

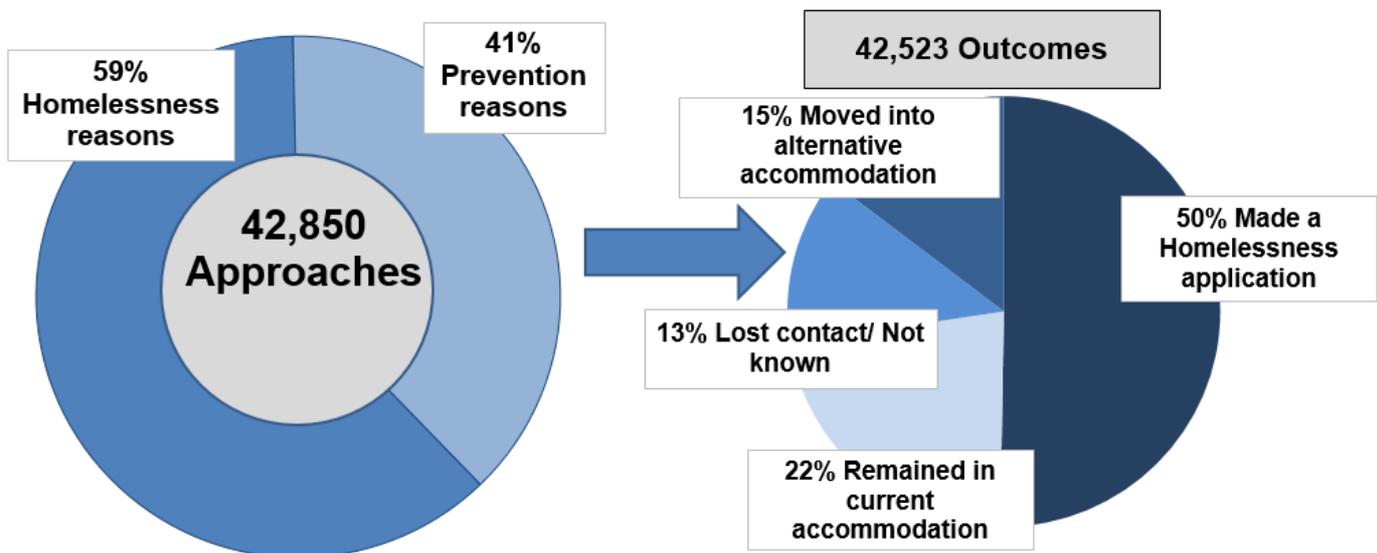
PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Housing Options (PREVENT1) Statistics in Scotland: 2018/19

This bulletin is based on information provided by local authorities to the Scottish Government on the operation of Housing Options services that are made available when households seek assistance for housing-related issues, and which can be used by local authorities as a means of delivering statutory duties around the provision of advice and information for the prevention of homelessness. It provides information on the operation of Housing Options between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, and includes information on the number of approaches made, as well as details on the reasons for the approaches made, the activities undertaken, and the outcomes achieved.

Excel workbooks with the tables and charts from this publication are available to download at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

Figure 1: Flow diagram of all approaches to Housing Options services in Scotland, 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019



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Help us improve this publication and its statistics:

These are designated as experimental statistics, defined in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics as "*new official statistics undergoing evaluation*".¹

Get in touch by email:

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All tables and charts from this publication are available online at:

<http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

¹ For more information on experimental statistics please see:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.html>

Introduction

When households seek assistance for housing-related issues from their Local Authority, they may be presented with advice on a range of housing options, for example, the opportunity to make a homelessness application. This approach, which is known as Housing Options, began to be implemented from around 2009, and more so after the abolition of the priority need test² for homelessness.

Local Authorities can use Housing Options as a means of delivering their duty under [section 2 of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#). It must be stressed however that Housing Options is only one way of delivering the duty and that Housing Options as an approach is not a statutory function. This legislation places a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that advice and information about:

- (a) homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, and
- (b) any services which may assist a homeless person or assist in the prevention of homelessness,

are available free of charge to any person in the Authority's area.

The aim of this approach is to make households better informed of their options for accommodation, and ensure they are able to make a more informed choice.

In May 2014, the Scottish Housing Regulator published a national thematic inquiry into Housing Options and homelessness prevention, "Housing Options in Scotland: a thematic inquiry"³. This inquiry assessed the performance of Local Authorities in developing and delivering Housing Options services for their customers. In it, it recommended that Local Authorities and the Scottish Government should work together to provide improved guidance on best practice for Housing Options as it regarded that there was still room for development. A summary of the Regulator's recommendations is found in the [Background](#) Section. Housing Options Guidance was published in March 2016.⁴

Each Local Authority is likely to have its own version of Housing Options as each will have decided how to best deliver their section 2 duty. The Housing Options Guidance published by the Scottish Government in March 2016 is not statutory guidance, but is to be used as a tool-kit for local authorities when developing their approach to Housing Options.

² In November 2012, the Scottish Parliament approved the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012, found online at:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2012/330/contents/made>

³ This report is available online at:

<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-options-scotland-thematic-inquiry>

⁴ Housing Options Guidance (March 2016) is available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/6556>

Defining Success

Success criteria are difficult to define and measure. Whilst Local Authorities have a general prevention duty under section 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Housing Options itself is not specifically defined within a legislative framework.

Because of the differing approaches to deliver their duty, the local authority figures reported in this publication are not directly comparable and cannot be used as indicators of good or bad performance.

In direct contrast, the homelessness legislation provides an assessment framework and each assessment decision gives a statutory entitlement to some form of assistance. The operation of the homelessness legislation can therefore be evaluated by measuring compliance with this framework. For example, the proportion of unintentionally homeless households who secure settled accommodation can be tracked over time.

Scottish Government policy has been for Housing Options to be developed locally. As such, there is no single definition of Housing Options operating across all Local Authorities. The Scottish Government funded Housing Options Hubs are working to develop a training toolkit which will introduce a degree of consistency across the country but there will be local developments taking account of housing markets and available options.

The purpose of this publication is to provide a statistical update on the operation of Housing Options between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, providing further reporting of the statistics available since April 2014.

Main Points

Number of Approaches

- In the last year (1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019), there were 42,850 approaches recorded.
- Compared with the same period one year ago, there has been a reduction of 2,995 approaches across Scotland (-7%). 24 Local Authorities have seen a reduction in approaches.
- It is for local authorities to decide what constitutes an approach, and this can lead to large differences in the volumes of approaches recorded. Across Scotland, the national average for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 is 160 approaches per 10,000 households – around 2% of all households in Scotland.

Open Approaches

- At 31 March 2019, there were 19,310 approaches recorded since 1 April 2014 that still remained open. This equates to 7% of all approaches recorded since 1 April 2014.
- During the first four years of the Housing Options statistics, some local authorities have built up a large number of open cases. However this can be a reflection of local practices and is not, of itself, a measure of success or failure. For example, North Lanarkshire has 23% of its cases still open. Where Local Authorities have a high proportion of open cases, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Housing Options approach as approaches can have no recorded outcome.

Reasons for Approaches

- Despite the overall reduction in Housing Options approaches when comparing 2018/19 with 2017/18, the proportion of approaches made for homelessness type reasons (59%) *versus* prevention type reasons (41%) has fallen across these two years. In 2017/18, 61% of approaches were for homelessness type reasons.

Activities

- There is wide variation in the mix of activities offered by local authorities. During 2018/19, 54% of all approaches had activities not exceeding Type I advice - active information, sign-posting and explanation. Type II advice (casework) was carried out in a further 46% of approaches.
- The most common type of activity was to provide general housing advice and tenancy rights advice - this accounted for 37% of all activities during 2018/19. Informing clients of their rights under the homelessness legislation accounted for 28% of all activities.

Outcomes

- For approaches closed during the 2018/19 financial year:
 - 50% of approaches made a homelessness application.
 - 22% remained in their current accommodation.
 - 13% had an unknown outcome or contact was lost.
 - 15% found alternative accommodation, including a social rented tenancy (5%), a private rented tenancy (2%) and moving in with family and friends (2%). Other known outcomes accounted for a further 6%.
- The outcomes achieved by Housing Options vary considerably by Local Authority. For example, during this period:
 - In Clackmannanshire, 98% of all approaches resulted in a homelessness application being made, whilst this figure was 20% in Orkney.
 - 54% of approaches in Stirling remained in their current accommodation, compared to 0% of approaches with this outcome in Orkney.
 - For Orkney, 40% found alternative accommodation. This figure was 1% in Clackmannanshire.
 - For Orkney and Midlothian, 40% have an outcome of lost contact or not known. In Local Authorities where there are high proportions of lost contacts and unknown outcomes, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of their Housing Options policy.

Repeat Approaches

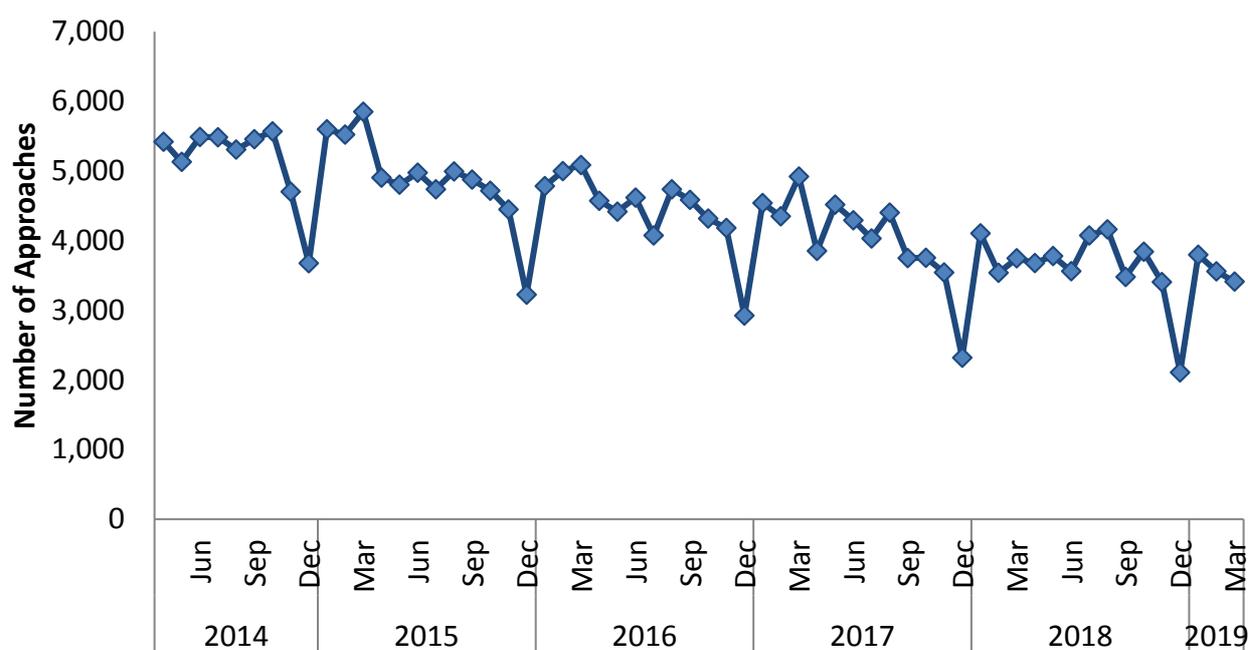
- During 2018/19, the rate of repeat approaches for Scotland was 8% of all households. Falkirk had the highest rate of repeat approaches at 15% of households, however this may be a reflection of recording practice. East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Eilean Siar, Orkney and West Dunbartonshire all had no repeat approaches in 2018/19.

Number of Approaches to Local Authorities

Since the PREVENT1 data collection began in April 2014, there have been 260,670 approaches recorded (**see Table 1**). During the financial year (2018/19) there were 42,850 approaches recorded, a reduction of 2,995 (-7%) compared to the previous year, and which continues the downward trend seen since 2014. Comparing 2018/19 to the first year (2014/15) data was collected for Housing Options, there has been a reduction of over 20,000 approaches (32%).

