (or at risk) (annual flow), and the rate of households in TA (at a point in time). At LA level, the correlation between the first two measures is surprisingly low, at 0.325, suggesting that they are measuring something significantly different and subject to different factors. However, the correlation with the total TA rate is higher at 0.519. While correlation at LA level is subject to a range of measurement factors and approximations, the comparisons at regional level, shown in Table 5.3, show quite large systematic differences. The core homelessness rate in London is 3.00 times the rate in the North East, and 2.61 times the rate in the East Midlands, whereas the statutory homeless applications rates differ by factors of only 1.16 and 1.74.

Although the formal legal basis for statutory homelessness is the same across England, the objective housing market conditions faced by both households and LAs differ dramatically across these regions. In London, housing is prohibitively expensive and subject to very high demand, with private rents typically well beyond the level which LHA would cover for eligible households. Social rented lettings are scarce and the chances of households in need gaining access to them are very low, especially for single people and other non-priority groups.

283 See the 2025 Technical Report for a section discussing the context of the ID25 core homelessness estimates and some practical technical differences between them and this set of Homelessness Monitor estimates and projections.

Temporary accommodation numbers are very high in London, in contrast to the northern regions. By contrast, in many parts of Northern or Midland England the conditions are quite different, with closer to a balance between supply and demand. So it is not surprising that relatively more households apply, with reasonable expectation of getting some form of housing assistance, in the midland and northern regions, than in London. This underlines the value of core homelessness as a more accurate measure of homelessness need and pressure.

5.4 Introduction to projections

The projections analysis below examines future scenarios for the evolution of core homelessness and the potential impact of different policy options. This research builds on an existing modelling framework which has been used in a number of other research studies.[284] The model predicts levels of housing need and key homelessness numbers, for sub-regional areas in England, with a major focus on time horizons of 2026, 2031 and 2041. In this round, improvements have again been made to most parts of the forecasting model to take account of new data and to improve model properties.[285]

Recent disruptive events, including the Covid emergency and the cost of living crisis triggered by the Ukraine war, are reflected in the base year (2024), the immediately preceding period and the forecasts for the immediately following years. Overall, this has been a period of exceptional economic turbulence as a result of these and preceding events (including Brexit), which poses a challenge for forecasting. We reflect this challenge by taking careful account of recent and short-medium term forecasts of economic variables at national level (drawing on a range of respected sources), and by testing different economic scenarios.

The July 2024 General Election saw the election of a Labour Government at UK level with a strong commitment to planning reform and ambition to significantly increase overall and social rented housing supply. Intense legislative, policy and financial reviews have subsequently filled in much of the detail of this programme, as reviewed in Chapter 2. This makes for a significant change to our 'baseline' projection, which now includes a considered judgement on the levels and profile of key economic and housing supply measures likely to be achieved over the timescale of the projection. We do also, however, show the effects of going further in these directions, in terms of achieving even higher levels of housing

284 More information on this model was given in Appendix 3 to the 2021 Monitor and the longer Technical Report: Bramley, G., (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections. Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. See also 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. and Watkins, D. (2016) *What Would Make a Difference? Modelling policy scenarios for tackling poverty in the UK*; and Bramley, G. (2018) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for low income households and homeless people*. Research Report for Crisis and the National Housing Federation. Main Technical Report. Edinburgh. Heriot-Watt University; and in Bramley (2024) 'How much housing do we need and how should we provide it?', in M. Stephens, J. Perry, P. Williams & G. Young (eds) *UK Housing Review 2024* Chartered Institute of Housing, pp.11-21.

285 See Bramley (2025) *Technical Report on Updated Core Homelessness Estimates and Projections*. See also Bramley, G. (2023) *Homelessness Monitor Research Programme: Technical report on Updated Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections 2023*. Edinburgh: I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University. Fifteen of the specific predictive models have been updated and refined, including those addressing new build supply, house prices, rents, social relets, homeless applications and TA, rough sleeping and sofa surfing.

supply and/or economic growth, as well as showing what would have happened if these recent policy changes had not been implemented.

Looking forward, ten variant policy packages were tested by running the projection model forward over specified time periods with each policy in place. These policy options are listed and described in Table 5.3 below.

5.5 The baseline projections

Figure 5.3 shows our resulting new baseline estimates and projections by category for key years.[286]

We would expect the recent cost of living crisis, ongoing welfare restrictions, and increasing pressure on affordable housing in both the private and social rented sectors to continue to have adverse effects on homelessness. In the light of this background, we would certainly expect the model to reflect recent and continuing pressures up to the base year of 2024, perhaps easing slightly for a period thereafter. However, since 2024 significant policy changes have been initiated, notably in relation to planning and housing supply, which may begin to have some effect in 2026 but more from 2031 onwards. Also, the macro-economy has performed sluggishly but is expected to gradually improve, based on a consensus of independent forecasts, although underlying social challenges around numbers affected by poverty, disability, care needs. remain unresolved in the face of challenging fiscal constraints.

This mixed picture is broadly what the baseline projection summarized in Figures 5.3 and 5.4 shows, with most elements of core homelessness and the total rising significantly above 2020 levels (and pre-Covid) up to 2024, flatlining overall to 2026, then resuming growth gradually through 2031 and more significantly up to 2041. This applies to all elements of core homelessness except hostels, etc., although the amplitude of fluctuations varies.

In the shorter term (2026), the model suggests that there will be some easing of the core homelessness pressures overall, relative to the 2023-24 period. This recent period has been something of a perfect storm for homelessness, but the following period is projected to be somewhat more stable and some of the effects of the previous crisis unwind to some extent as a result. Related to this, Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation, the most dynamic element, is projected to fall significantly, following its previous rapid rise, while sofa surfing would continue to increase moderately, with a marginal rise also in rough sleeping and unconventional accommodation. The numbers in hostels and other congregate emergency accommodation are essentially supply-driven, and in the baseline projection we have not included any specific programmes to bring about a reduction.

Looking to the medium and longer term, total core homelessness is projected to rise by a further 20% (61,000) by 2041, reaching a total of 361,000, 66% above 2020 levels and 75% above the level of 2012. Recent challenges (cost of living, etc.) accelerated previously projected growth, while longer term growth in the future is moderated slightly by the new baseline policy assumptions associated with the Labour government, including higher supply but also somewhat higher economic growth in the longer term. Overall, the longer term projections do not provide grounds for complacency: four of the five elements of core homelessness are projected to rise further in magnitude by 2041, including rough sleeping by 16% and sofa surfing by 35%, even accounting for Labour's current housing policies. Further policy initiatives are clearly needed to bring these numbers down and undo the damage of the last 3-4 years.

The regional impacts shown in Figure 5.4 suggest that whereas between 2020 and 2024 growth had been strongest in the North and South, from 2024 to 2041 growth in core homelessness will be greater in London while remaining rather lower in the Midlands, with the North and South close to the average. While these projections reflect some effects from the new Government's housing growth policies, the net increase in supply in this baseline is not very dramatic. However, these policies and other changes seem to have benefited London, which was previously (in the 2023 projections) expected to have seen a very steep rise in core homelessness.

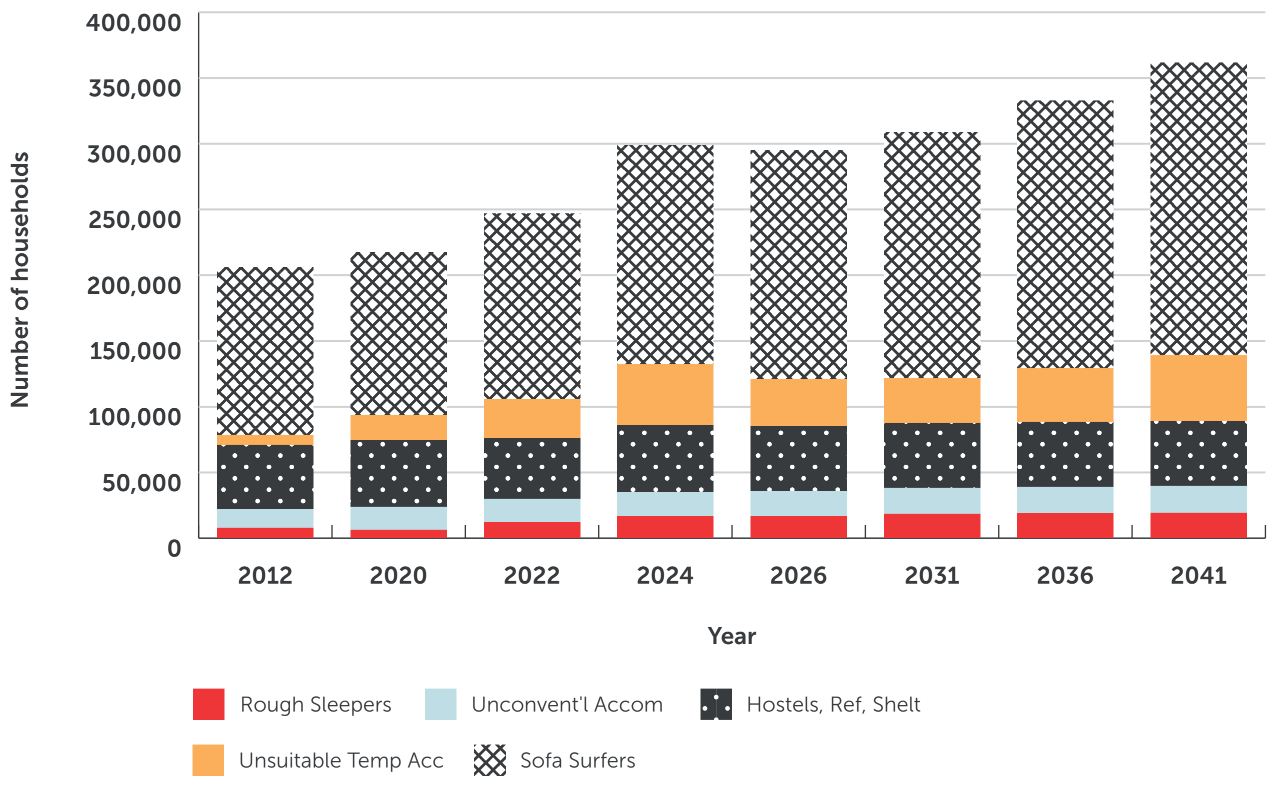
286 'Estimates' refer to estimated actual numbers from multiple sources for past years up to 2023; 'projections' refer to conditional forecasts generated by the models for future years up to 2041.

