Homelessness data review project plan

The purpose of this project is to review and update the homelessness data collections to better meet user need and ensure the statistics gathered are reflective of homelessness legislation, policy initiatives and are consistent and of high quality. The statutory homelessness data collections are based on management information gathered by local authorities in the process of undertaking their statutory duty to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, or when approached for homelessness prevention support. The scope of the review is therefore limited only to what is appropriate for local authorities under their data remit. Strong user need that falls outwith this will have to be progressed separately.

A new post was filled in Summer of 2022 to pick up and progress the homelessness data review that was commenced in 2020. The work was paused in 2021 due to competing priorities and lack of capacity within the homelessness statistics and analysis team.

Since then, HL3 and HL1 guidance has been updated in line with consultation feedback and the material gathered in the early stages of the review (via consultation activity) has been analysed and will be prepared for publication during Spring/Summer 2023.

The previously formed homelessness data review working group is being re-established in Spring 2023. The purpose of this group is to oversee, inform and contribute to decision making throughout the entirety of the project.

High-level project plan:

During 2023, SG analysts will aim to fully understand the data requirements for the SG statutory homelessness data collection/s as well as understand what is feasible and appropriate to collect. This will be done through working and topic-group discussions, research and external stakeholder engagement. The requirement for data systems and homelessness data to be linked to other data sources will be established during this stage so that it can be worked into the drafted content if required.

The aim is to establish system requirements by end of 2023 / early 2024.

By early 2024, the aim is to have agreed proposed new content which will be brought forward for public consultation. As stakeholder engagement is built-in to the content drafting stage (and a public consultation inviting general views and data gaps has already been undertaken) this is not envisaged as an opportunity to propose further content but to identify any major issues which may have been overlooked or to suggest minor changes helpful to better meet user need.

The aim is to finalise content by the end of 2024 / early 2025.

Parallel to the content work, the requirements for data submission and collection systems and (SG) processing systems will be established and available options explored. An important aspect of the data review is to ensure that systems are flexible enough to allow for future changes to content to be readily introduced (to reflect new legislation / policies and wider user need). Opportunities will be sought to build additional efficiencies into collection and processing mechanisms.

The data review working group will develop and agree an implementation and transition plan that is feasible and practical for all 32 local authorities as well as the Scottish Government. Based on previous communication with local authorities, implementation is anticipated to require up to two years to accommodate all local authority timescales.

It is not yet clear if the SG processing system will be developed by the homelessness statistics and analysis team or whether development will be commissioned from elsewhere (although it is anticipated that there is support for this work in SG).

Another workstream of the data review is the development of all associated documentation. This includes data specification, data sharing agreements, question and system guidance documentation and a data protection impact assessment and quality assurance statement.

The aim is to have fully implemented a new homelessness data collection/s by the end of 2026 / early 2027.

High-level timescales (indicative)

Activity	Timing
Establish proposed new content	End 2023/ Early 2024
Understand requirements for data collection and processing systems	End 2023/ Early 2024
Consult on proposed new content	Early-mid 2024
Scope collections and processing systems	Early-mid 2024
Finalise content	End 2024/ Early 2025
Agree collection and processing systems	End 2024/ Early 2025
Develop / agree an implementation strategy	End 2024/ Early 2025
Build & implementation	End 2026/ Early 2027

Data review project workstream

Understanding data requirements	Drafting collection content	Documentation	Collection and processing systems	Implementation / transition

Data review working group and topic-specific subgroups

Understanding data requirements	Drafting collection content	Documentation	Collection and processing systems	Implementation / transition
Initial consultation activities including detailed collection consultation with data providers and stakeholders	Discuss each question / group of related questions / data gaps • Relate to established requirements • Understand and describe feasibility / suitability / issues • Research legislation and similar questions / guidance • External stakeholder engagement	Data specification	**LA collection / reporting system requirements** • Requirement gathering	• Requirement gathering • Develop implementation and transition strategy including timescales • Determine resource requirement for developing new system/s • Build / test new systems
Establish data linkage requirements and feasibility		Question guidance		

Understand SG policy data requirements		Collection system user guidance	**SG collection / processing systems**
			
			• Requirement gathering
			  o Data specification
			  o Error reports
			  o Quarterly and annual reports
			• Scope collection systems options
			• Scope processing systems options
			• Agree on preferred option for collection and processing systems	

Understand LA data provider requirements	Topic group to sign off draft content / solution considering the above	Data protection impact assessment		
Understand external stakeholder requirements	Public consultation	Quality assurance statement		
	Working group final sign off	Data sharing agreements		
	SG internal / Ministerial agreement			
	ALACHO / COSLA agreement			
	Finalised and agreed content End 2024 / early 2025		**Agree systems by End 2024 / early 2025**	**Implement / transition of collection to new LA and SG systems (Project complete) End of 2026 / early 2027**