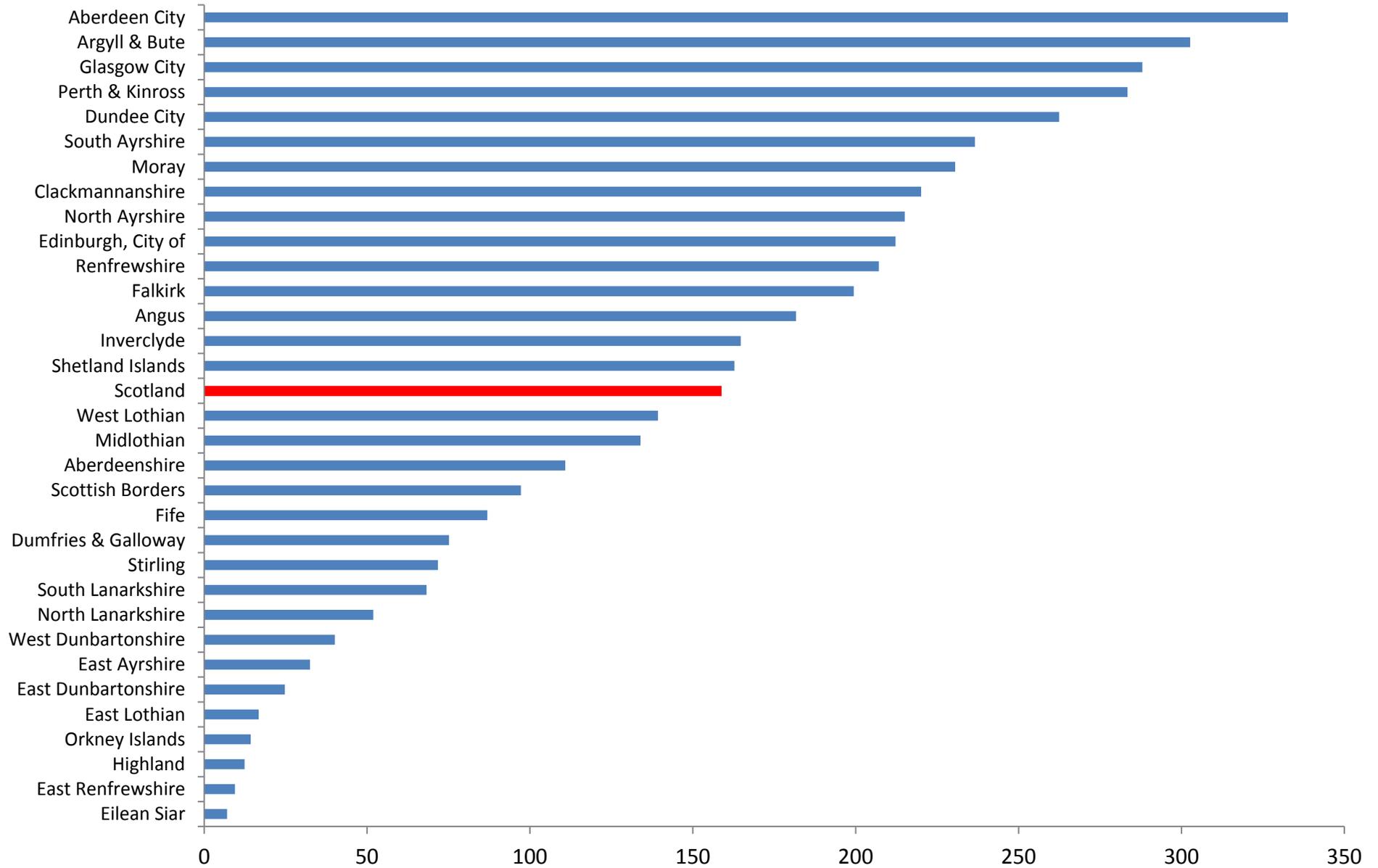
[Chart 1](#) shows the number of new approaches per month. It is not known why there are sharp reductions in the number of approaches made during December each year, but this trend suggests an element of seasonal fluctuation in demand for Housing Options.

Chart 1: Number of New Approaches to Housing Options, 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2019



It is for local authorities to decide what constitutes an approach. This can lead to large differences in the volumes of approaches that are recorded. [Chart 2](#) shows the number of approaches as a percentage of all households in each Local Authority for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. This varies greatly amongst Local Authorities. For example, in Aberdeen City 3.3% of households within the local authority made a unique household approach to the Housing Options service. This is double the national average of 1.6% (**Table 2**).

Chart 2: Rates of Housing Options approaches per 10,000 households, 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019



Housing Options has been developing in Local Authorities from around 2009 onwards, although the pace of implementation has varied by Local Authority.

In total, **around 61,377 households made either a homelessness application or Housing Options approach during 2018/19**, an increase of 1.6% from 60,418 during 2017/18.

Figure 1 shows that the number of *unique households* making a homelessness application has fallen from a peak of around 57,300 households in 2005/6 to around 33,700 in 2015/16. Since then it has gradually risen to 35,400 households in 2018/19.⁵

Not all households making a homelessness application are found to be homeless though. In 2018/19, of the 35,402 unique households making an application, 29,498 (83%) were found to be homeless. The proportion of those being assessed as homeless has increased by six percentage points (from 77%) since 2009/10, however the number assessed as homeless has decreased over the same period. It is therefore likely that, in addition to reducing the number of homelessness applications since 2009, the introduction of Housing Options has led to a greater proportion of homelessness applications being assessed as homeless and a reduction in lost contacts for those households going on to make a homelessness application⁶.

Comparing 2018/19 and 2017/18 Housing Options statistics, the number of households who made an approach and **did not** go on to make a homelessness application has increased. Around 25,975 households made an approach and did not make a homelessness application in 2018/19, compared to around 25,800 in 2017/18, a slight increase of 0.8%.

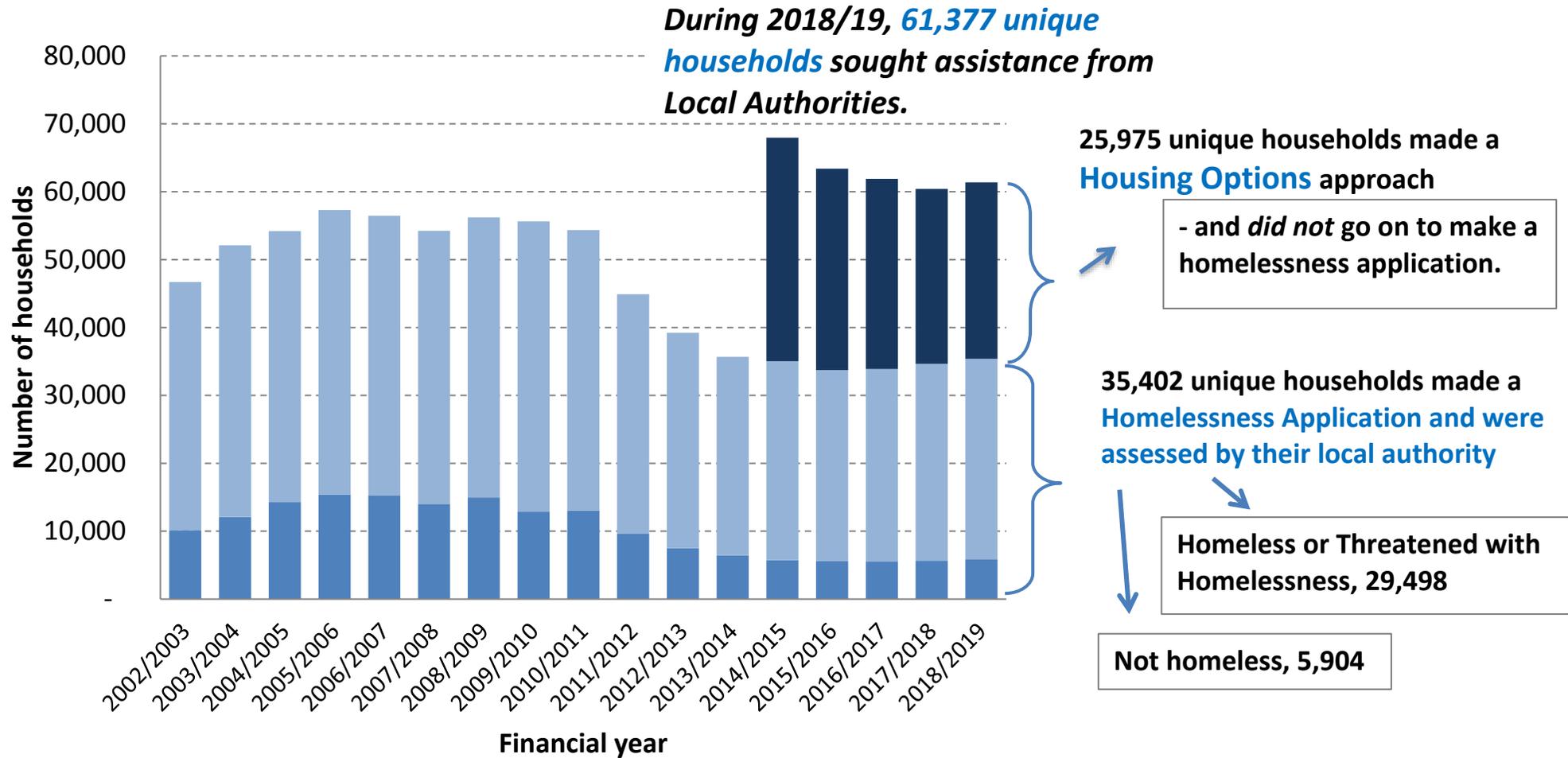
The proportion of homelessness applications which were made directly (and did not go through Housing Options first) has increased over the last year, from 43% to 45% of all applications when comparing 2017/18 to 2018/19. This suggests why the number of Housing Options approaches has decreased over the last year, but the number of homelessness applications has slightly increased.⁷

⁵ The Annual (2018/19) Homelessness publication (published on 26 June 2019) reports the total number of homelessness applications and assessments (not the total number of unique households with an application or assessment); therefore, figures reported here differ.

⁶ Lost contacts prior to a homelessness assessment have reduced by three percentage points between 2009/10 and 2018/19. Where a homelessness duty is owed, lost contacts have reduced by six percentage points. (See Table 11 & 33 in the [2018/19 Annual Homelessness Statistics](#)).

⁷ For more information, see Chart 2 in the Homelessness publication, linked above.

Figure 1: Number of unique households making a local authority approach for housing or homelessness assistance, 2002/03 to 2018/19



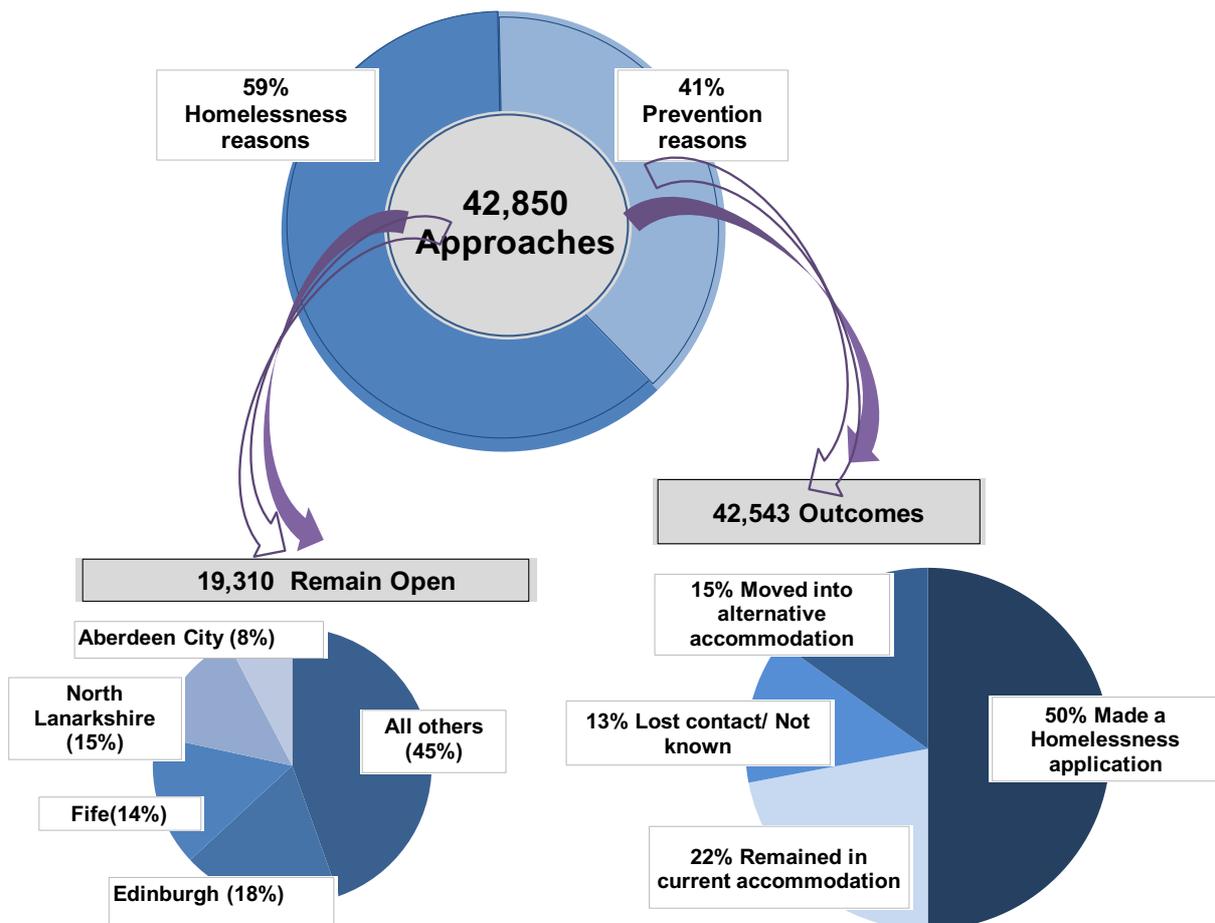
The number of *direct* homelessness applications (not going through Housing Options first) have increased from around 15,200 in 2017/18 to 16,300 in 2018/19 (43% to 45% of all applications respectively)