Table 5.3: Comparison of core homelessness and statutory homelessness rates by region, 2023/24

Region	New Core	Stat Homeless	Temp'y Accom	Index	Index	Index
	Homeless	Applics % hhd	tot % hhd	Core	Stat Apps	T A
1 North East	0.720	1.758	0.084	0.65	1.23	0.18
2 Yorks & Humber	0.871	1.370	0.128	0.79	0.96	0.27
3 North West	1.002	1.462	0.231	0.91	1.03	0.49
5 East Midlands	0.828	1.169	0.159	0.75	0.82	0.34
6 West Midlands	1.017	1.322	0.299	0.93	0.93	0.63
7 South West	0.835	1.272	0.214	0.76	0.89	0.45
8 East England	0.899	1.222	0.284	0.82	0.86	0.60
9 South East	1.048	1.278	0.346	0.95	0.90	0.73
10 Greater London	2.160	2.038	1.943	1.96	1.43	4.10
England	1.099	1.425	0.474	1.00	1.00	1.00
		Ratio	G Lond vs N E	3.00	1.16	23.02
			G Lond vs E M	2.61	1.74	12.20

Source: Author's estimates as referenced for Figure 5.1 but using 2023/24 estimates developed as inputs to the Indices of Deprivation 2025, together with MHCLG statutory homelessness Live Tables for 2023/24. See 2025 Technical Report for further details.

Figure 5.3: New baseline projection of core homelessness by category, England 2012 – 2041



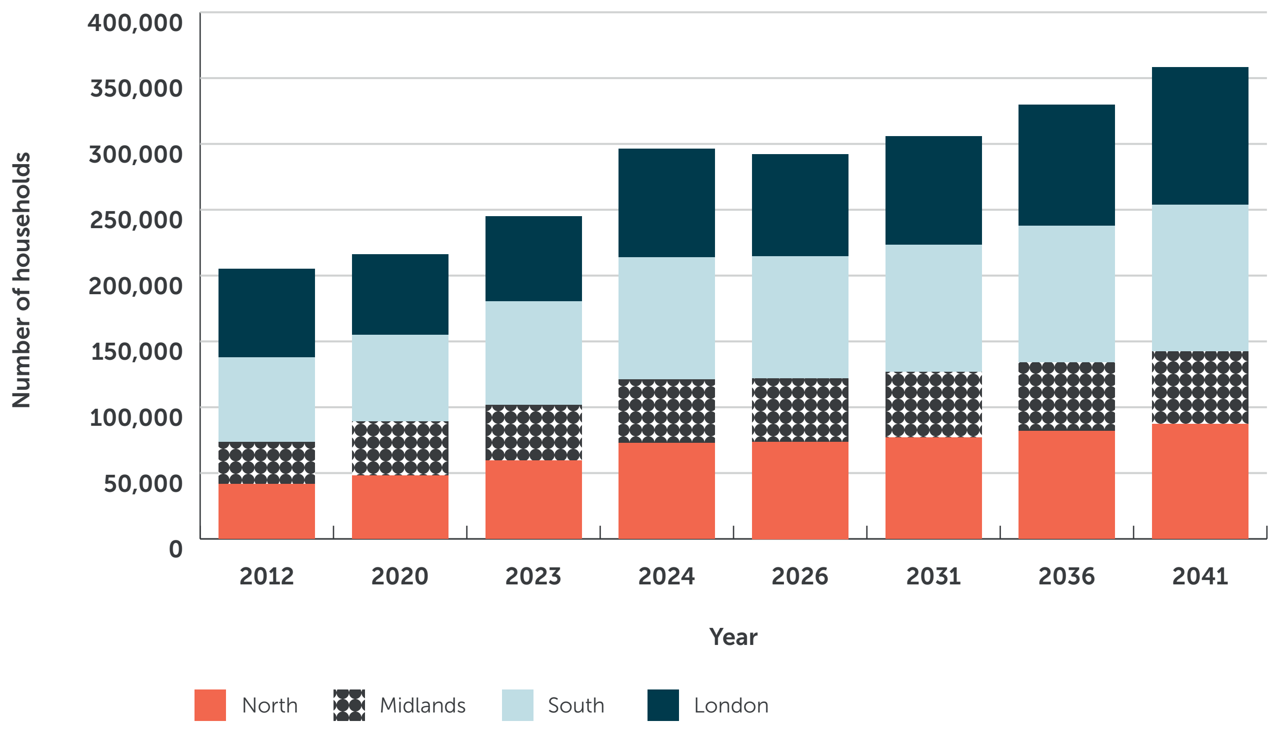
Source: Author's estimates and projections based on source cited under Figure 5.1 together with further detail on sources and model updates provided in the 2025 Technical Report.

5.6 Impacts of policy changes

This section considers the impacts of the ten policy scenarios described in Table 5.4 below. These scenarios reflect some reform agendas already in train (e.g. via the Renters' Rights Bill) and others long called for by the homelessness sector and others (e.g. indexing LHA and reversing cuts to/caps on key social security benefits).

It is very important to note that the baseline scenario embodies two new elements which reflect UK Government policy post 2024 and which represent a substantive change from previous iterations of these projections. These new elements are the increase in overall new housing supply incorporating a substantial element of additional social rented provision, and a somewhat higher longer term assumption about economic growth. However, in both cases there are a range of views about how large and significant a change the government's current policy settings and realistic prospects are.

Figure 5.4: New baseline projection of core homelessness by broad region, England 2012 – 2041



Source: as Figure 5.3

Table 5.4: Policy scenarios tested through projections model over period to 2041

Shorthand Name	Description
Baseline	Includes after-effects of Covid/lockdown, Ukraine war induced cost of living crisis and financial instability induced by September 2022 budget, with economic trajectory similar to average of reputable forecasts for short/medium term. Incorporates reflection of post-2024 Labour government housing supply plans and somewhat higher economic growth in medium term
1. Prevention	More effective prevention by LAs using existing tools, raising key measures of performance (based on cohort outcomes and other admin data) to the level of best performing group of authorities
2. Implement the Renters' Rights Bill & Evictions	The Renters Rights Bill includes private rental tenancy reform & administrative measures to limit and delay evictions, etc. from private renting, sufficient to reduce such homelessness presentations by up to half after a transition period[287]

287 The key tenancy reform would be to implement the ending of Section 21 'No Fault' evictions in England, as already implemented in Scotland; examples of administrative measures

Shorthand Name	Description
3. Direct rehousing	Allocating up to an additional 20% of net social lettings to core homeless households, where appropriate,[288] on an ongoing basis
4. Index LHA CPI	Rebase Local Housing Allowance to 30th percentile level in all LA areas every five years and maintain real level annually through indexing to CPI between rebases[289]
5. UC, Benefit Cap & Two Child Limit	Restore £20 per week enhancement to UC personal allowance, end 5-week wait for first UC payment, further curb debt deductions from benefits, reduce PIP 'fails', improve Local Welfare Support and scrap Benefit Cap and Two-Child Limit; also proactively support clients transferring to UC under 'managed migration'
6. Housing First & Severe and Multiple Deprivation 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
7. Social Housing Supply	Increase in social rented housing supply (increasing from 48,000[290] to 74,000 p.a.), including specific provision within that targeted at permanent sustainable rehousing of hostel etc. residents, enabling further reduction of scale of hostel provision
8. Large Welfare Hike	In addition to the UC and destitution measures, increase personal allowances in UC and related systems by 3x the amount in the above in UC & Destitution measures scenario
9. Higher Economic Growth	Raising real GDP growth over next 20 years from 2.1% p.a. to 2.8% p.a., including raising productivity from 1.25% to 1.5%
10. Levelling Up	Raising economic growth rates in regions away from London to divert population and economic activity to other regions, with some enhanced housing provision in growth areas

288 Where there is sufficient core homeless need to justify this number and sufficient lettings to allow this without going over an 80% threshold of total new lets to homeless

289 The baseline assumption for LHA is an extension of the current Government policy of fixed allowances in money terms with no indexing, over a period of years (5 assumed), followed by rebasing at 30th percentile.

290 48,000 is the new number in the baseline projection reflecting UK Government planning and housing policies and funding commitments, with additional allowance for social rented housing generated through planning obligations beyond that directly publicly funded.

To account for this, in our baseline we include a cautious estimate of the impact of the planning and social housing funding commitments announced to date, and a similarly cautious estimate for economic growth, with short term prospects slightly worse (on consensus forecasts) than previously. We then look at a higher level of housing supply target being achieved, based on the Bramley (2024) study, which argued this could be achieved with consistently effective application of s.106 planning obligations and compensation arrangements in large scale publicly led developments, and a pattern of growth targets linked closely to measures of affordability and homelessness need, at only moderate additional public spending cost. This higher supply option also includes the explicit targeting of a moderate proportion of extra social lettings (5%) on (mainly) single homeless people who would otherwise be staying in hostels, facilitated by ensuring a proportion of new supply is appropriate in terms of size (one bedroom), type and location for this group. We also look at a higher level of economic growth (gross value added and productivity) overall, and at more evenness across regions alongside that.

While several of these policy options, or packages, are effectively the same as those tested in the previous Monitor, some are new or have been significantly modified in scope or implementation.[291] Further details are provided in the 2025 Technical Report associated with this edition of the Monitor.

