

## Briefing for Highlands & Islands

### Crisis in Scotland

#### March 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Homelessness in the Highlands and Islands

During 2021/22, across the six local authorities represented with the Highlands & Islands region:

- 2,165 households were found to be homeless or at risk (2,507 adults and 1,134 children)

- 205 households slept rough in the three months prior to making a homelessness application. 100 were in Highland and 55 in Moray.
- 1,006 households were in temporary accommodation as of 31 March 2022. In most council areas a smaller than average proportion of homeless households being housed in temporary accommodation while homeless. Highland and Shetland were above the national average.
- There were 1,195 temporary accommodation placements in ordinary social housing and 155 placements in bed&breakfast style accommodation. 90 of these were in Highland.
- The average number of days in temporary accommodation varied from 136 in Moray, to 406 in Shetland. Similarly, the length of time a household spent in the homelessness system varied from 152 days in Moray to 461 in Shetland
- The rate of homelessness is generally below the Scottish average.

	<b>No. household s found to be homeless / at risk</b>	<b>Slept rough in past 3 month s</b>	<b>Households in temporary accommodatio n</b>	<b>Ave. no. day s in TA</b>	<b>Ave. no days to close homeless applicatio n</b>	<b>Rate of homelessnes s per 100,000</b>
Argyll and Bute	335	30	107	202	217	451
Na h-Eileanan Siar	130	10	56	297	325	571
Highland	1,135	100	612	344	330	569
Moray	380	55	99	136	152	475
Orkney Islands	105	10	46	207	199	553
Shetland Islands	80	5	86	406	461	414
<i>Highlands &amp; Islands</i>	<i>2,165</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>1,006</i>			
<i>SCOTLAND</i>	<i>28,880</i>	<i>2,130</i>	<i>13,945</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>606</i>