Flow Diagram

Figure 2 shows a summary of household approaches and outcomes during 2018/19. There were 42,850 approaches to local authorities recorded between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 (where the approach was **opened** between these dates). Of these, 59% were made for homelessness type reasons and 41% were for prevention type reasons.

Outcomes were recorded for 42,543 approaches (these approaches were **closed** between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019). The most common outcome was for a homelessness application to be made (50% of all outcomes), followed by remaining in current accommodation (22%) and moving to alternative accommodation (15%). Contact was lost or the outcome was unknown in 13% of closed approaches.

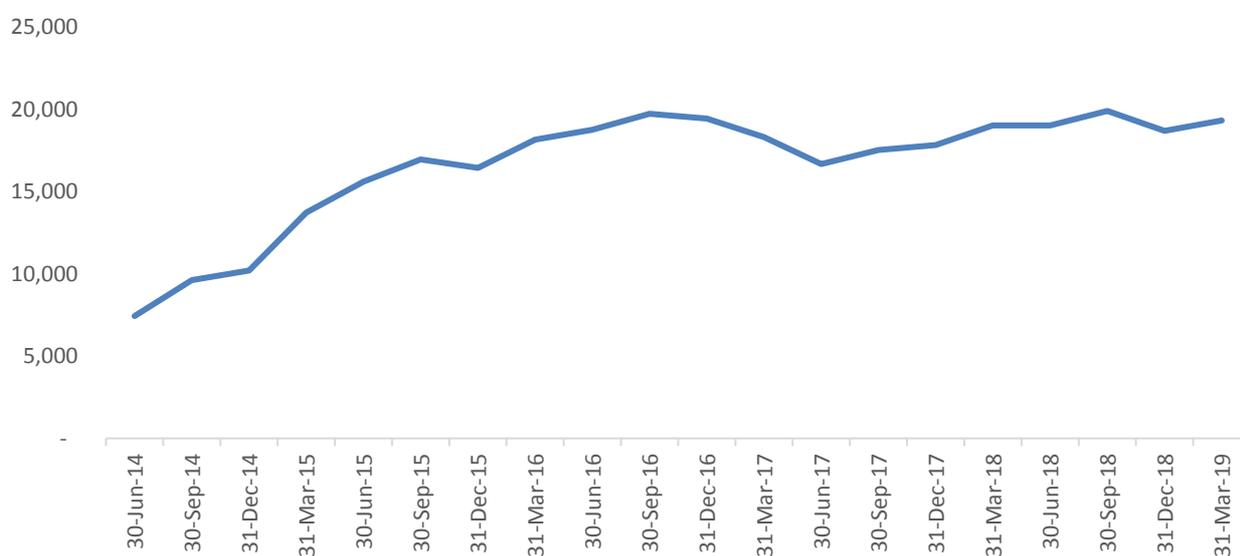
Figure 2: Flow diagram of all approaches to Housing Options services in Scotland, 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019



Open Approaches

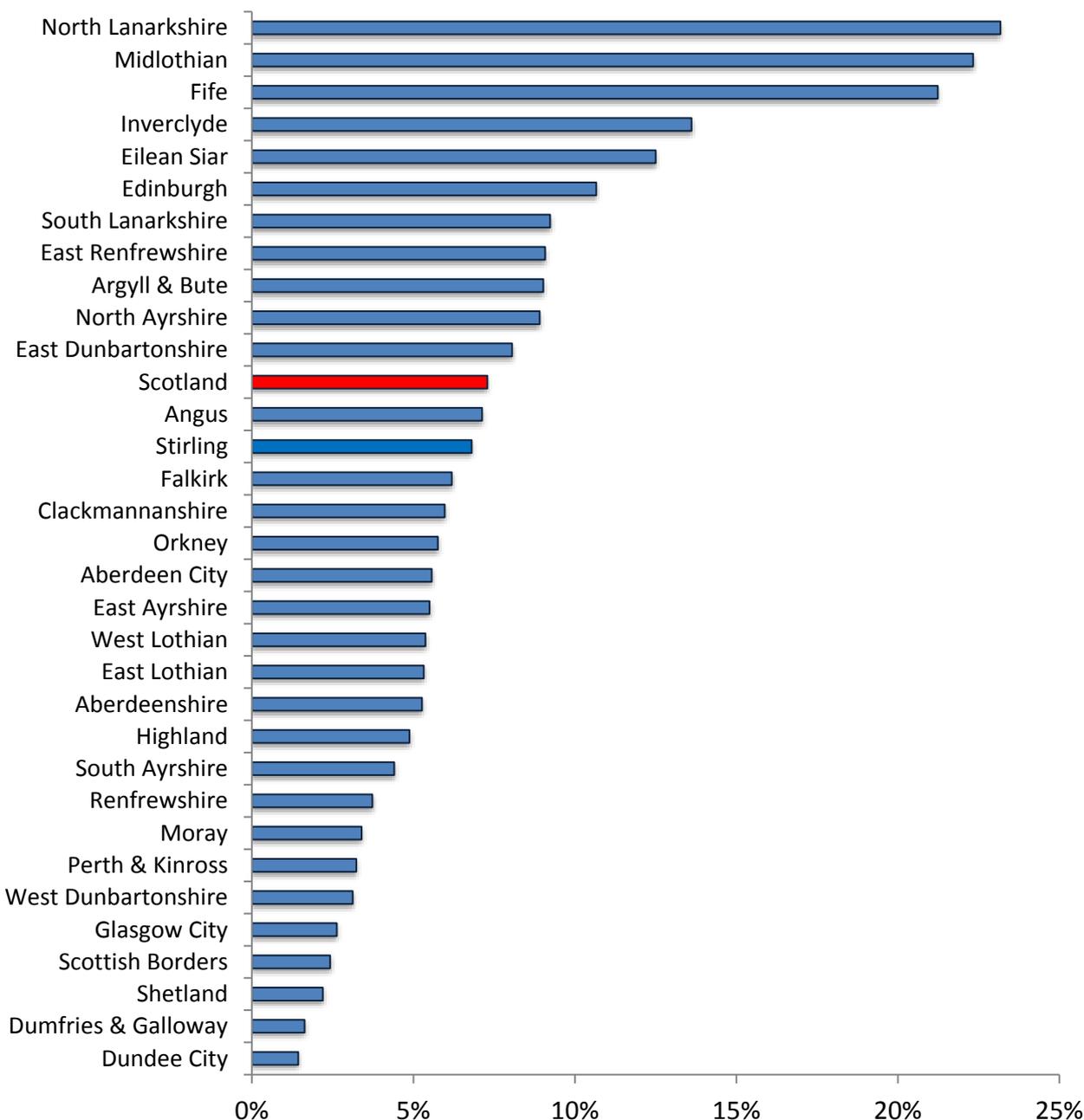
There were 19,310 approaches that were still open as at 31 March 2019. These are approaches which have not yet reached the outcome stage. **Table 3** and **Chart 3a** show that this figure has more than doubled since the first quarter of data collection, 1 April to 30 June 2014 (from 7,430 approaches). Since then, the number of open approaches steadily increased until September 2016 (19,720 open approaches were recorded on 30 September 2016). There was a reduction (to 16,665) as at 30 June 2017, before a recent increase to a peak of 19,890 on 30 September 2018 (see Chart 3a). For Scotland, 7% of all approaches received between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2019 remain open (19,310 of 260,670 approaches).

Chart 3a: Open approaches at the end of each quarter



Since the monitoring of PREVENT1 statistics began, some Local Authorities have built up a large number of open cases. For example, as at 31 March 2019, compared to the Scottish average of 7%, North Lanarkshire had a high proportion of approaches still open (23%) (**Chart 3b**).

Chart 3b: Percentage of Housing Options approach cases still open by Local Authority, of all approaches made between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2019

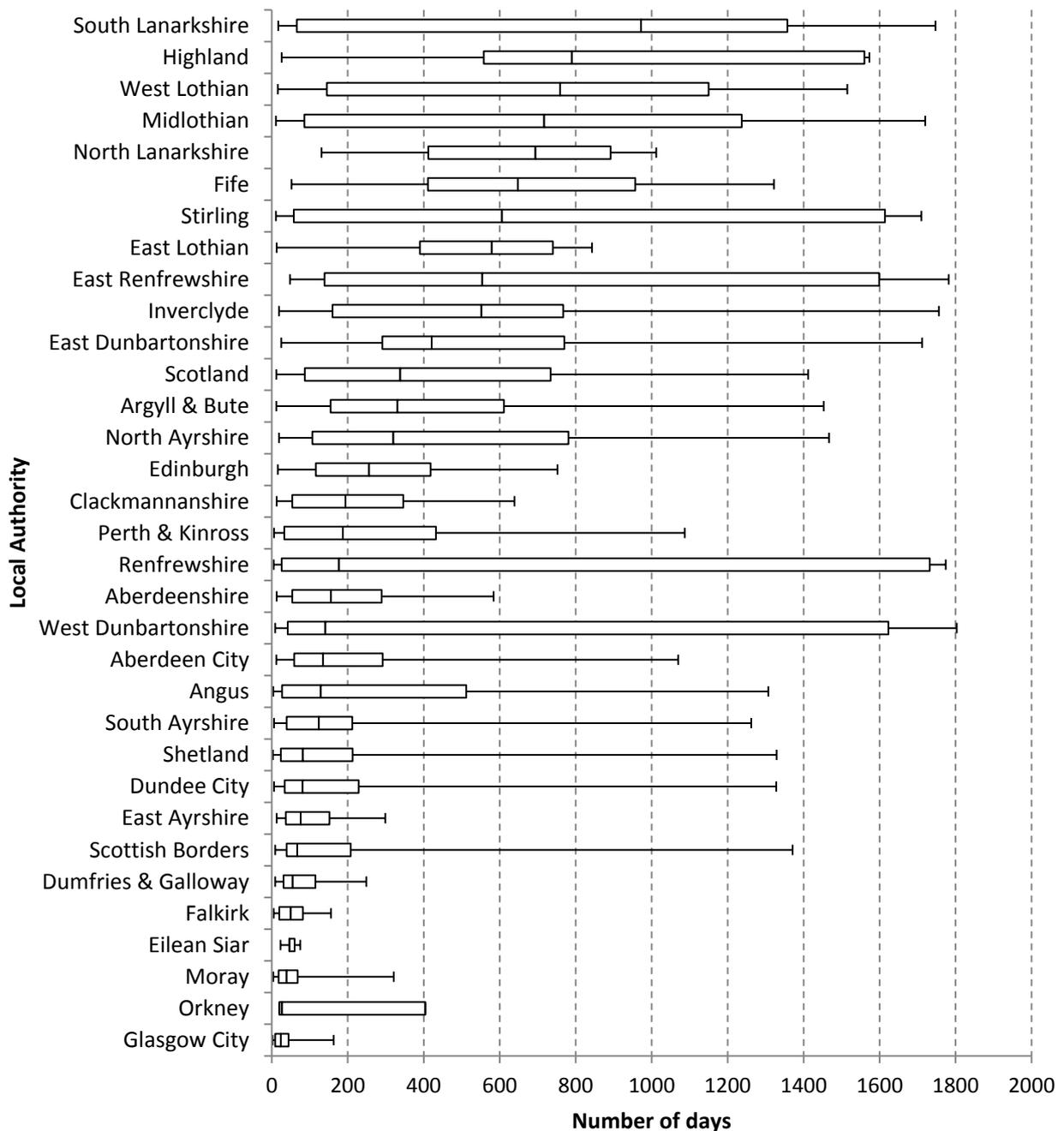


Where Local Authorities have a high proportion of open cases, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Housing Options approach as these approaches have no recorded outcome.