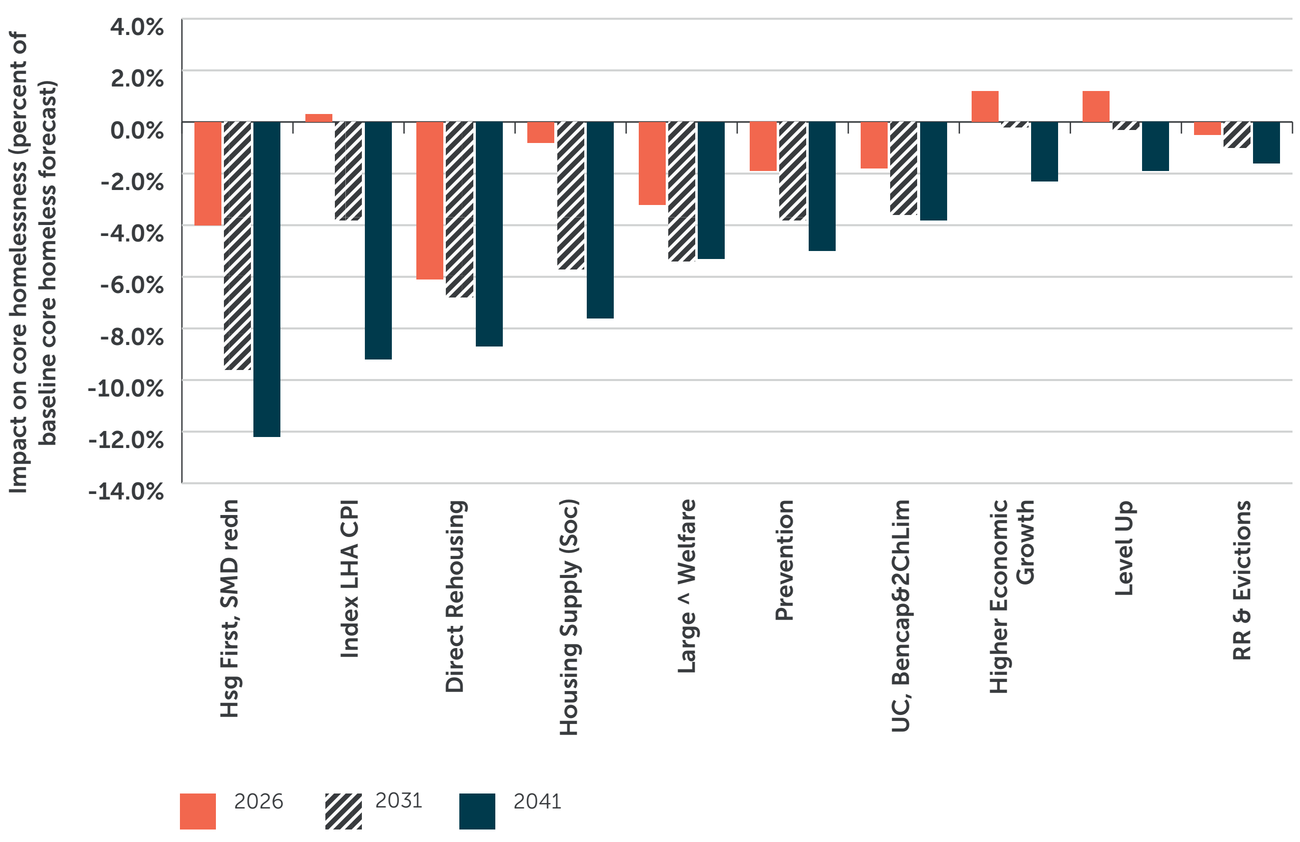
Summary impacts are shown in Figure 5.5 below, which presents the percentage reductions in core homelessness, relative to the baseline projection, at key points in time for each policy considered in isolation. In Figure 5.5, the policies are shown in descending order of the size of their impact at the end of the projection period, 2041.

Policies which are most effective in the short as well as the longer term are increasing the direct allocation of social housing to core homeless households, Housing First (with this scenario including an explicit link to hostel reduction), and the two welfare-benefit focussed packages, both that of raising the personal allowances significantly and that focused more specifically on elements which contribute to alleviating destitution and deeper poverty. These welfare scenarios now include the linked elements of scrapping the Benefit Cap and Two-Child Limit. These impacts are bigger than shown in previous iterations of these projections, partly because we have improved the way of capturing some of these effects in the modelling.

We can break these benefits packages down into (a) removing Benefit Cap and Two Child Limit, reducing core homelessness by 0.9% in the short term and 1.9% in the medium term; (b) other destitution reducing measures in UC including the £20 uplift, ending the 5 week wait, further reduction in debt deduction, and help with managed migration, reducing core homeless by 0.7% short term and 2.5% medium term; (c) combination of both reducing core homelessness by 2.9% short term and 4.2% medium term; and (d) combination with higher personal allowances as well as fuller support with managed migration, reducing core homelessness by, 4.3% short term, 5.9% medium term.

291 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021*. London: Crisis.

Figure 5.5: Summary of impact of policies considered individually by selected year, ranked by size of impact by 2041 (% of baseline core homeless forecast)



Source: As Figure 5.3, applying policy and contextual scenarios listed in Table 5.4.

Policies which have relatively smaller early impact, but which build up to a substantial impact later in the period include indexing the LHA to CPI between rebases (a -9% impact by 2041) and enhancing social housing supply (to 75,000, p.a), with an explicit element of targeting to enable further reduction of hostel numbers (-6-8% in the medium to longer run). Enhancing prevention is projected to reduce core homelessness in the short run (-3%) and somewhat more in the longer run (-4 to -5%).

Higher economic growth has a lower impact than shown previously, particularly in the short-medium term. This reflects the reality of poor consensus economic forecasts in the first few years and a slightly more cautious/judicious level of enhancement thereafter. It should also be remembered that higher economic growth tends to be accompanied by higher house prices and rents, and this may offset the benefits of higher employment rates, earnings and income, other things being equal. The 'levelling up' scenario exemplified here shows relatively little difference nationally in terms of our key core homeless outcomes, and overlaps heavily with the higher growth scenario. This may be because of details of the way that it has been implemented, but it should be noted that this scenario would be associated with a higher level of private housebuilding, with some social output spinoff, in the North and Midlands, thanks to better viability of development.

The Renters' Rights Bill/reduced evictions scenario has a modest impact reducing core homelessness, particularly in the medium to longer run. The larger impact comes in the longer term from reduced unsuitable TA and rough sleeping, while there is a small net reduction (<1%) in sofa surfing throughout. It is not unreasonable to argue that the legislation will reduce rental lettings turnover, whether or not it reduces the overall scale of the sector. This turnover effect could then disadvantage potential new households forming from existing sofa surfers, while also enabling some existing private tenants sharing with sofa surfers to remain longer in situ. Effects of this kind could account for the relatively weak impact on this largest category of core homelessness.

Arguably some policies might be scaled up further, for example prevention. We have not done this in the current iteration of the modelling to reflect that LAs are limited by the scope of their current duties and funding/resource constraints (see Chapters 3 and 4), and that current duties to prevent homelessness do not extend to other public bodies. Approaches to broadening responsibility for homelessness prevention are currently being developed in Wales and Scotland.

Implementing the more impactful policy scenarios presented here is not without challenge. The direct rehousing scenario for example would require concerted change in housing allocation priorities across the sector. Both Housing First and new social housing supply go with the grain of recent or current national policies, but crucially depend on making some of that supply appropriate and accessible for current core homeless households, notably those in the hostels sector. Suggested and impactful measures in the welfare benefits entail quite large, tangible fiscal costs, which is also an issue for the LHA indexing option. To effectively negotiate these challenges it will be necessary to build political will and consensus among relevant actors and to marshal more arguments and evidence about the costs of homelessness, including but clearly going beyond the currently sensitive issue of TA costs to include other adverse impacts in the areas of health, education and crime as well as severe poverty and destitution.[292]

Impacts of different policies on specific components of core homelessness in 2026

There is inevitably strong interest in government, media and the housing sector in homelessness prospects for the near future, whether in terms of high-profile strands of policy such as rough sleeping or in relation to critical problem areas from a financial or management perspective, such as TA. We therefore present a specific analysis of the forecast impacts of different policies on the different components of core homelessness by 2026.

Table 5.5 shows this analysis. The Table also shows the impacts on two key statutory homelessness measures: total homeless applications and total TA. We now consider impacts on these components of core and wider homelessness in turn.

In the case of *rough sleeping*, the focus of strong policy interest in recent years, it appears that, while a number of policies would have an impact, the four offering the most potential on this time horizon would be direct rehousing, prevention, welfare benefit measures including those

292 Bramley, G. (2024) 'The Cost of Homelessness,' in Johnson, G., Culhane, D., Fitzpatrick, S., Metraux, S., & O'Sullivan, E. (Eds.) Research Handbook on Homelessness. Cheltenham: Elgar

Table 5.5: Shorter term impact of policies considered individually on main components of core homelessness, overall homeless applications and total temporary accommodation (% of baseline at 2026)

Impact in 2026 of policy measures	Rough Sleep	Unconventional Acc	Hostels etc	Unsuitable Temp Acc	Sofa Surfing	Homeless Applic'ns	Total T A
1. Prevention	-8.4%	-0.1%	0.0%	-25.3%	2.9%	-5.5%	-22.5%
2. Renters' Rights & Evictions	-0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-0.8%	-3.5%	0.0%
3. Direct Rehousing	-10.1%	-0.3%	0.0%	-7.5%	-7.8%	-0.1%	0.0%
4. Index LHA CPI	-0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	-0.5%	0.6%	-0.1%	-0.3%
5. UC, Bencap&2ChLim	-7.1%	-0.1%	0.0%	-0.8%	-2.2%	0.5%	-0.2%
6. Hsg First, SMD redn	-7.1%	-0.1%	-5.5%	-0.4%	-4.4%	-4.7%	-0.3%
7. Housing Supply (Soc)	-0.5%	0.0%	-6.9%	-0.8%	0.8%	-0.1%	-0.4%
8. Large ^ Welfare	-9.4%	-0.1%	0.0%	-0.7%	-4.4%	1.5%	0.1%
9. Higher Economic Growth	-0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	-0.4%	2.1%	-0.6%	-0.1%
10. Level Up	-0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	-0.6%	2.3%	-0.8%	-0.2%

Source: as Figure 5.5

geared to tackling destitution, and Housing First. It is noteworthy that three of these are a policies within MHCLG's own remit. The overall story is that, with all policies in place, rough sleeping in 2026 would be reduced by 35%, from 16,700 to 10,900.

