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## PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

# Homelessness in Scotland: 2019-20

**Contents**

# Main Points
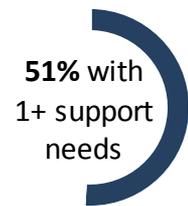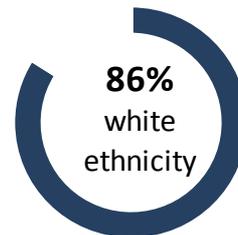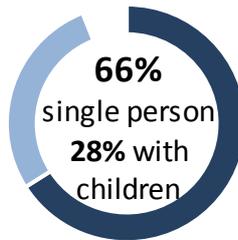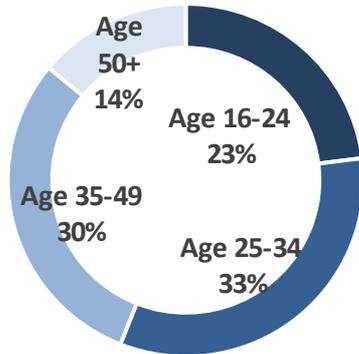
**31,333** households assessed as homeless* in 2019/20 (⬆ 4%)

**51,365** people in the households – 35,654 adults, 15,711 children

**Asked to leave** and **household disputes** most common reasons for homelessness

2,884 reported **sleeping rough** 3 months before and 1,643 the night before application

Age 50+ 14%

Age 16-24 23%

Age 35-49 30%

Age 25-34 33%

**66%** single person **28%** with children

**86%** white ethnicity

**51%** with 1+ support needs

*includes those threatened with homelessness

**11,665** households in temporary accommodation at 31st March 2020 (⬆ 6%)

**7,280** children in temporary accommodation

**184** days on average spent in temporary accommodation
Higher for households with children

**4,595** not offered instances

**500** breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order

**61%** social sector accommodation

Three+ 12%

Two 17%

None 36%

One 35%

**Placements**

**82%** settled accommodation
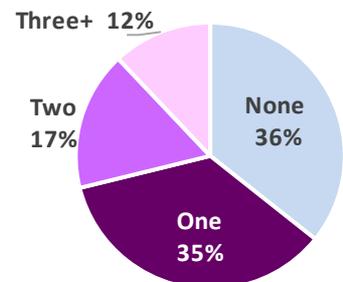
**Repeat homeless**

6% within 1 year

12% within 3 years

15% within 5 years

**16** days from application to assessment

**224** days from assessment to close

3

# Introduction

This statistics bulletin provides information on homelessness in Scotland in the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, alongside historical data.

It provides statistical information on all stages of the homelessness process, including the size and characteristics of the homelessness population, the circumstances from which they became homeless, and the final outcomes of their application.

The publication also provides information on the use of temporary accommodation by local authorities during the homelessness application process, including the number of households in temporary accommodation, the duration of their stay. It also details the number of households in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

The statistics in this publications are based on administrative data collected by local authorities in the course of processing homelessness applications. A limitation of this approach is that data is not collected for any households that are homeless but do not engage with their local authority. For this reason the statistics in this publication do not necessarily cover the entire homeless population in Scotland. More detail on the data sources we use are included at the end of this publication.

Excel workbooks containing the tables and charts referenced in this publication are available to download at: https://www.gov.scot/collections/homelessness-statistics/

## A Quick Guide to the Homelessness Process

A household is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, or have accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it. A household is threatened with homelessness if it is likley they will become homeless within two months.

There are **three stages involved in a homeless application in Scotland**:

1. The Application stage where the household first presents to the local authority.
2. The Assessment stage which determines:
   a. whether the household is homeless or not;
   b. if the household is homeless, whether this is 'unintentional' or 'intentional'; and
   c. if unintentionally homeless, whether there is a connection to the local authority to which the application was made and/or to any other (Scottish) local authority.
3. The Outcome stage. A case can be closed only once the local authority has fulfilled its statutory duty or contact has been lost for 28 days.

**What is the statutory duty of the local authority?**

If a household is unintentionally homeless, the local authority must offer settled accommodation. Until this is available, the local authority must offer temporary accommodation.

If a household is intentionally homeless, the local authority has no statutory duty to provide settled accommodation (although they may choose to do so). There is a duty to provide temporary accommodation and advice and assistance to help the household secure alternative accommodation.

Temporary accommodation must be offered while the household is awaiting an assessment decision.

The statutory duty lies with the local authority the household applies to. If a household has no local connection to the one to which it applied, but to another local authority, they may be referred.

A household can accept or refuse offers of accommodation. A local authority's duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless people would be fulfilled by an offer that is refused, provided that the offer is a reasonable one.

More information on the duty local authorities have to assist people who are threatned with or experiencing homelessness can be found in the Code of Guidance on Homelessness.

# A note on interpreting the figures

It is not possible to make direct links within a reporting year for the different stages of the homlessness process as different households will be at a different stage at different times.

That is, not all applications made in 2019/20 will have an assessment or temporary accommodation placement that year. Similarly, some assessments made in 2019/20 will relate to applications received prior to this; and some temporary placements in 2019/20 will relate to household applications and assessments prior to this also. Furthermore, there will be households who entered and exited temporary accommodation within the same reporting year, and therefore will not appear in the end of year snapshot.

To also note:

- that it is possible for households to make an application and/or be assessed more than once in the same year

- not all households assessed as homeless enter temporary accommodation

The term 'homeless households' is used throughout the publication to denote households who have been assessed as (unintentionally or intentionally) homeless or threatened with homelessness.