Across Scotland, half of open approaches have been open for more than 338 days (over eleven months). A quarter of such approaches have been open for more than 734 days (over two years).

There is a large degree of variation between local authorities in terms of the number of days that Housing Options cases have been open (**Chart 3c**). For example, in South Lanarkshire (where 8% of approaches remain open), 50% of open cases have been open for more than 972 days (over two and a half years). The average length of time for open cases is much shorter in other local authorities. For example, in Glasgow City, the median time for an open case is 9 days. (see [Annex A](#) for explanation 'How to understand a boxplot')

Chart 3c: Distribution of the number of days Housing Options approach cases have been open, between approach date and 31 March 2019



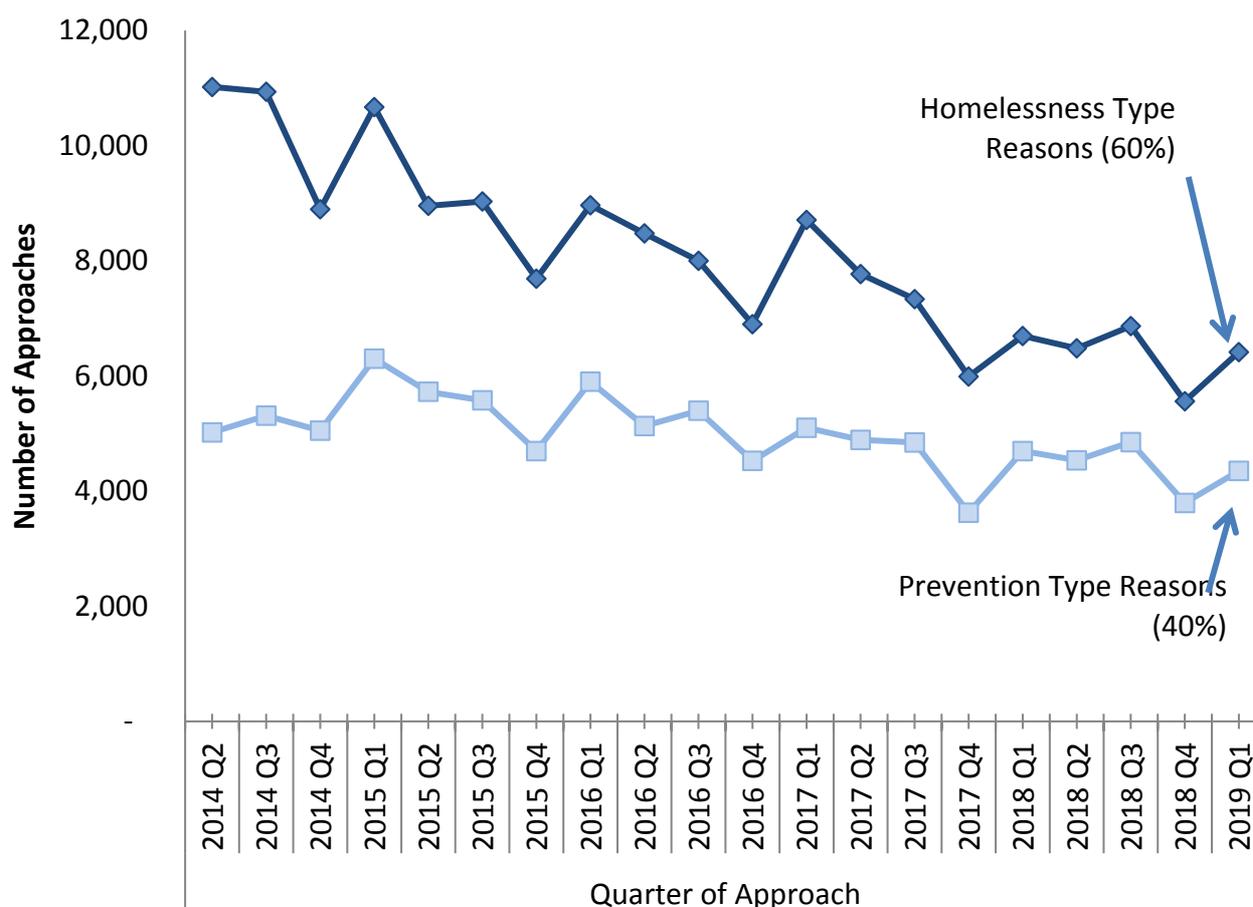
Reasons for Approaches

Whilst the number of homelessness applications has decreased since 2005/06, the underlying reasons for homelessness have remained very stable over time in Scotland⁸.

The majority of Housing Options approaches cite homelessness type reasons, however the volume of approaches made for such reasons has reduced from around 10,000 approaches per quarter initially (66% of all approaches during 2014/2015), to less than 7,000 per quarter during 2018/19 (59% of all approaches).

During the most recent quarter, there were 6,415 (60%) of applications with homelessness type reasons. The number of approaches citing prevention type reasons has remained relatively stable since the monitoring of Housing Options began – with a low of 3,625 during October to December 2017 which is likely to be a reflection of overall decreases in Housing Options approaches (**Table 4, Chart 4**).

Chart 4: Reasons for Housing Options approaches by quarter

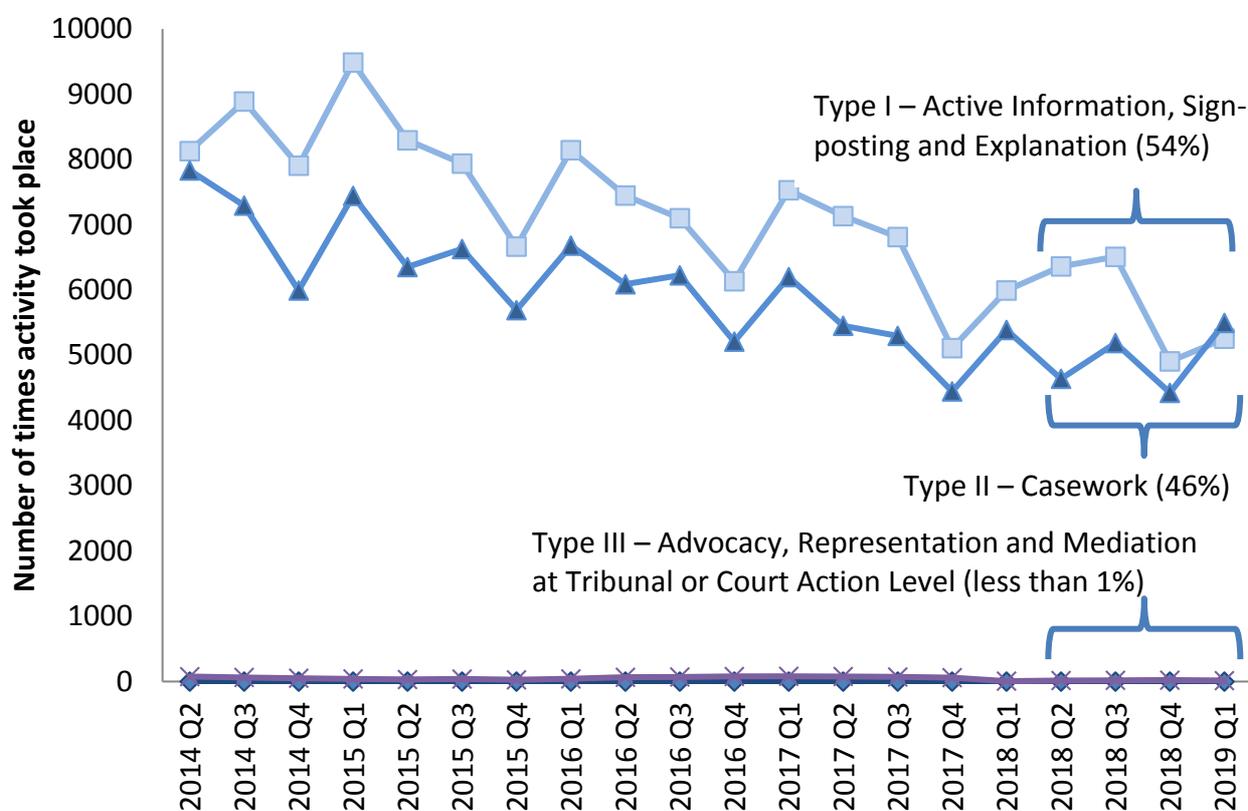


⁸ Further information on reasons for homelessness is found in the recent publication, Homelessness in Scotland: Annual Update: 2018/19, found online at: [2018/19 Annual Homelessness Statistics](#)

Activities Undertaken

Chart 5 shows the three types⁹ of Housing Options activities undertaken by local authorities since the scheme began. During the 2018/19 financial year (April 2018 to March 2019) the majority of approaches (23,032 approaches, 54% of all approaches) resulted in activities which did not exceed Type I advice - active information, sign-posting and explanation. Type II advice (casework) was carried out in a further 19,749 approaches (46%). Only in the remaining 72 approaches was the top level Type III advice (advocacy, representation and mediation at tribunal or court action level) carried out (see Table 5).

Chart 5: Intensity of activity types completed for Housing Options approaches by quarter

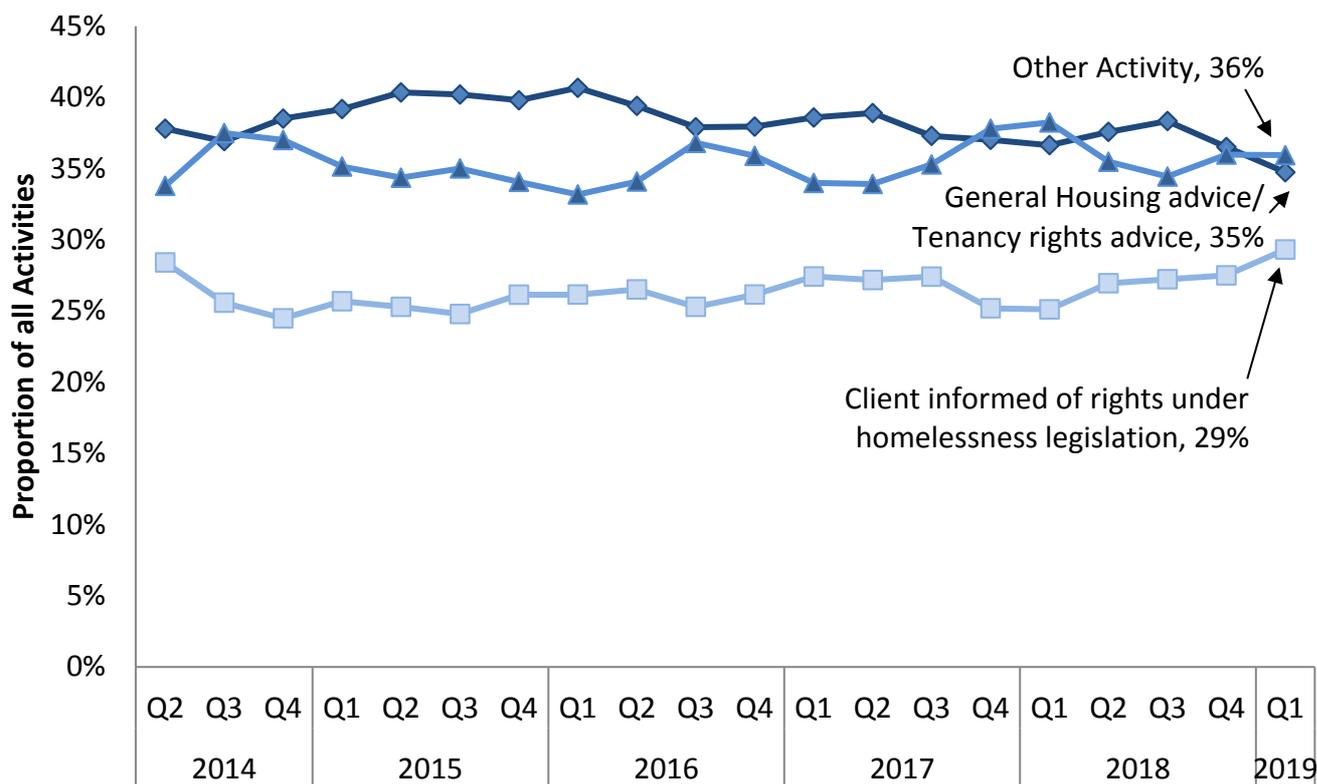


Since monitoring began, the most common type of activity has been to provide general housing advice and tenancy rights advice. Since April 2014, this activity type has typically fluctuated between 37% and 41%, although it has fallen to 35% over the most recent quarter (January to March 2019). The proportion of cases informing clients of their rights under the homelessness legislation has typically fluctuated between 24% and 28%, though it rose to 29% for the most recent