In this context it is important to note that, as discussed in detail elsewhere in this Monitor (see Chapter 3), a key feature of rough sleeping, particularly in London, is the presence of non-UK nationals, including many with NRPF, because of their migration status. A range of sources of data, including CHAIN data and the Destitution in the UK survey in autumn 2022, indicate that around half of rough sleepers in London are non-UK nationals. This reinforces the difficulty of meeting ambitious rough sleeping targets without addressing the role of immigration policy in driving this and wider forms of homelessness.

Only two policy options covered in our modelling reduce hostel numbers, these being Housing First and Social Housing Supply, and these would only achieve modest gains by 2026 (a reduction of about 6% and 7% respectively), with much greater potential in the longer run. These policy scenarios include explicit assumptions that the increases in appropriate social rented supply and tailored support would be used to drive phased reductions in traditional hostel use.

Table 5.5 also shows that most policy measures could contribute in a modest way to a reduction in unsuitable TA in the short term, but only one (prevention) would offer a large reduction (-25%), with direct rehousing also contributing significantly (-7.5%).

Four policies are shown to have beneficial effects in the short term in reducing sofa surfing, particularly direct rehousing

Table 5.6: Longer term impact of policies considered individually on main components of core homelessness, overall homeless applications and total temporary accommodation (% of baseline at 2041)

Impact in 2041 of policy measures	Rough Sleep	Unconventional Acc	Hostels etc	Unsuitable Temp Acc	Sofa Surfing	Homeless Applic'ns	Total T A
1. Prevention	-8.3%	-1.2%	0.0%	-35.8%	1.0%	-5.5%	-51.9%
2. Renters' Rights & Evictions	-2.4%	-0.3%	0.0%	-6.3%	-0.9%	-10.6%	-6.8%
3. Direct Rehousing	-11.6%	-1.6%	0.0%	-10.9%	-10.4%	0.0%	0.0%
4. Index LHA CPI	-3.1%	-1.6%	0.0%	-30.1%	-7.5%	0.0%	-22.7%
5. UC, Bencap&2ChLim	-6.3%	-0.9%	0.0%	-6.0%	-4.1%	-0.9%	-7.1%
6. Hsg First, SMD redn	-20.6%	-2.4%	-32.4%	-11.0%	-8.1%	-20.7%	-11.3%
7. Housing Supply (Soc)	3.0%	-2.2%	-46.9%	-11.9%	0.8%	8.2%	-4.9%
8. Large ^ Welfare	-8.4%	-1.4%	0.0%	-6.7%	-6.2%	1.2%	-6.2%
9. Higher Economic Growth	-5.5%	-0.7%	0.0%	-24.1%	2.4%	-6.5%	-6.9%
10. Level Up	-5.9%	-0.6%	0.0%	-26.3%	3.5%	-6.0%	-7.5%

Source: As Figure 5.5

(-8%), Housing First (-4%), larger or more immediate/targeted welfare benefit measures (-4% and -2% respectively) with modest reductions also associated with indexing LHA and housing supply (-1% each). Certain policies would be associated with modest increases in sofa surfing in the short term (prevention, higher economic growth and levelling up).

The costs and challenges of running the statutory homelessness system are primarily related to levels of homeless applications and total TA numbers. The former could be reduced in the short run most effectively by limiting evictions through Renters Reform (-3.5%), spreading best practice on homeless prevention (-6%), and through enhanced Housing First (-5%). On this short timescale prevention in particular appears to lead to a significant decrease in total TA -23%), with other policies not making much difference.

Impacts of different policies on each component of core homelessness in long run

Table 5.6 looks at policy effects of the five different components of core homelessness on the longer-term time horizon of 2041.

It can be seen that virtually all policies have effects in the desirable direction of reducing rough sleeping in the longer run, with seven policies offering reductions in the range c.6%-21%. The biggest impacts are associated with Housing First, direct rehousing, prevention and the larger increase in welfare benefits, with significant contributions also from levelling up/economic growth, and the destitution related welfare package.

The *unconventional accommodation* category, as represented in the current version of the model, again shows relatively 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. Most effects are negative but small, possibly underestimated by the current model.

The *hostels* category is essentially supply-determined in our modelling approach. Hitherto the main opportunity to reduce hostel numbers was seen to lie in the Housing First related strategy,[293] but there is also significant opportunity to reduce hostel numbers significantly by introducing a targeted element within enhanced new supply. This accounts for the much larger role of additional social renting supply in the overall impacts, although there are also a moderate effect of improved market affordability across different outcomes.

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, onto the proportion of 'unsuitable' placements. In the current round of projections, the unsuitable TA category is quite strongly influenced by the prevention enhancements, indexing of the LHA (making the PRS consistently more affordable), higher economic growth and/or levelling up (via improved employment and incomes) scenarios. Significant reductions are also shown to result from direct rehousing, increased social housing supply, more Housing First and reducing evictions scenarios. The two welfare benefit packages have a moderate impact in reducing this element of core homelessness, with the destitution-oriented package (also including removal of Two Child Limit/Benefit Cap) playing the main role. A cautionary note, however, is that one cannot simply add all these single-policy options together, because of the likely high degree of overlap, whereby the same households could be affected by different policies but should not be double-or triple-counted.

While a majority of the policies appear to have beneficial impact in reducing sofa surfing, three have relatively larger effects. These are direct rehousing (-10%), Housing First (-8%) and the indexing of the LHA (-7.5%). The two welfare benefit packages have moderate impacts in reducing sofa surfing, accounting for reductions of 4% and 6% respectively. Because of the large scale of sofa surfing, even a moderate percentage impact could make a worthwhile contribution to the overall outcome. Four policies appear to have some perverse positive effects on this component of core homelessness, these being the levelling up, higher economic growth, and (on a very minor scale), prevention and housing supply. The former probably relates to the impact via prices and rents on affordability.

Total homeless applications are forecast to be most reduced, relative to baseline, by Housing First (-21%), and Renters' Rights measures limiting evictions (-11%) with higher economic growth and/or Levelling Up also playing a part (-6% each), alongside a similar impact from prevention (-6%). The relatively high impact of Housing First is noteworthy,

293 The impact of Housing First and related polices on reduced hostel numbers is somewhat attenuated when constraints are placed at sub-regional level on the scale of reduction related to overall local provision and the local scale of SMD (Severe and Multiple Disadvantage) homelessness.

underlining that complex support needs are a significant issue, not least in repeat homelessness presentations (see Chapter 4). The Renters' Rights/reduced evictions impact is expected given the high proportion of homeless applications directly related to the ending of private tenancies (see Chapter 4). Higher economic growth features in this list, underlining the general relationship between homelessness and low incomes/poverty. The modest positive effect of housing supply is understandable and consistent with previous findings.

Total TA numbers would be significantly reduced by nearly all of the measures examined here, especially more consistently applied prevention (-52%), Housing First (-11%), indexation of LHA (-23%), Housing First (-11%), Renters' Rights/reducing evictions (-7%), welfare changes especially targeting destitution (-7%), and higher economic growth/levelling up (-6-7%). These measures could therefore reduce the costs of TA, which have risen dramatically over the last couple of years, threatening some LAs with bankruptcy (see Chapter 4).

5.7 Broader policy packages

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, or of constructing an overall package of measures. 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 are combined, the less they may appear to achieve, 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' households may be getting smaller the more policies are in place.

In fact, there is a lot of overlap in that sense in the projections of policy impacts. Adding up all of the longer term impacts of the ten policies tested individually, suggests a total reduction of 58% in core homelessness in 2041. However, if we combine them all, the net impact turns out to be only a 36% reduction. A similar situation applies at the intermediate date of 2031 (31% vs 40%), although in 2026 the comparison is more favourable (21% vs 16%). The latter finding is particularly encouraging suggested that concerted policies could bring quite substantial early benefits.

There are different ways of ordering or grouping policies when presenting the trajectories of policy impact. In reviewing the issues for this round of the monitor, we have grouped the policies into their main types, which tend to correspond with the government department responsible for them. On that basis the policies fall essentially into three groups:

Housing and planning policies primarily within the remit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, comprising:

1. Prevention
2. Renters reform reducing evictions
3. Direct rehousing allocations
4. Housing First
5. Planning and housing supply

Welfare benefit policies and parameters, primarily within the remit of the Department for Work and Pensions:

6. Rebasing and indexing the LHA

7. UC and other benefit system features affecting destitution risks, plus Benefit Cap and Two Child Limit
8. Combining this with a larger increase in personal allowances and more proactive help with Managed Migration to UC

Policies promoting macro-economic growth and a greater regional balance of economic performance (alias 'Levelling Up'), primarily within the remit of HM Treasury and the Department for Business:

9. Higher economic growth
10. Levelling Up

We have therefore organised our presentation of the cumulative impact of different policies into three packages corresponding to the above groupings. In addition, although we have rebased the projections on current established policies, including those for planning and housing supply and economic growth developed since the 2024 Election, we have started in this particular analysis from the policies as they essentially were just prior to the 2024 Election.

The picture of how these packages build cumulatively to the overall projection, were all policies to be implemented in the way we have modelled them, is revealed in Figure 5.6. This analysis shows a number of things very clearly.