⁹ Further information on definitions of types of information and advice can be found in: Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers: A Quality Assurance Framework 2009 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/10/08154126/0>

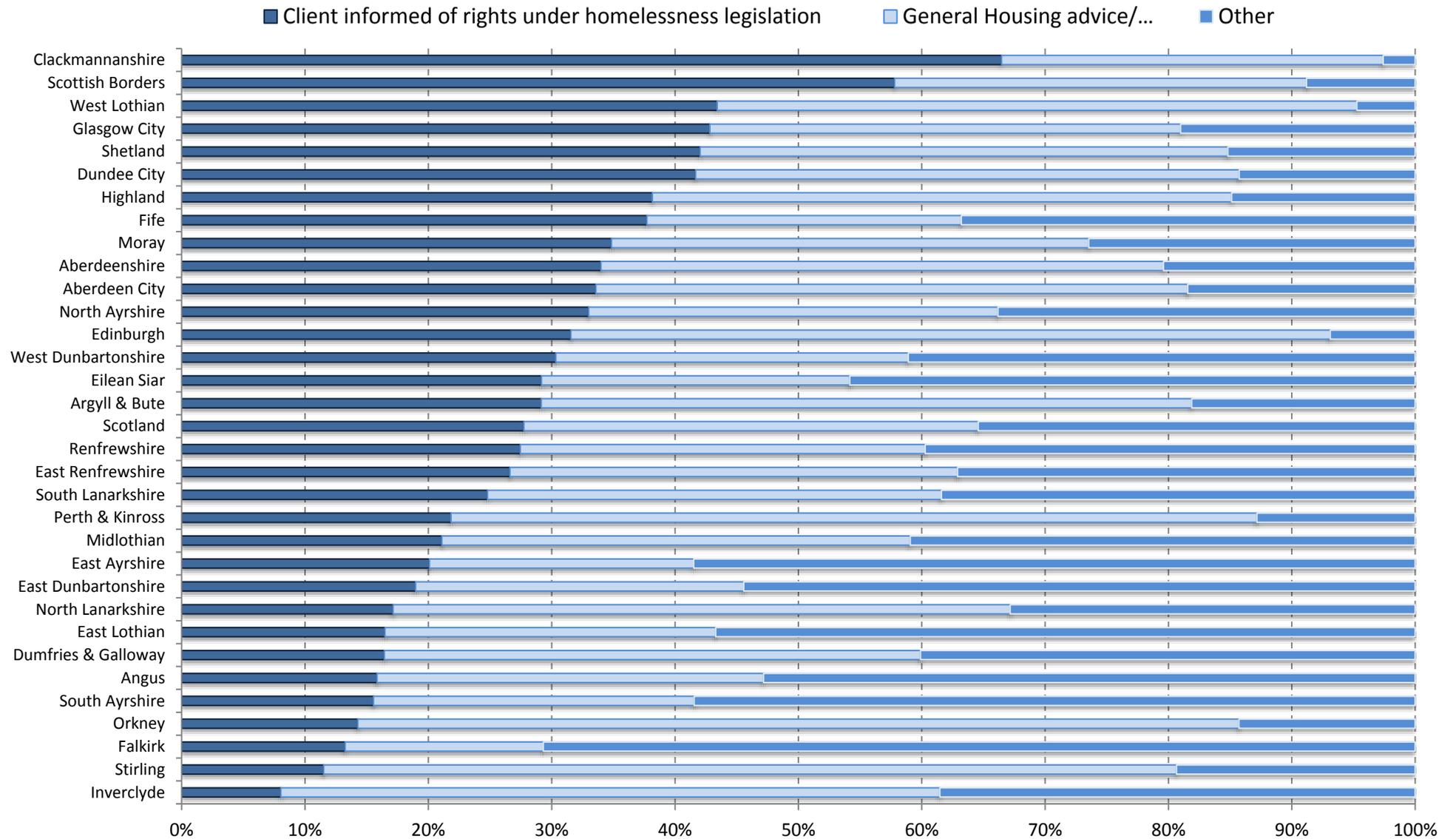
quarter. All other activity (this includes activities such as financial advice and assistance in moving out of a property) has fluctuated between 34% and 37% over the same time period, and remains at 36% for the most recent quarter. The mix of activities at the national level has remained fairly static since monitoring began, with no activity changing its share by more than five percentage points (**Table 6** and **Chart 6**).

Chart 6: Types of activities completed for Housing Options approaches by quarter



Again there is wide variation in the mix of activities offered by Local Authorities and some of this may be due to differences in how activities are recorded (**Table 7** and **Chart 7**). During 2018/19, 67% of Clackmannanshire’s activities were to inform clients of their homelessness rights. Over the same time period, 75% of Orkney’s activities related to providing general housing and tenancy rights. In Falkirk, 71% of activities were taken up with other activities such as providing financial advice.

Chart 7: Housing Options activities by Local Authority, 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019



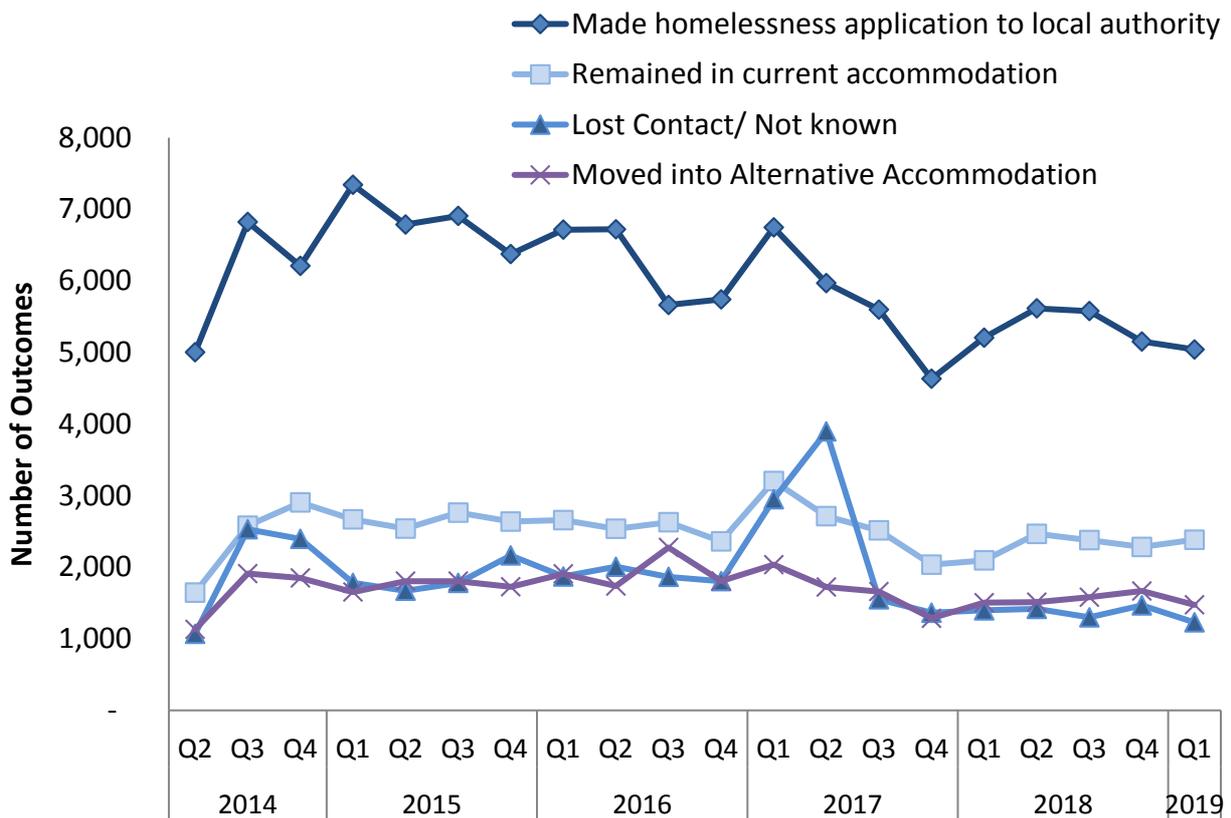
Outcomes

Chart 8 shows the outcomes of Housing Options approaches by quarter (also see Table 8a and 8b). Since the beginning of Housing Options in April 2014, the percentage of outcomes in each category has remained relatively stable.

Over the last year, 50% of approaches had the outcome ‘made homelessness application to local authority’. This has risen from 47% of all outcomes during the previous financial year (2017/18).

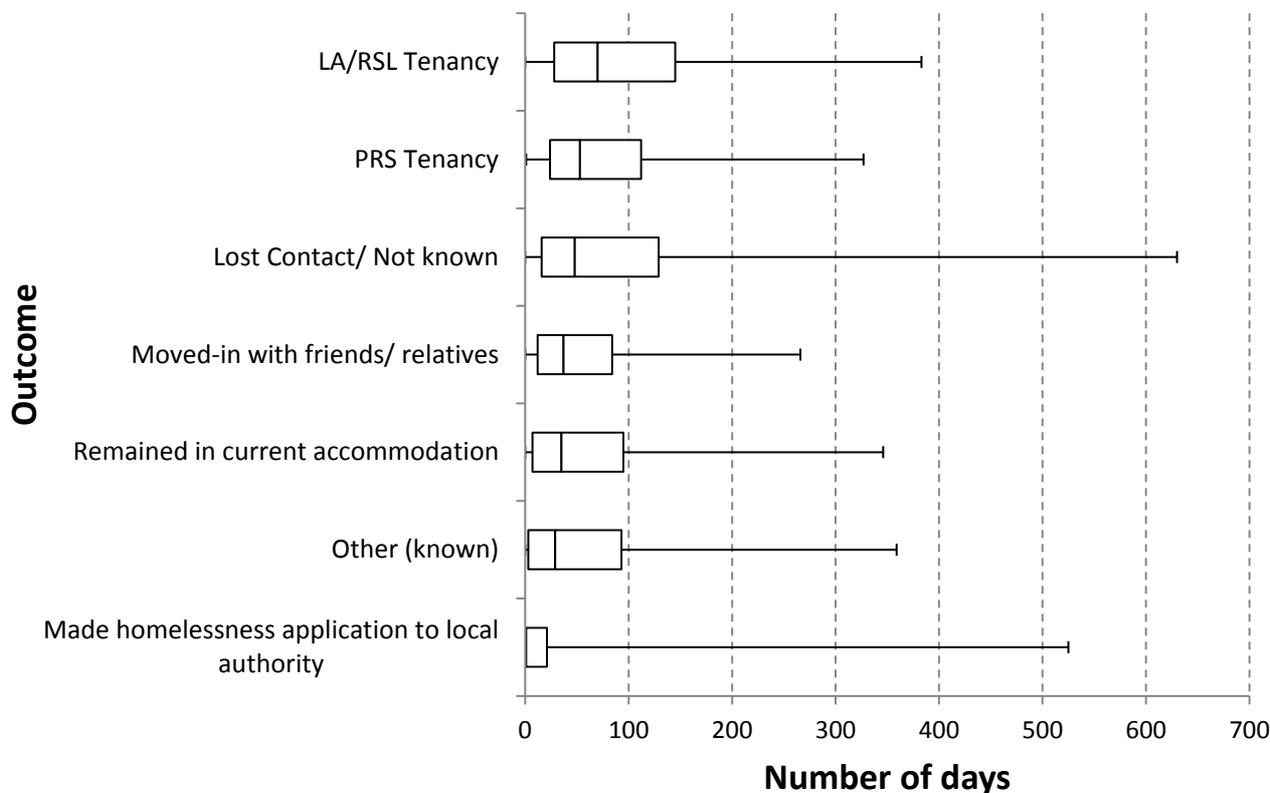
22% remained in their current accommodation (one percentage point greater when comparing to 2017/18); 13% had an unknown outcome or contact was lost (a decrease of 6 percentage points from 2017/18) and 15% found alternative accommodation (this includes a social rented tenancy (5%), a private rented tenancy (2%), moving in with family and friends (2%) and Other (known) (6%)).

Chart 8: Outcomes of Housing Options approaches by quarter



Different outcomes take different lengths of time to achieve – Chart 9 shows the time it has taken to reach different outcomes since the recording of Housing Options began (April 2014). (see Annex A for explanation ‘How to understand a boxplot’)

Chart 9: Distribution of Housing Options approach case durations by outcome, cases closed between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2019



Closing an approach by making a **homelessness application** is relatively quick. Half of these outcomes are done in less than one day and only in a quarter of cases does it take more than 21 days to make a homelessness application.

The next quickest outcomes are **Remaining in current accommodation** and **Other (known)** – half of these outcomes are achieved in around 35 days and only a quarter take more than 95 days for the former and 93 days for the latter.

Moving in with **family and friends** takes slightly longer – half of these outcomes are achieved in 37 days, although again around a quarter of these outcomes take over 84 days to achieve.

Achieving an outcome of a **private or social rented tenancy** takes the longest to time to achieve. Half of private rented tenancies are achieved in 53 days, with a quarter taking more than 112 days. Half of local authority tenancies are achieved in 70 days, with a quarter taking more than 145 days.

Half of **lost contacts or not known** outcomes occur within around 48 days – a quarter of these outcomes take more than 129 days.

If a household needs to make a homelessness application, this is typically done in one day or less. If advice or assistance can be provided to enable the household to remain in their current accommodation, this may take around 33 days to achieve. Moving in with friends and family takes a similar length of time – on average 35 days. At this point, if a private rented tenancy or social rented tenancy is not available quickly, contact may be lost or the outcome is unknown, and this may occur in 48 days.

Local Authority variation

Over the last year (1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019), Housing Options outcomes vary considerably by Local Authorities (see **Table 9** and **Chart 10**).

In Clackmannanshire 98% of all approaches resulted in a homelessness application being made, whilst this figure is 20% in Orkney. 52% of approaches in North Lanarkshire remained in their current accommodation. For West Dunbartonshire, 43% of approaches found alternative accommodation.

For Orkney and East Lothian, 40% had **an outcome of lost contact or not known**. In Local Authorities where there are high proportions of lost contacts and unknown outcomes, it is difficult to assess what the Housing Options policy is achieving. Due to the nature of the Housing Options approach a lost contact may not necessarily be a poor outcome, an applicant could access advice which then resolves their issue meaning they do not need to go back to the local authority for further assistance.

For approaches with an outcome of **lost contact or not known** (during April 2017 to March 2018), Chart 11 shows that although the Scottish median to close approaches with this outcome is around 50 days, some Local Authorities used this outcome much more readily. Clackmannanshire and North Ayrshire closed half of their cases as lost contact/ not known outcomes on the same day as the approach was made. (see [Annex A](#) for explanation 'How to understand a boxplot')

Chart 10: Variation in Housing Options outcomes for each Local Authority, for cases closed between 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

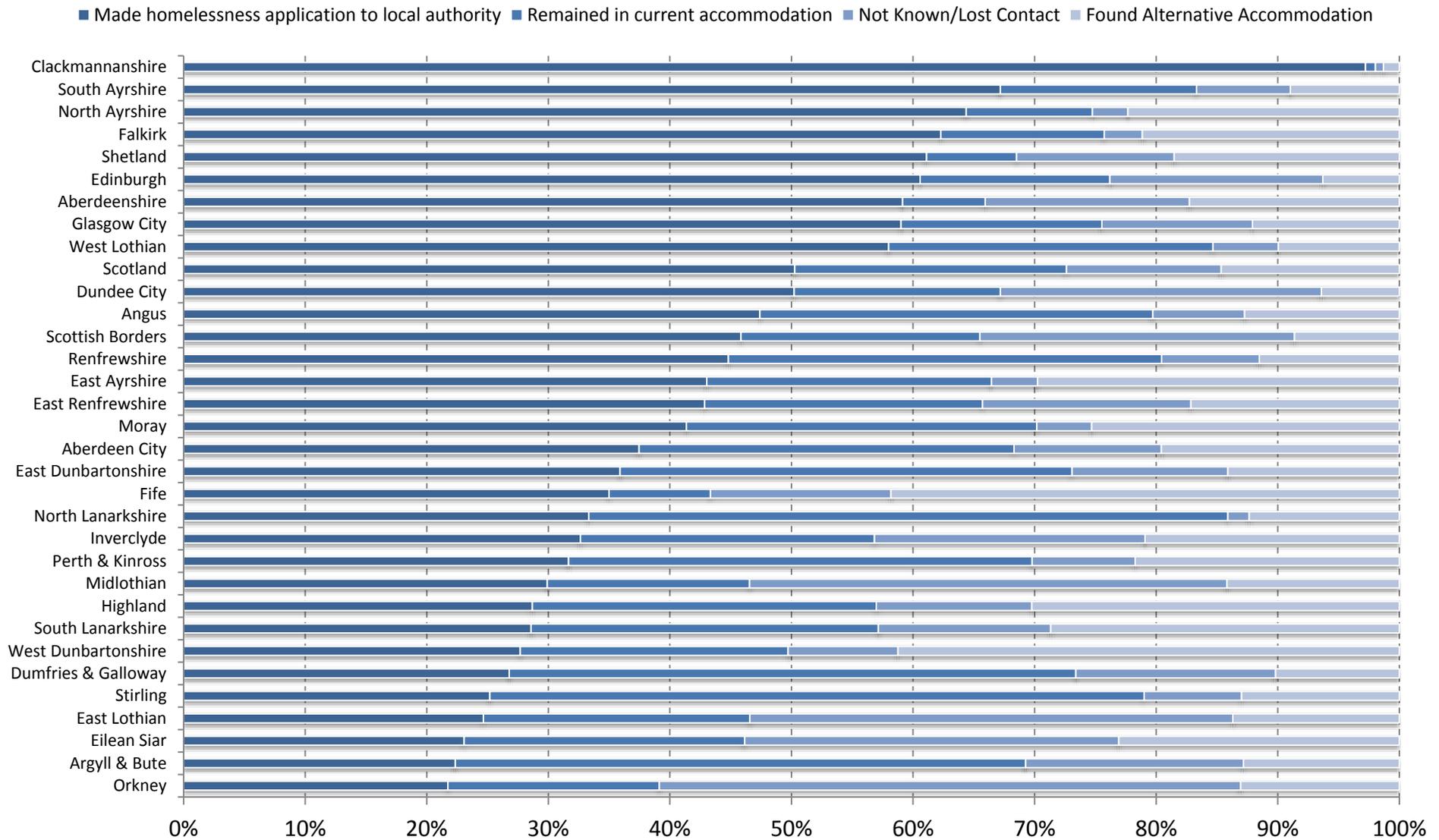
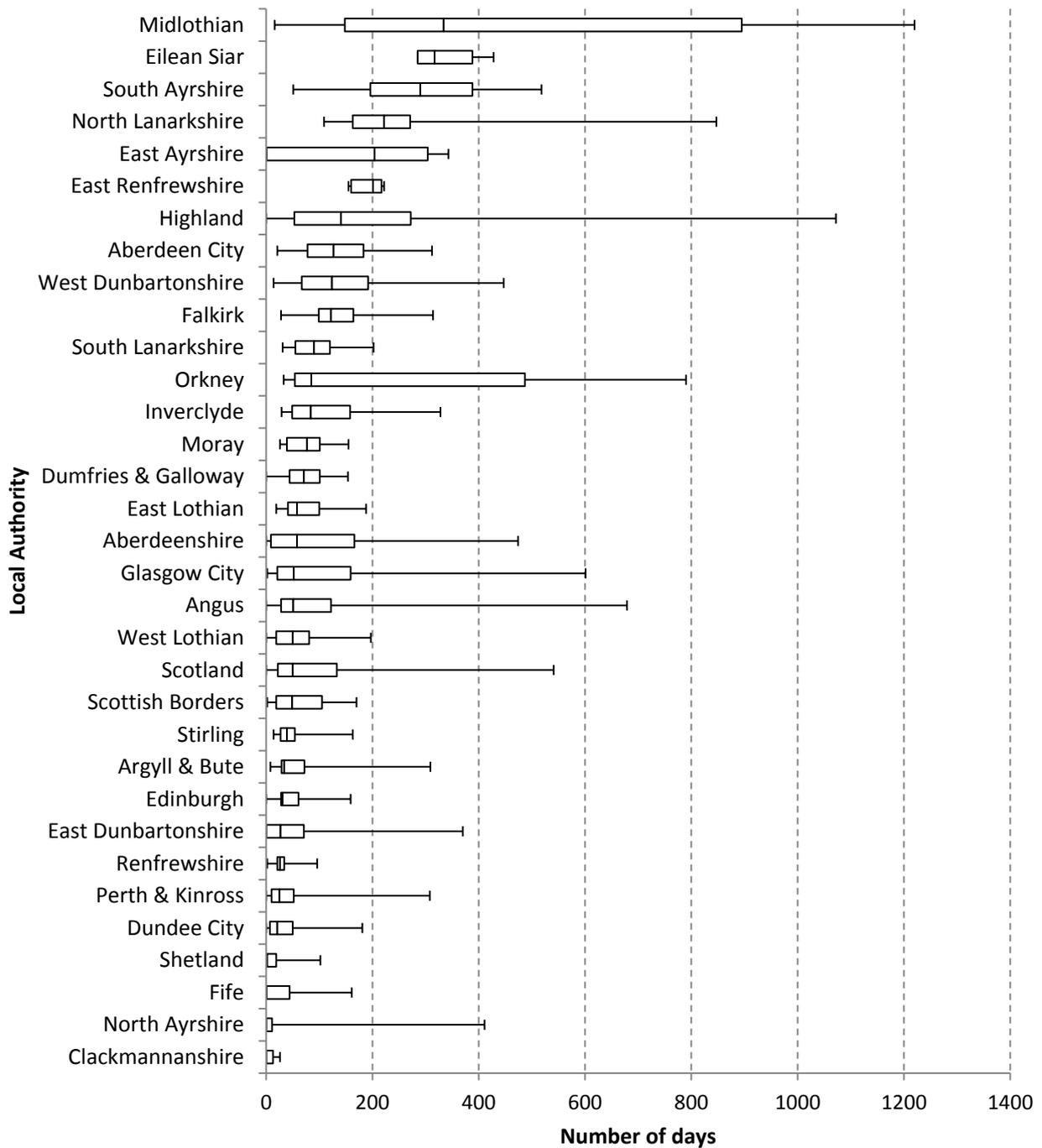


Chart 11: Distribution of the number of days from Housing Options approach to outcome as Lost Contact or Not Known by LA, for cases closed between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019