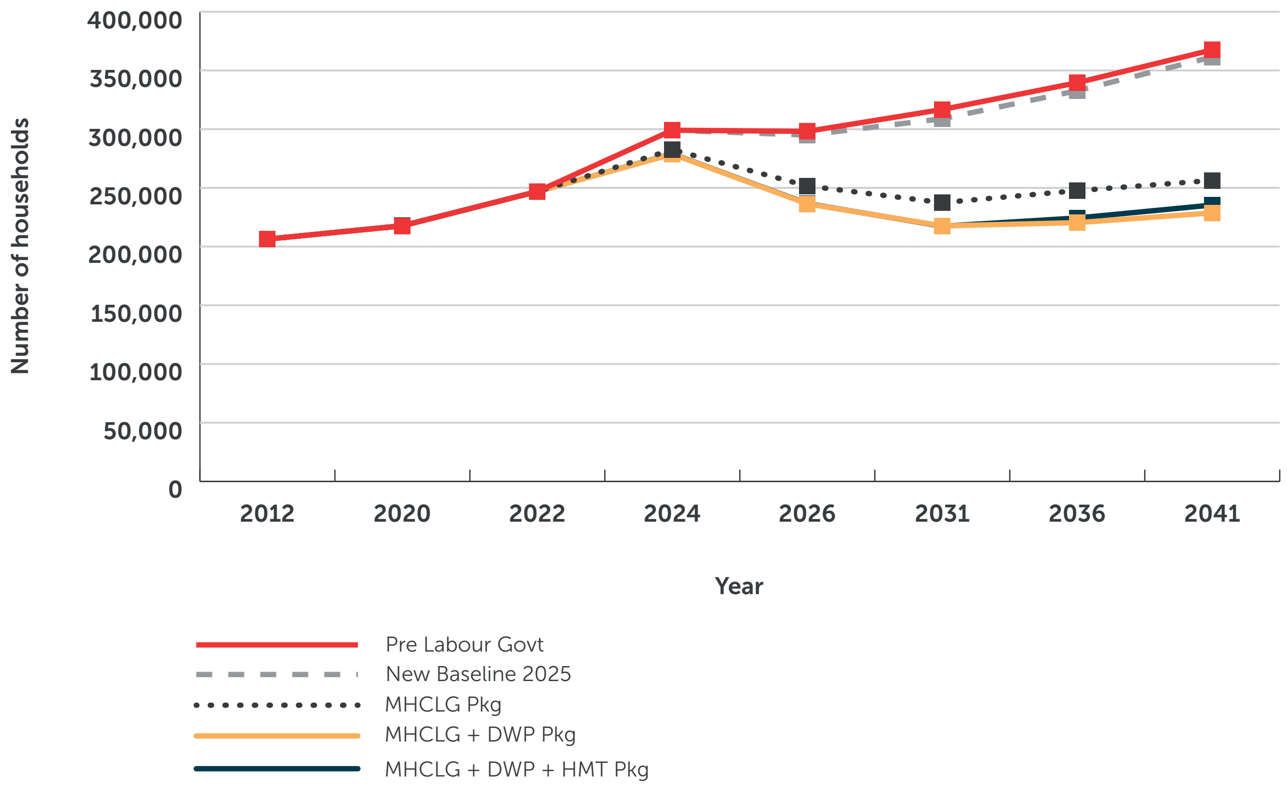
Firstly, by introducing these key packages of policy measures, it is possible to reduce projected levels of core homelessness by sizeable margins, particularly in the medium to longer term. Implementing all policies discussed in the previous section would see core homelessness drop by over a third (36%) compared with the pre-election baseline by 2041, with a 31% improvement by 2031 and 21% in the short term (2026). In 2031, core homelessness would be around 27% below 2024, although by 2041 this margin would be somewhat less at 21%.

Second, some packages have a bigger impact than others. The biggest impact is attributable to the MHCLG package, bringing reductions of 23% in 2031 and 26% in 2041. There is only a small effect from the initial move from 2024 status quo policies to the current supply policies in the new baseline, accounting for only around 2.5% in 2031 and 2.0% in 2041. It is when the scale of supply increase is greater and when it becomes linked to targeting of reduction in hostel residents and complex need homelessness through Housing First that the impacts mount. It is not unreasonable to place the MHCLG package ahead of the DWP one, given that these are policies which are within the discretion of the Ministry and do not necessarily have very large fiscal costs. While when considered as a group, the DWP packages including LHA indexation account for reasonable sized reductions (9-14% from 2031), if we assume that they might take longer to implement than the MHCLG package (not least because of their more substantial fiscal impact) then the attributable additional effect would be somewhat smaller, shown here as around 8% in 2031 and 11% 2041. However, the DWP package could have larger impacts earlier, insofar as it could be implemented relatively quickly.

By contrast, the final package (economic growth and levelling up), which was shown to have a relatively small impact when considered singly, appears to have no net additionality beyond the packages just considered. Reasons for this include the ambiguous anticipated effect given impacts on prices/rents and affordability, as well as the rather more modest change in economic growth modelled this time.

When comparing with previous editions of the Homelessness Monitor it might be judged that these impacts appear to be

Figure 5.6: Cumulative impact of all policies modelled, grouped into five packages (number of households experiencing core homelessness at point in time by selected years).



Source: As Figure 5.5

rather less in magnitude than some of those previously reported. They suggest that we appear to be rather further from ending core homelessness than we would wish, or than we appeared to be several years ago. One reason for this is that, as Figure 5.6 graphically illustrates, between 2021 and 2023-24 the system experienced a very sizeable shock from cost of living and other factors, which pushed the numbers up very substantially. It is from this higher base that we are now trying to bring numbers down again.

It may also be argued that some policies have not been projected at their maximum feasible level. For example, based on 2018 research (recently updated) on overall housing requirements, we argued that a social housing programme of up to 90,000 units p.a. would be justified in the next decade or so. In this exercise we have modelled levels of 48,000 and 75,000. As exemplified in the previous issue of the Monitor, raising the LHA to cover up to the average actual rent in the locality, and indexing that annually, would have a much larger impact than the more limited LHA option exemplified this time, at a cost. Additional prevention duties and mechanisms may be introduced, involving legislation mandating fuller cooperation from certain other public agencies in relation to particular groups at risk. Housing First could be operated at a higher level, and hostel numbers could possibly be brought down even further. Levelling up could be taken further in the longer run, given sufficient priority.

Finally, there are specific policies which have been mooted which could quite clearly impact on the risks of core homelessness for specific groups. An obvious example here is measures to enable some or most households within the NRPF group to access a fuller range of legal work, benefits and/or housing support, measures which have been argued to offer significant cost-benefits to the public sector in the longer term, as well as alleviating acute homelessness problems in the short term.[294] Such measures would doubtless be politically controversial and partly for this reason these have not been specifically included in this package. A more immediate administrative measure would be to (re) extend the time given to migrant households granted leave to remain to make the transition from Home Office accommodation to mainstream housing from 28 days to 56 days (or longer).

To look more positively at the findings of this modelling exercise, it is worth returning to the impacts on specific forms of core homelessness. Embodied within the combined impact of all three packages on core homelessness, we can look at each of the five components separately. In some cases there is a very good story to tell: for unsuitable TA, we would see a reduction of 81% at the end of the period, while for rough sleeping it would be 46%, and for hostels 61%. At the other end of the spectrum is 'unconventional accommodation', where the problem is more one of not having enough good measures to calibrate instruments which might impact on this category. We suspect that if we had better measures and models we might well find this was more responsive to some policies than it appears here.

The big number which is disappointingly less responsive to the policy measures we have tested through the models which we have is sofa surfing. The combined impact of all of these packages would reduce this by only 20%. There may be a need for more creative thinking on measures to reduce this component of homelessness, but it may also be the case that sofa surfing is really more of a function of the overall structural inequalities of income, wealth and opportunities in UK society, which have in certain respects worsened over recent years.

294 See in particular Benton, E., Karlsson, J., Pinter, I., Provan, B., Scanlon, K., & Whitehead, C. (2021) *Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) policy in London*. Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) Report, London School of Economics.

6. Conclusions

This edition of the Monitor has focused on the record to date of the Labour Government elected in July 2024, and considered the current operation and effectiveness of the centrepiece of English homelessness policy, the Homelessness Reduction Act. It is, though, worth pausing to consider the legacy on homelessness inherited by the current Government.

Far from ending rough sleeping by 2024 as Boris Johnson hoped, this acute form of homelessness stood higher in 2024 than it did in 2019 when the target was set, and over 2.5 times the level seen in 2010. The very substantial gains made during the pandemic on rough sleeping were completely wiped out by 2022. Despite the introduction of homelessness legislation that aimed to put prevention at the centre of local authority responses and introduced new 'priority need-blind' duties securing substantive help for all eligible homeless households for the first time, temporary accommodation placements have reached their highest level in 18 years; approaches from eligible households are at their highest since the HRA came into force; and prevention and relief actions are achieving diminishing levels of success. On our estimations, levels of 'core homelessness' have increased 45% since 2012. The *"decade of disaster"*[295] on homelessness seen during the 2010s has turned into fifteen years of failure.

The election of a new Government promising *"to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness"* thus offered promise of a welcome change of direction. Over a year into the parliamentary term, the record is mixed. Key metrics on homelessness continue to go in the wrong direction, but it remains early days. More damning is that our projections suggest that a continuation of current policy will see core homelessness continue to rise, hitting over 360,000 by 2041 compared to just under 300,000 in 2024. This suggests that the positive moves made on homelessness by the new administration will not be sufficient to turn the tide.

These positive shifts include an ambitious target to deliver 1.5 million net additional homes in by 2029 (300,000 annually), supported be planning reforms, investment in social and affordable housing supply, and changes to the Right to Buy. But, the pledge to build 300,000 affordable homes over ten years, 60% of them social homes, falls considerably short of estimates of the new social supply that is actually needed, and there is serious doubt that this target will be achieved.

Also welcome, including by local authorities, is impending legislation that will strengthen the rights of renters. It is hoped and expected by most local authorities that the suite of measures included in the Renters' Rights Bill will help ease homelessness pressures and enable more effective responses locally, though

295 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., & Watts, B. (2020). The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England, *Policy & Politics*, 48(4), 541-561.

there are also concerns about unintended consequences. Local authorities already report landlords exiting the market to avoid these regulations and expect them to continue to do so. It is feared that those that remain will be increasingly risk averse in who they are willing to let their properties too. Local authorities are also concerned that the legislation will hamper their own incentive schemes that enable them to rehouse homeless households in the private rented sector by restricting the amount of money that landlords can be paid in advance.