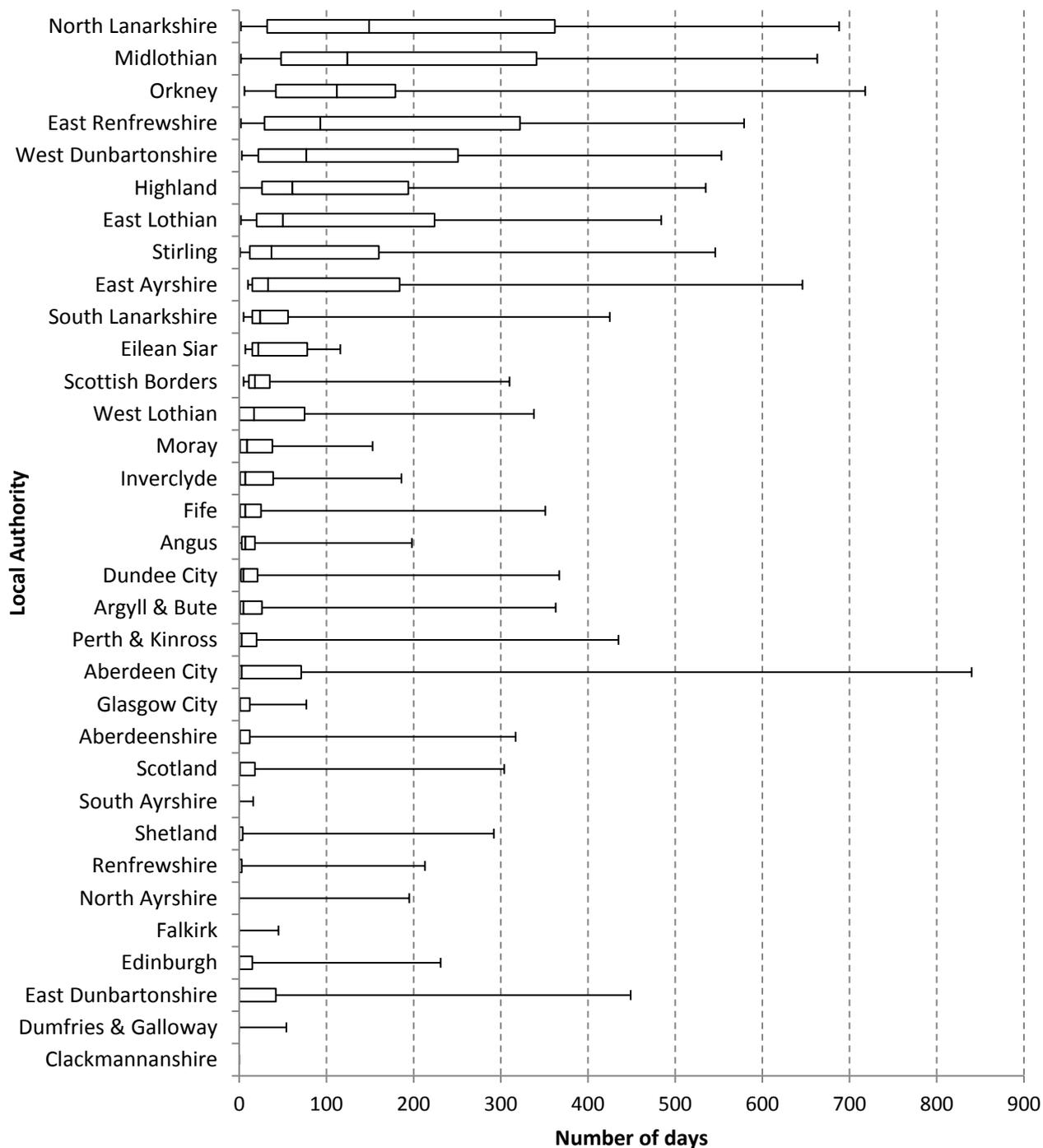


For the Housing Option approaches **which resulted in a homelessness application**, there is wide variation (across local authorities) in the number of days it takes to make the homelessness application.

Chart 12 shows that between April 2018 and March 2019, the average time (across all local authorities) to make a homelessness application occurred very quickly (50% of approaches with a homelessness application outcome occurred within 1 day; a quarter of approaches took over 14 days).

Some local authorities take much longer than others for homelessness applications to be made (see Chart 12). Where the average time to make a homelessness application occurs very quickly, for example, in Clackmannanshire and Dumfries and Galloway, a greater proportion of households may be approaching these Local Authorities in crisis and so the alternatives to a homelessness application may be limited. The average time it takes to reach this outcome (making a homelessness application) is much longer for some local authorities. For example, in North Lanarkshire, 50% of these outcomes take over 133 days. Again, this variation highlights the differences in practice and how Housing Options is used by different Local Authorities and recorded. (see [Annex A](#) for explanation 'How to understand a boxplot')

Chart 12: Distribution of the number of days to make a homelessness application from initial Housing Options approach, for cases closed between 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

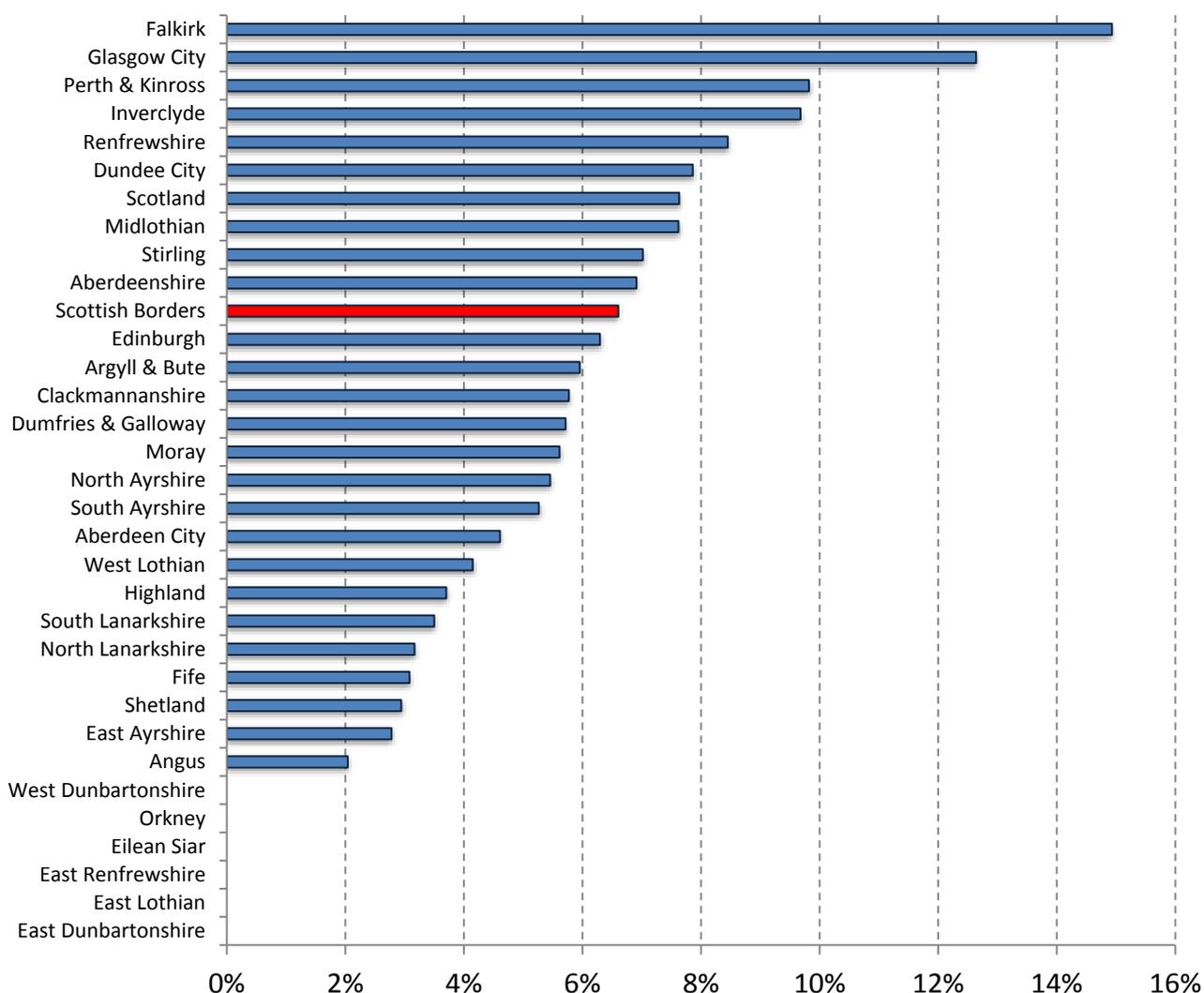


Repeat Approaches

Table 10 shows that, over the last year (1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019), around 39,310 unique households made a Housing Options approach. Of these around 36,310 made only a single approach to a Local Authority, around 2,660 made two approaches and around 340 made three or more approaches. Overall, the rate of repeat approaches for Scotland (for the 2018/19 financial year) is 8% of all households.

Chart 13 shows the variation by Local Authority. Notably, some local authorities had no repeat approaches during this time. Falkirk has the highest rate of repeat approaches at around 15%. It should be noted when considering local authority variation, that the number of repeat approaches will be affected by the approach individual local authorities have decided to take to Housing Options. For example, one local authority may close cases quickly which could result in higher numbers of repeat cases in comparison to a local authority who tends to keep cases open longer, meaning multiple issues may be resolved within one (longer) approach.

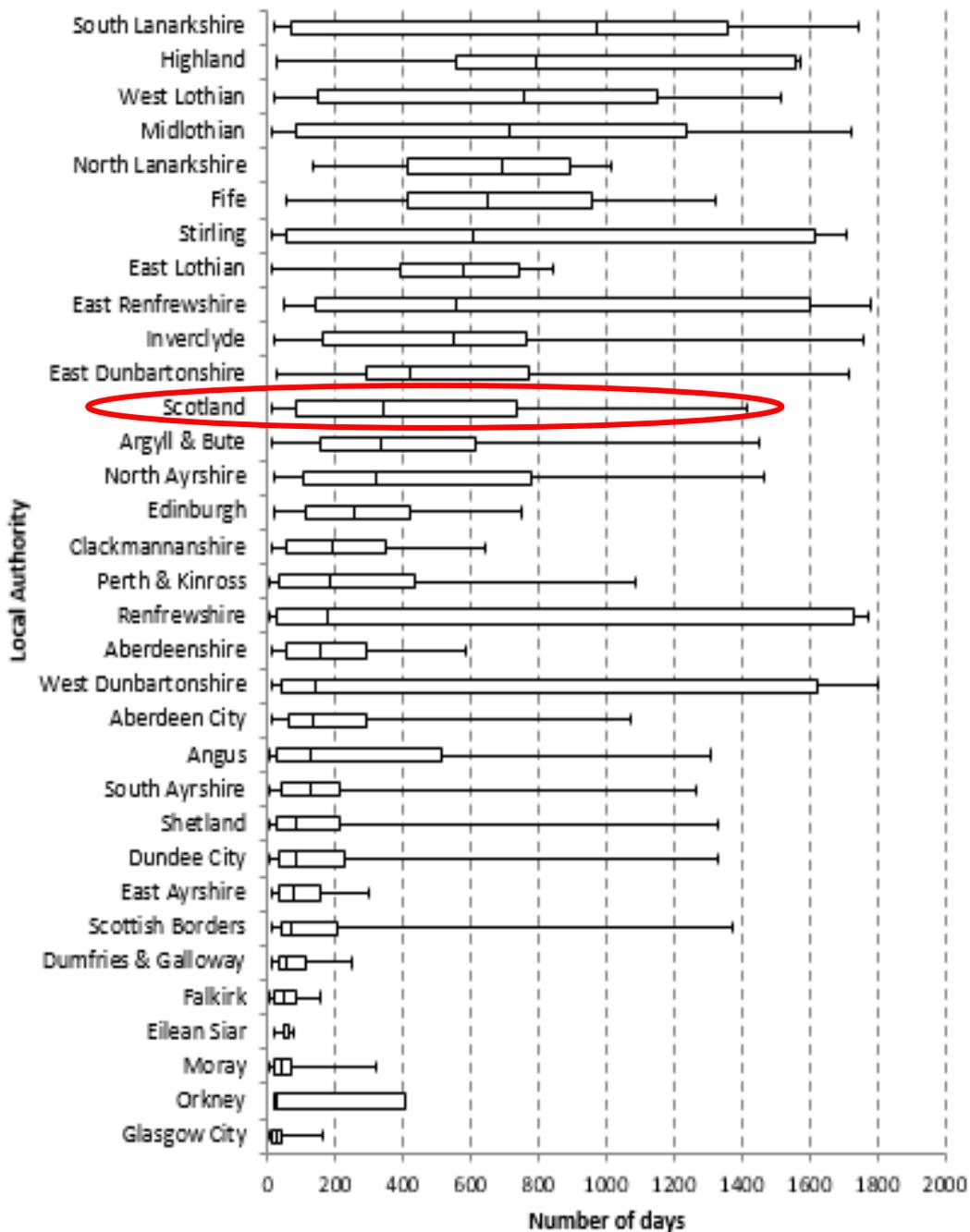
Chart 13: Percentage of unique households in each Local Authority area making repeat approaches, between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019



Annex A - How to understand a box plot

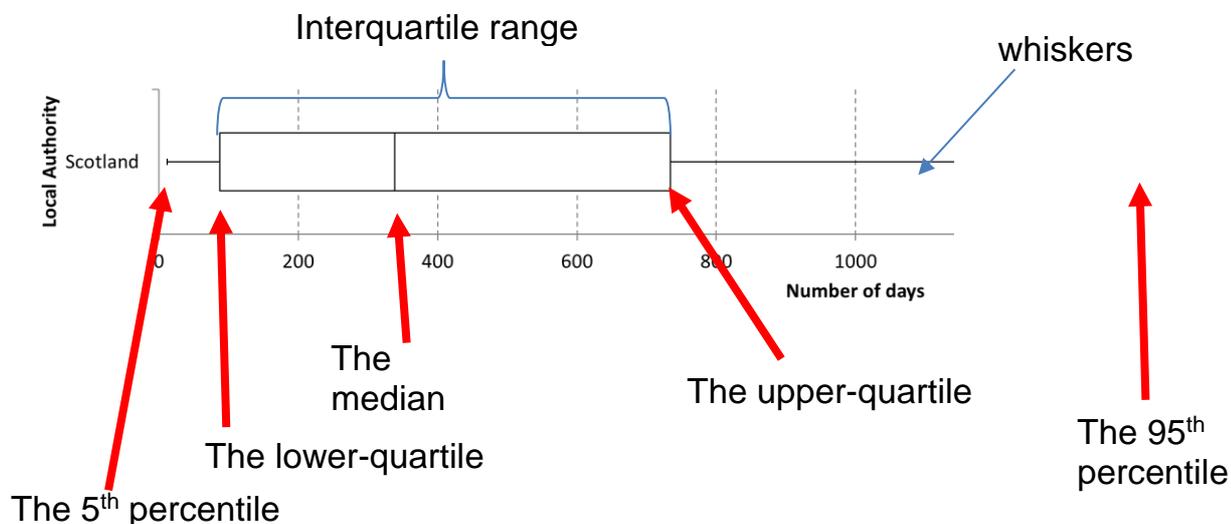
We use box plots to show both the scale and the distribution of a variable across a group. For example in Chart 3c we use a box plot to show the distribution of the number of days Housing Options approach cases have been open, between approach date and 31 March 2019, across all Local Authorities.

Chart 3c: Distribution of the number of days Housing Options approach cases have been open, between approach date and 31 March 2019



How to read a box plot

Here is an annotated example, using Scotland from the above chart.



The **median**, this marks the mid-point of the data and is shown by the line that divides the box into two parts. Half the scores are greater than or equal to this value and half are less. In this example the median is 338. This means that for 50% of open cases the Housing Options approach has been open for less than 338 days (just over 11 months) and for 50% of cases it has been open for 338 days or more.

The inter-quartile range, the “box” represents the middle 50% of values for the group. The range of scores from lower to upper quartile is called the inter-quartile range. The middle 50% of scores fall within the inter-quartile range. In this example, this means that the middle 50% of open Housing Options approaches have been open between 87 and 734 days (between about 3 months and about 2 years)

The upper-quartile line represents the point at which 75% of cases fall below this value (or 25% equal to or above). So in the example, the upper-quartile is 734, meaning 75% of open Housing Options approaches have been open for less than 734 days (just over 2 years), or 25% have been open for over 2 years.

The lower-quartile line represents the point at which 25% of cases fall below this value. So in the example, the lower-quartile is 87, meaning 25% of open Housing Options approaches have been open for less than 87 days (just under 3 months).

The upper and lower **whiskers** represent scores outside the middle 50%. In this example the whiskers cover the ranges 5% to 25% and 75% to 95%.

The **5th percentile** line, represents the point at which 5% of cases fall below this value. So in the example, the 5th percentile is 12, meaning 5% of the open Housing Options approaches had been open for less than 12 days.

The **95th percentile** line, represents the point at which 95% of cases fall below this value (or 5% have this value or above). So in the example, the 95th percentile is 1412, meaning 5% of open Housing Options approaches have been open for 1412 days (about 3 years, 10 months) or more.

How to compare the groups in a box plot

Box plots are used to show overall patterns of response for a group. They provide a useful way to visualise the range and other characteristics of responses for a large group. In the example of Chart 3c, the groups are local authorities.

Looking at Chart 3C, you will see that the box plots for the local authorities do vary quite a lot. Below I will explain what these variations mean in relation to this example.

- **The box (inter-quartile range) is relatively small** – see Glasgow for example. This suggests that overall Housing Options approaches are open for quite a consistent length of time. In the example of Glasgow, the middle 50% of cases are open between 9 and 44 days (only a difference of 33 days between the 25% shortest cases and 25% longest cases).
- **The box (inter-quartile range) is relatively large**– see Renfrewshire for example. This suggests that within this local authority there is quite a large variation in the time Housing Options approaches are open for. In the example of Renfrewshire, the middle 50% of cases are open between 26 and 1732 days (a difference of 1706 days (over 4.5 years) between the 25% shortest cases and 25% longest cases).
- **One box plot is much further to the right than the other** – compare Highland and Aberdeenshire. This could suggest a difference in how Housing Options are implemented by local authorities. For example, the box plot for Highland is much further to the right, meaning the middle 50% of approaches have been open for longer than the middle 50% in Aberdeenshire. This doesn't mean either approach is right or wrong, it just highlights this difference.
- **Same median, different distribution** – see Aberdeen City and West Dunbartonshire for example. The medians (which generally will be close to the average) are about the same. However the box plots in these examples show quite different distributions. In Aberdeen City the median length of an open Housing Options approach is 135 days, 25% of open approaches have been open under 59 days and 25% of open approaches have been open at least 292 days. In West Dunbartonshire, the median length of open Housing Options approach is 141 days (less than a week difference from Aberdeen City). However, 25% of open approaches have been open less than 42 days (2.5 weeks shorter than Aberdeen City) and 25% of open approaches have been open for longer than 1623 days (over 3.5 years longer than Aberdeen City). This

is a good example of why a box plot is useful to visualise data, as it shows a much wider picture of what is going on than just the average case length.

Background

Please see the section on [data quality](#) for a discussion of known factors which might affect the tables in this publication.

Where figures have been rounded, the total shown may not equal the sum of its constituent parts.

All tables in this publication are available at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

Why collect this data?

In March 2012, in its [report on the 2012 Homelessness Commitment](#), the Infrastructure and Capital Investment (ICI) Committee recommended that the Scottish Government should consider the development of a measurement tool for homelessness prevention work.

Consultation began with the Homelessness Statistics User Group (HSUG) on the development of the return (known as PREVENT1), and the final version was agreed by Local Authorities in April 2013. In October 2013, the Minister for Housing and Welfare and COSLA decided that the collection of Housing Options activity should be mandatory in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding across all Scottish local authorities. Data capture commenced in April 2014.

Main users of the data are Local Authorities and Scottish Government policy colleagues, academics and third sector parties. User needs are represented by the [Homelessness Statistics Users Group](#), which also sets out to improve the quality of the data collected.

How the data is collected

One month after the end of each quarter, Local Authorities are asked to submit an XML file containing the information as set out in the [data specification](#). This data is then uploaded to the Scottish Government's ProcXed website. Once the data has been validated by our software, the data is passed over to the Scottish Government's Communities Analytical Division.

Data Quality

The data submitted via the agreed specification includes a number of validations. These validations are provided through an XSD schema and have also been implemented into the ProcXed system. Once Local Authorities submit data to the ProcXed system, a number of validations are triggered and warning messages appear. Local Authorities may re-submit data to fix these errors or they can comment on them to explain why they believe the data is valid. On submission of the data to the Scottish Government, each Local Authority is sent a detailed automatic report showing the contents of the data and any remaining errors.

Please note here is a known issue with the number of approaches for Q1 2018/19 and Q3 2018/19 for Perth & Kinross, for this reason please treat any results for this local authority with caution. This issue will be rectified in the next publication.

Data Specification

The data specification for the Housing Options (PREVENT1) statistics is available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/prevent1>

Guidance to help Local Authority officers to record information is available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/introductionprevent1>

Calculation of Households

We collect information on all people within each application. To group people into household units we filter the people table to contain only the main applicant and their partner. We ensure that there is no more than two people for each application. We generate a unique household reference based on the hashed National Insurance Number, gender and date of birth of the main applicant, and if applicable, their partner.

Housing Options

Local Authorities working on the Housing Options approach have looked at the broad description of providing a tailored service to households and have adopted it for their own uses. Housing Options opens up further areas to explore in attempting to achieve the most sustainable options available for them.

Housing Options Hubs

The hubs were awarded grants to undertake joint training, commissioning joint research, developing joint approaches to prevention, benchmarking and sharing practice and learning. These are supported by quarterly seminars which brings the hubs together to discuss their own developments, receive a Scottish Government update, discuss topical issues of the day and enable other organisations access to the hubs to explain their work and the benefits they can offer.

Hub	Hub Members
Ayrshire and South Hub	North Ayrshire Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, East Ayrshire Council, Inverclyde Council, South Ayrshire Council.
East Hub	City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, Falkirk Council, Midlothian Council, Scottish Borders Council, West Lothian Council.
North and Islands Hub	Highland Council, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Eilean Siar, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council.
Tayside, Fife and Central Hub	Perth and Kinross Council, Angus Council, Argyll and Bute Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Dundee City Council, Fife Council, Stirling Council.
West Hub	East Dunbartonshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow City Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, Glasgow Housing Association (GHA).

Recommendations from the Scottish Housing Regulator thematic inquiry

These recommendations have been taken from:

<http://www.scotishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-options-scotland-thematic-inquiry>

The Scottish Government should:

- provide enhanced guidance for Local Authorities on the delivery of Housing Options;
- ensure that guidance provides clarity on how Local Authorities operate Housing Options effectively within the context of homeless duties and obligations; and
- use the recently introduced mandatory data collection for Local Authorities to evaluate the success of policy on Housing Options.

The Scottish Government and Local Authorities should:

- build on the work of the Hubs to further develop clear and supportive practice tools to help practitioners deliver Housing Options effectively.

Local Authorities should:

- ensure all outcomes in Housing Options cases are recorded in accordance with the Scottish Government's recently introduced monitoring system;
- ensure that outcomes achieved through Housing Options are consistent, appropriate and meet people's needs;
- consider opportunities for early intervention and work to prevent homelessness;
- ensure that support assessments are given to people who need them;
- review any use of staff performance targets around reducing numbers of homeless applications to ensure these do not result in behaviours that act against the achievement of good outcomes for people in need;
- minimise the time people wait between initial contact and Housing Options interview;
- support front line officers with appropriate training and clear guidance and procedures;
- ensure they complete a homeless assessment, while progressing Housing Options efforts, where there is clear evidence of homelessness or potential homelessness.
- have a consistent structure for Housing Options interviews to ensure that relevant and important questions are always asked;
- ensure that advice and information is given in a balanced and appropriate way;

- improve the quality of record keeping to ensure accurate records of discussions and outcomes and provide a timely record of discussions and actions for the service user; and
- implement a systematic and consistent system of audit of Housing Options work with the aim of improving service delivery.

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

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Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

e-mail: statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route. Summary tables can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact homelessness_statistics_inbox@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

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