A similar mix of hope and concern surrounds the promised introduction of new regulations on Supported Accommodation that aim to address very poor quality provision in the Supported Exempt Accommodation space. Well over half of local authorities expect these regulations, when finally in place, to tackle poor quality provision, but a significant proportion also have fears that regulations will drive out good providers and reduce accommodation available to rehouse single people. Key stakeholders are eager to see an end to this period of limbo and also point out that the regulations will not address fundamental and enduring questions about how support needed by homeless or at risk households will be funded.

Other positive steps being taken by the current Government include increasing investment in homelessness responses, including a sizeable boost to the Homelessness Prevention Grant and continued funding for rough sleeping, with funding commitments made in the 2024 Autumn Budget maintained and added to in the 2025 spending review via the new £3.2 billion Transformation Fund. In addition, the Government have committed to finally repealing the Vagrancy Act and ending the criminalisation of rough sleeping and begging. Moreover, in plans for funding for 2026 onwards the Government intends to end the trade-off local authorities face between investing in homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation.

Less positively, the Government's promised cross-governmental strategy on homelessness has been significantly delayed from its expected publication in spring 2025, and is still yet to materialise at the time of writing. Local authorities have a clear vision for what needs to be included in the strategy: a focus on housing supply targeting homeless households; a truly cross-governmental approach that takes seriously the impact of wider policy decisions on social security and immigration on homelessness and insists on substantive help being provided by wider public bodies and local partners; a strong emphasis on prevention, including support provision; and firm action to address the temporary accommodation crisis, including urgent reform of temporary accommodation funding rules to address the serious impacts of subsidy loss on local authority finances. Key stakeholders however have lost faith that the strategy will be as ambitious and transformative as originally intended and fear that necessary but high-cost policy changes will not be pursued.

It is clear from this year's monitor that the Homelessness Reduction Act is buckling under the strain of demand and in a challenging housing and social security context. While the Act has meant that thousands of single people have access to substantive help from their local authority when facing homelessness, it is also clear from our findings that it is not living up to its potential as a preventative, housing-led and partnership-driven framework. Local authorities report struggling to meet their duties under the legislation to families and single people, but especially to those with complex needs. This is especially concerning given that over three-quarters (78%) of local authorities perceive there to have been an increase in demand from this group in the last year, a trend attributed to the cumulative impact of long-term pressures on wider public services. Other key issues include that the current 'duty to refer' on wider public bodies is very clearly inadequate as a means to ensure their involvement in and support with homelessness prevention and there are considerable gaps in partnership arrangements with key actors locally and nationally. In addition, there is a woeful lack of floating housing-related support provision. In the absence of dedicated funding and a statutory duty to provide such support, nearly half of local authorities (47%) report that many who need such support do not have access to it. In some areas there is no such provision at all, whereas in others it is narrowly targeted and fails to offer the level or duration of support required.

The capacity of local authorities to effectively prevent and relieve homelessness as well as secure settled rehousing for homeless households is undermined by a plethora of wider contextual and policy factors, including the lack of suitable and affordable housing; the burden of securing, managing and funding temporary accommodation; the declining value of discretionary forms of support offered at local level and their variable design and accessibility; and the profound inadequacy of social security benefits to cover actual rents. The impacts of the freeze on Local Housing Allowance, the Benefit Cap, Two Child Limit and Shared Accommodate rate are clearly especially pernicious in this regard.

Migration and asylum policy are emerging as an increasingly important drivers of rough sleeping and homelessness, yet the prospects for Government taking these impacts seriously seem frustrating low and indeed diminishing in a toxic political environment where the far right have increasing sway.

So the promise and hope of a decisively positive change of direction on homelessness and related policy has overall not materialised as yet under this new administration, but our core homelessness projections, focussed on homelessness' most acute manifestations, once again underlines that continued rises are 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.

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 geared to avoiding destitution and severe poverty. 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 indexing the Local Housing Allowance, increased supply of social rented housing, enabling a reduction of traditional hostel accommodation, and replicating best practice in homeless prevention. Whilst maximising reductions in homelessness requires cross-government action, levers within the control of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have the potential to make very significant gains.

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 finally know how the Labour Government plans to address these worsening homelessness trends, and whether its initial actions in this area have started to pay off.

Appendix 1 Key informant topic guide (2025)

Introduction

Explain nature and purpose of research

Their job title/role; how long they have been in that position/organisation, and specific involvement in homelessness

Trends in homelessness

- What have been the key trends in ***levels*** of homelessness in past few years and why?
  - Probe: trends in subgroups: single versus families; statutory homelessness vs. rough sleeping etc.

- Have there been any significant changes in the ***profile*** of those facing homelessness in the last few years?
  - Probe: nature/complexity of need; age; household type, migration status, etc.

- What changes, if any, have we seen in the ***triggers*** for/***drivers*** of homelessness?
  - Probe: private rented sector vs. relationship breakdown; prison leavers; migration related pressures (newly granted refugees, no recourse to public funds) etc.

- Do you feel you have the ***data*** you need to get an accurate picture on trends in, drivers of and profile of people experiencing homelessness?

Statutory duties and wider responses

- Have ***local authorities' ability to respond*** to homelessness effectively changed for better or worse over the last few years? If so, in what ways/why? Probe in relation to:
  - ***Prevention and relief*** duties – housing-related support, PRS, duty to refer/role of wider public sector bodies, etc. Which, if any, public bodies need to play a greater role on homelessness prevention and what should that role be?
  - ***Temporary accommodation*** duty – impact of Emergency Accommodation Reduction Pilots
  - Full ***rehousing*** duty – social housing, private rented sector

- Have there been significant change in use or quality of ***supported exempt accommodation*** as part of local authorities' homelessness response over the last few years?
  - Probe: why, with what impacts?

- What are your hopes/concerns re the introduction of new regulations for supported exempt accommodation?
- How, if at all, will this interact with your local authority's capacity to meet temporary accommodation duties?
- How has ***Housing First provision*** developed over the last few years?
  - Probe: scale/quality of provision, fit to need/options for those HF doesn't suit, impact of pilots/evaluation, progress/enablers/barriers to mainstreaming.

- What shifts, if any, have there been in reliance on dormitory style ***night shelters*** as a homelessness response in recent years:
  - Probe: impact of publication of operating principles, impact of Night Shelter Transformation Fund (2022-25)

Responses to particular groups

- Do you think there's been a change in local authorities' ability to effectively respond to the following ***groups*** over the last few years?
  - Non-priority need groups
  - People with complex needs
  - People sleeping rough
  - Survivors of domestic abuse – impact of Domestic Abuse Act 2021; target to halve violence against women and girls in a decade
  - Migrants, refugees, those with no recourse to public funds

- What have been the homelessness implications/impacts of streamlined/accelerated decision making on asylum claims by the ***Home Office***?
  - Probe: Impact of extension of notice period to 56 days

- Are there any other impacts of ***UK immigration policy*** on homelessness and responses to it? What are the key factors here and what specific impacts to they have?
  - Probe: e.g. impact of no recourse to public funds policy on rough sleeping/ responses to domestic abuse etc.

Homelessness funding

- How adequate is ***homelessness funding*** provided/available to local authorities/ others to respond to homelessness? How significant, if at all, have the following changes been/will they be in enabling local authorities to effectively respond to homelessness?
  - Homelessness Prevention Grant – increase to £633m, change in formula used to allocate, limits on proportion local authorities can spend on temporary accommodation
  - Increase in Rough Sleeping Winter pressures Funding (to £30m)
  - Introduction of new Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant
  - Mechanisms for funding of temporary accommodation and supported accommodation
    - Probe: impacts of temporary accommodation/supported accommodation subsidy loss on local authorities?
  - Recent announcements in the spending review
  - £950m in local authorities Housing Fund to support investment in new temporary accommodation
  - £100m via Transformation fund for upstream homelessness prevention

- What, if any, have been the impacts of the increase in employer National Insurance contributions on responses to homelessness since the Autumn budget?
- To what extent, if at all, are local authorities or commission/third sector homelessness services able to recruit and retain staff with the right skills?

Housing policy

- What impacts, if any, do you anticipate the provisions proposed in the ***Renters Rights Bill*** to have on homelessness? Probes:
  - Positive (e.g. reduce homelessness as a result of private rented sector eviction), negative (e.g. landlord disinvestment – driven by regulation or other factors?), overall.
  - Importance of particular provisions – abolition of Section 21 evictions, extended notice periods, introduction of periodic open-ended tenancies, restrictions on rent in advance, others?

- What impact do you anticipate the Government's efforts to boost affordable housing supply will have on homelessness and over what timescales? Probes:
  - £39bn 10-year Affordable Homes Programme
  - National ***housing target*** (300k pa): local authority ability to meet targets? How important are the mandatory Local Planning Authority targets in helping achieve this? Should there be a specific social rent target?

- Other elements of the Spending Review: rent settlement, proposals regarding rent convergence, focus on private investment.

- How, if at all, have approaches to ***social housing allocation*** changed in recent years and with what impacts on homelessness? Probe:
  - Differences between stock-owning local authorities and housing associations

- Do local authorities need more leverage over housing associations to enable them to meet homelessness duties (e.g. S5 in Scotland and Welsh equivalent under consideration)? Probe:
  - Different for stock owning/non-stock owning local authorities?
  - Exclusion of low-income households based on financial capability assessments, access procedures difficult for homeless households to manage, residency requirements
  - Potential impacts of plans to exempt veterans, young care leavers and victims of domestic abuse from the local connection test

Cost of living/social security policy

- What impact, if any, has the ***ongoing cost of living crisis*** had on homelessness over the last few years? What impact do you see it having over the next year?
- How, if at all, are local authorities managing these impacts/pressures? What would help going forward?
- On ***welfare benefits more generally***, what, if any, have the homelessness impacts been of:
  - Uplift of Universal Credit and other means tested benefits by 1.7% in April 25
  - Reduction of max. Universal Credit deductions from 25 to 15%
  - Continuation of Local Housing Allowance freeze until April 26
  - Retention of the Benefit Cap
  - Retention of the 2-child limit
  - Retention of shared accommodation rate for under 35s

- What impacts on homelessness, if any, will ***Labour's proposed welfare reforms*** have? Probe as appropriate:
  - Increase in Universal Credit standard allowance
  - 'Right to try' work without losing benefit
  - Tightening eligibility criteria for Personal Independence Payment
  - Cuts to the health element of Universal Credit (from £97 in 2024 to £50 in 2026/27)
  - Work capability assessments scrapped, Personal Independence Payment assessment used
  - £1bn investment in tailored employment support for disabled with long-term conditions (plus "New Support Conversations" for people with health conditions, investment in Youth Guarantee via delayed access to health element to 22)

- How important are ***local/discretionary forms of support*** – Discretionary Housing Payments, the Household Support Fund and Local Welfare Assistance - in enabling local authorities to prevent and alleviate homelessness?
- What, if any, will the homelessness impacts be of:
  - Maintaining Discretionary Housing Payments at £100m in 2025/26
  - Reducing the Housing Support Fund to £900m (from £1b)

- To what extent are local authorities able to effectively target these forms of support to tackle homelessness? What are the barriers to doing so? What would more effectively enable it?

Inter-Ministerial Group and forthcoming homelessness strategy etc.

- How effective do you anticipate the Inter-Ministerial Group structure to have been in developing a homelessness strategy for England?
- What do you hope to see in the forthcoming Cross-Government Homelessness Strategy? Probe:
  - Priorities for inclusion
  - Concerns about potential gaps
- Anything I've missed/should have asked you about/final comments/you'd like to add?

Appendix 2 Local authority survey (2025)

Emulating similar surveys implemented as an integral component of Homelessness Monitor England fieldwork since 2014, an online survey of England's 296 local authorities[296] was undertaken in April-May 2025. 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) local authorities' 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. Survey design was informed through consultation with national experts in the field, as well with Crisis UK colleagues. A draft version of the questionnaire was piloted by two case study local authority contacts.

An e-mail invitation to participate in the survey was sent to local authority homelessness contacts (or 'housing options managers'). Net of duplicates and entirely incomplete returns, responses were filed by 178 authorities or 60% of all authorities – see Table 1. In terms of its regional distribution the achieved sample is reasonably representative of England as a whole.

Table A2.1: Survey response rate

Broad region*	Responding local authorities	All local authorities	Response rate %
London	21	33	64
South	78	136	57
Midlands	37	65	57
North	42	62	68
England	178	296	60

*This survey follows the convention that the South includes the East of England as well as the South East and South West of England.

296 As constituted in 2025

This appendix summarises in tabular form the key quantitative survey results. Key survey findings, including the qualitative data generated by the extensive use of open text responses within the survey, are contained in the main body of the report.

Table A2.2: Change in number of households seeking homelessness assistance in 2024/25 compared with preceding year (% of responding local authorities)

	Significantly higher	Slightly higher	Fairly similar	Slightly lower	Significantly lower	Total	N=
1 London	48	29	10	14	0	100	21
2 South	27	40	22	9	1	100	77
3 Midlands	24	46	24	5	0	100	37
4 North	40	33	21	5	0	100	42
England	32	38	21	8	1	100	177

Note: Excludes one authority where trends had been variable during the preceding year.

Table A2.3: Change in number of households seeking homelessness assistance in 2024/25 compared with preceding year (% of responding local authorities)

	Increase	Fairly steady	Decrease	Don't know	Grand Total	N=
Complex support needs	78	13	2	7	100	174
Families with children	58	32	7	4	100	174
Single people >25	55	34	5	6	100	174
Rough sleepers	51	44	2	3	100	173
Sofa surfers	39	49	2	10	100	174
Working households	39	41	6	14	100	174
People with disabilities	39	47	3	10	100	174
Single people 16-24	31	56	7	5	100	174

Note: Excludes 'not relevant in my area' responses

Table A2.4: Numbers of households becoming homeless, according to causal factors; presentations in 2024/25 compared with preceding year (% of responding local authorities)

	Increase	Fairly steady	Decrease	Don't know	Total	N=
Survivors of domestic abuse	71	23	4	2	100	173
People evicted from private rented sector	68	24	8	1	100	173
Refugees	61	35	2	2	100	168
Prison leavers	51	43	5	1	100	172
People discharged from hospital	44	50	5	1	100	172
People being asked to leave by friends	41	50	7	2	100	174
People experiencing non-violent relationship breakdown	40	52	6	2	100	173
Other migrants with NPRF or restricted eligibility for statutory support	31	55	4	10	100	161
Repossessed home owners	21	69	6	4	100	169
People evicted from social rented sector	19	69	10	2	100	172

Note: Excludes 'not relevant in my area' responses

Table A2.5: Do you anticipate any change in the numbers seeking assistance from your Housing Options/homelessness service over the next year, as compared with the past 12 months? (% of responding authorities)

	Will Increase	Will remain fairly steady	Will Decrease	Don't know	Total	N=
People evicted from private rented sector	81	10	5	4	100	172
Refugees	61	31	4	5	100	170
Survivors of domestic abuse	55	38	2	5	100	172
People being asked to leave by family	49	47	0	4	100	172
People sleeping rough	46	47	4	4	100	171
Prison leavers	45	49	1	4	100	172
Sofa surfers	44	46	2	9	100	172
People being asked to leave by friends	41	55	0	4	100	172
People discharged from hospital	41	53	1	5	100	172
Other migrants with no recourse to public funds or other restricted eligibility for statutory support	37	50	2	10	100	163
People experiencing non-violent relationship breakdown	31	63	1	5	100	172
Repossessed home owners	26	66	1	6	100	172
People evicted from social rented sector	18	74	4	3	100	172

Note: Excludes respondents indicating specified cohort 'not relevant in my area'

Table A2.6: To what extent is your local authority struggling to meet its statutory duties to prevent homelessness for the following groups? (% of responding local authorities)

	Struggling all time	Struggling most of the time	Struggling some of time	Struggling only rarely	Not struggling at all	Total	N=
Families with children	17	26	41	7	7	100	166
Single people	17	34	35	8	5	100	166
People with complex needs	37	34	22	1	5	100	166

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.7: How effective is the 'Duty to Refer' from named public bodies in assisting you meeting your prevention duties? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very effective	Moderately effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective at all	Total	N=
1 London	13	38	31	19	100	16
2 South	4	32	51	12	100	74
3 Midlands	3	24	50	24	100	34
4 North	0	35	50	15	100	40
England	4	32	49	16	100	164

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.8: To what extent is your local authority struggling to meet its statutory duties to relieve homelessness for the following groups? (% of responding local authorities)

	Struggling all the time	Struggling most of the time	Struggling some of time	Struggling only rarely	Not struggling at all	Total	N=
Families with children	20	24	40	13	2	100	164
Single people	18	26	45	8	3	100	164
People with complex needs	37	34	24	2	3	100	164

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.9: To what extent is your local authority struggling to meet its statutory duties to provide temporary accommodation for the following groups? (% of responding local authorities)

	Struggling all the time	Struggling most of the time	Struggling some of time	Struggling only rarely	Not struggling at all	Total	N=
Families with children	12	16	36	24	12	100	163
Single people	10	19	36	26	10	100	163
People with complex needs	29	29	30	7	5	100	163

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.10: To what extent is your local authority struggling to meet its statutory duties to secure settled rehousing for the following groups? (% of responding local authorities)

	Struggling all the time	Struggling most of the time	Struggling some of time	Struggling only rarely	Not struggling at all	Total	N=
Families with children	20	26	37	13	4	100	164
Single people	21	31	37	8	3	100	164
People with complex needs	39	40	17	1	2	100	164

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.11: In your view, is floating housing-related support available to all those who need it in your area to sustain their tenancies? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes – all those who need such support have access to it	Most of those who need such support have access to it	No – many of those who need such support do not have access to it	Total	N=
1 London	24	29	47	100	17
2 South	11	43	47	100	75
3 Midlands	3	44	53	100	32
4 North	16	42	42	100	38
England	12	41	47	100	162

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.12: To what extent, if at all, are you able to assist applicants who are not in priority access temporary accommodation? (% of responding local authorities)

	To a large extent – we are almost always able to assist	To some extent – we can sometimes assist	To a limited extent – we can rarely assist	None – we can never assist	Total	N=
1 London	12	29	41	18	100	17
2 South	15	37	32	16	100	73
3 Midlands	3	41	53	3	100	32
4 North	13	48	38	3	100	40
England	12	40	38	10	100	162

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.13: To what extent, if at all, are you able to assist non-priority need groups access settled housing? (% of responding local authorities)

	To a large extent – we are almost always able to assist	To some extent – we can sometimes assist	To a limited extent – we can rarely assist	None – we can never assist	Total	N=
1 London	6	65	24	6	100	17
2 South	10	67	22	1	100	73
3 Midlands	9	63	28	0	100	32
4 North	8	65	28	0	100	40
England	9	65	25	1	100	162

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses

Table A2.14: How important have the following decisions been (or how important will they be) in helping or hindering efforts to prevent or minimise homelessness in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Will make little difference	Total	N=
1.7% uplift in Universal Credit	10	28 (38)	5	0	57	100	152
Reducing maximum Universal Credit deductions from 25 to 15%	10	37 (47)	6	3	44	100	147
Continuation of the LHA freeze until at least April 2026	4	7	13	70 (83)	6	100	160
Retention of the Benefit Cap	3	1	28	52 (80)	16	100	155
Retention of the Two Child Limit	3	1	34	44 (78)	19	100	152
Continuation of Shared Accommodation Rate applying to 25 to 35 year olds	4	2	20	62 (82)	11	100	158

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses.

Table A2.15: How important have the following funding changes been (or how important will they be) in preventing or minimising homelessness in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Will make little difference	Total	N=
Increases in the Homelessness Prevention Grant (to £633 million)	69	23	9	100	163
Increase in Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures Funding (to £30 million)	64	29	7	100	162
Introduction of new Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant	63	28	9	100	158

Note: Excludes 'don't know' responses.

Table A2.16: How challenging (if at all) are the levels of temporary accommodation housing subsidy loss for your local authority's overall finances? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Slightly challenging	Not at all challenging	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	94	6	0	0	0	100	16
2 South	57	19	9	1	13	100	75
3 Midlands	45	27	21	0	6	100	33
4 North	67	8	5	0	21	100	39
England	61	17	10	1	12	100	163

Table A2.17: How important, if at all, have the following locally administered funds been in mitigating the risk of homelessness in your area in 2024? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Low importance	Not at all important	Don't know	Total	N =
Discretionary Housing Payments	51	35 (87%)	10	1	4	100	164
Household Support Fund	38	38 (78%)	15	3	6	100	164

Table A2.18: How challenging will the following funding decisions be to efforts to prevent or minimise homelessness in your area in 2025/26? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Slightly challenging	Will make little difference	Don't know	Total	N=
Maintaining Discretionary Housing Payment funding at same level (£100 million)	30	41	13 (84%)	12	4	100	164
Reduction of Household Support Fund allocation (from £1 billion to £900 million)	34	35	13 (82%)	11	8	100	164

Table A2.19: Does your Local Authority have a Local Welfare Assistance scheme (or similar) in place? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	69	6	25	100	16
2 South	37	39	24	100	76
3 Midlands	39	45	15	100	33
4 North	56	26	18	100	39
England	45	34	21	100	164

Table A2.20: Has access to social housing for households experiencing or threatened with homelessness become easier or more difficult in your area over the past year? (% of responding local authorities)

	Easier	No difference	More difficult	Total	N=
1 London	0	47	53	100	15
2 South	11	28	61	100	72
3 Midlands	0	33	67	100	30
4 North	0	8	92	100	36
England	5	26	69	100	153

Note: Excludes 'Don't know' and 'There has been variation over the year' responses

Table A2.21: Has access to private tenancies for households experiencing or threatened with homelessness become easier or more difficult in your area over the past year? (% of responding local authorities)

	Easier	No difference	More difficult	Total	N=
1 London	6	0	94	100	16
2 South	4	11	85	100	72
3 Midlands	3	10	87	100	31
4 North	6	6	89	100	36
England	5	8	87	100	155

Note: Excludes 'Don't know' responses

Table A2.22: Has access to supported housing for households experiencing or threatened with homelessness become easier or more difficult in your area over the past year? (% of responding local authorities)

	Easier	No difference	More difficult	Total	N=
1 London	0	31	69	100	16
2 South	1	21	78	100	72
3 Midlands	7	17	77	100	30
4 North	9	14	77	100	35
England	4	20	76	100	153

Note: Excludes 'Don't know' and 'There has been variation over the year' responses

Table A2.23: Is your local authority seeking to increase the proportion of social housing allocations to homeless households? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	N=
1 London	44	50	6	100	16
2 South	40	45	15	100	75
3 Midlands	31	66	3	100	32
4 North	47	29	24	100	38
England	40	46	14	100	161

Table A2.24: To what extent, if at all, do you think the measures proposed in the Renters Rights Bill will help or hinder your efforts to prevent and address homelessness in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

RRA measure	Help significantly	Help somewhat	Will make little difference	Hinder significantly	Hinder somewhat	Will have mixed impacts	Total	N=
Abolition of Section 21 evictions	21	38 (49)	11	6	7	16	100	154
Extend notice periods for most grounds to four months	19	55 (74)	13	1	5	8	100	155
Establish periodic open-ended tenancies in full	16	50 (66)	16	3	7	8	100	147
Restricting rent payments in advance to one month	17	41(58)	22	4	10	6	100	156

Table A2.25: Are effective partnerships in place with relevant actors in the following fields that enhance your local authority's ability to effectively prevent and/or alleviate homelessness? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes partnerships in place significantly enhance ability in this area	Yes partnerships in place somewhat enhance ability in this area	No partnerships in place make little or no difference in this area	No partnerships are weak/not in place	Total	N=
Health services	15	69 (74)	10	7	100	157
Adult social care	17	53 (70)	21	10	100	156
Children's services	19	60 (79)	14	6	100	156
Criminal justice/ probation	23	63 (86)	12	2	100	158
Department for Work and Pensions / Jobcentre Plus	17	57(74)	20	6	100	158
Housing associations	36	52 (88)	9	4	100	157
Home Office	6	46 (52)	30	19	100	145

Note: Excludes 'Don't know' responses.

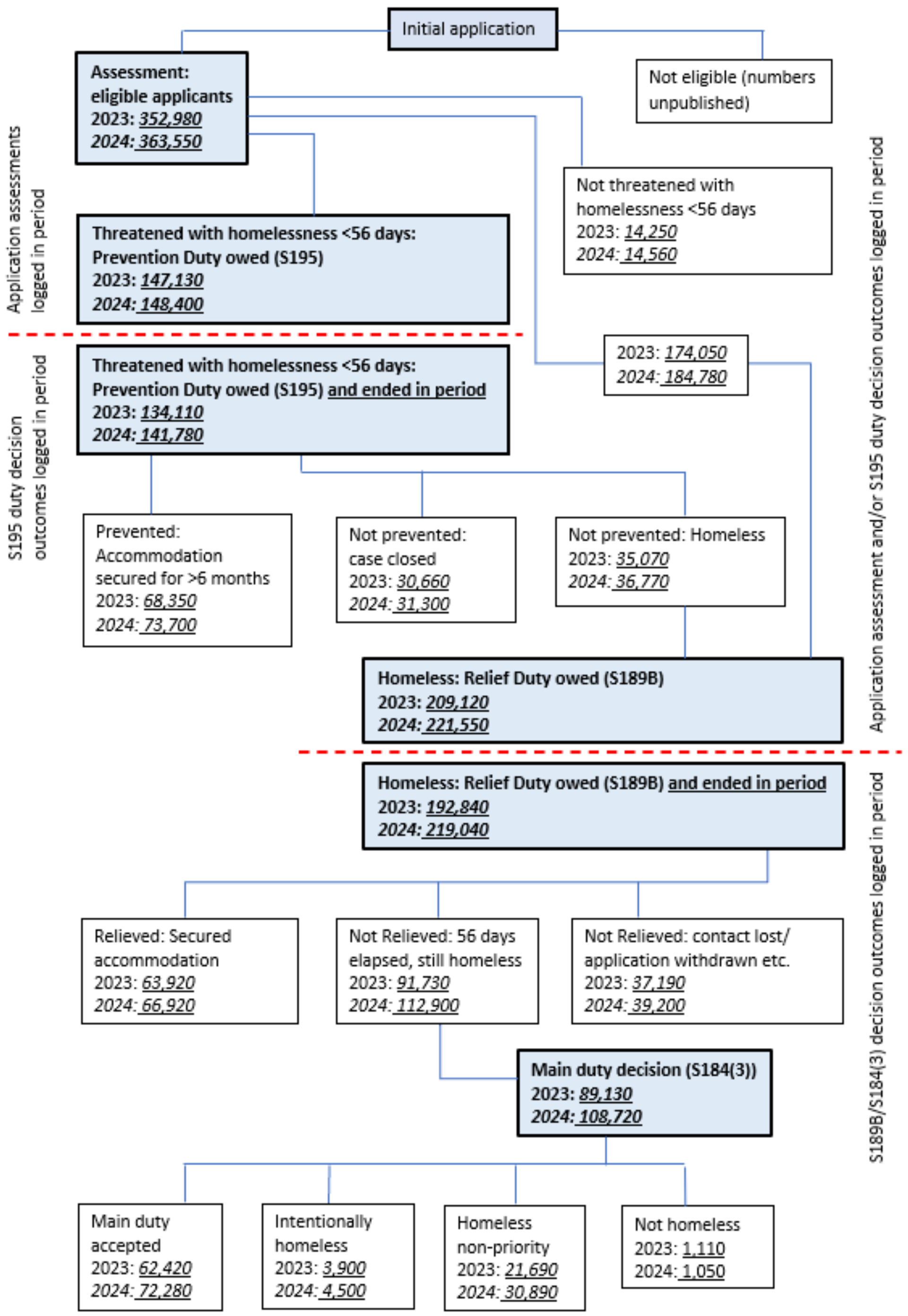
Table A2.26: Do you anticipate that the introduction of regulations covering Supported Exempt Accommodation will reduce the levels of poor quality supported accommodation in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes	No	Don't know	N/A - no poor quality Supported Exempt Accomodation in our area	Total	N=
1 London	50	13	25	13	100	16
2 South	32	9	34	24	100	74
3 Midlands	56	0	28	16	100	32
4 North	61	3	24	13	100	38
England	46	6	29	19	100	160

Table A2.27: Do you anticipate any wider and/or unintended impacts of introducing regulation covering Supported Exempt Accommodation? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes – anticipate wider positive impacts	Yes – anticipate wider negative impacts	Yes – anticipate wider mixed impacts	No	Don't know	N/A	Total	N=
1 London	13	6	38	13	19	13	100	16
2 South	9	11	23	16	31	9	100	74
3 Midlands	6	19	31	9	22	13	100	32
4 North	21	13	21	3	39	3	100	38
England	12	13	26	11	30	9	100	160

Appendix 3 Statutory homelessness flow chart



Source: Authors – based on MHCLG statistics and originally drawn with MHCLG assistance. Note: 1. Statistics cited in each box represent national published totals for 2023 and 2024. 2. Homelessness prevention and relief duties completed during each calendar year denoted as such by the term 'and ended in period'.

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