**Impact of coronavirus**

Given the figures in this publication report data up until 31st March 2020 this only crosses over with around a week of coronavirus restrictions and changes in practices being in place. Therefore, changes in trends in homeless data as result of coronavirus will be minimal over this reporting period, particularly for annual figures.

Coronovirus may have had more of an impact on snapshot data recording households in temporary accommodation as at 31st March 2020 as actions taken in response to coronavirus were taken before this date, including the beginning of lockdown on March 23rd.

Some summary information for homeless applications and the use of temporary accommodation during the coronavirus period has been collected by both the Scottish Housing Regulator and by the Scottish Government. These collections are released as management information however, and are not Official or National statistics.

# The Extent of Homelessness in Scotland

**Key Points**
- 31,333 households were assessed as homeless in 2019/20, an increase of 4% compared to 2018/19.
- These households contain 51,365 people, including 35,654 adults and 15,711 children.
- There were 11,665 households and 7,280 children in temporary accommodation at 31st March 2020, increases of 6% and 7% respectively compared to 2018/19.

**Applications, assessments and households in temporary accommodation**

In 2019/20, local authorities received a total of 36,855 homelessness applications. Over this same time period, 37,336 applications were assessed with 31,333 (84%) found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness. Of these 31,333, 30,146 (96%) were assessed as unintentionally homeless, with the remaining 1,187 assessed as intentionally homeless. (Tables 1 & 7)

As at 31$^{st}$ March 2020, there were a total of 11,665 households in temporary accommodation, 3,570 of which contained a pregant woman or children. (Tables 29 & 30)

**Trends over time**

Comparisons with the previous year are shown in Table A, with longer term trends in Chart 1.

**Table A: Annual differences for homelessness applications, assessments and temporary acommodation, 2018/19 to 2019/20.**

| | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Change Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Applications** | 36,771 | **36,855** | 84 | 0% |
| **Assessed as homeless** | 30,236 | **31,333** | 1,097 | 4% |
| **Households in temporary accommodation at 31$^{st}$ March** | 10,989 | **11,665** | 676 | 6% |

Table A shows there has been only a very slight increase in the number of applications between 2018/19 and 2019/20 (84, 0%). This compares to a 4% increase in the number of households assessed as homeless, implying a higher proportion of applications assessed as homeless compared to previously. This is indeed the case, with 84% assessed as homeless in 2019/20 compared to 82% in 2018/19. There is an even larger increase for households in temporary accommodation, which in part may be explained by stays in temporary accommodation increasing .

The number of households with a pregnant woman or children in temporary accommodation increased by 155 (5%) from 3,415 in 2018/19.

**Chart 1: Trends in homelessness applications, assessments and temporary accommodation, 2002/03 to 2019/20**
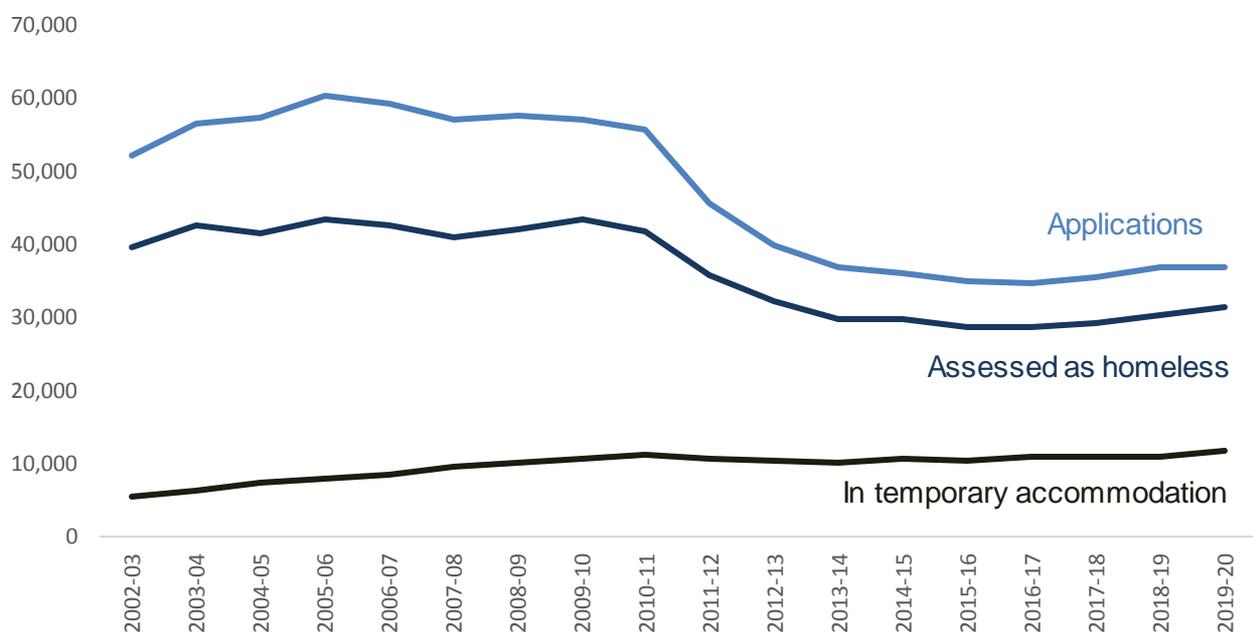


Chart 1 shows that the more recent slight increases from 2016/17 in the number of applications and homeless households follow a period of decline since 2009/10. However, the pattern for households in temporary accommodation is quite different between March 2003 and March 2011, with this experiencing a steady increase from 5,403 to 11,254 (5,851, 108%). Between 2012 and 2019, this figure has remained relatively stable - between 10,200 and 11,000 – with a slight increase to 11,665 as at March 2020 in line with the increase in homeless households.

Changes in legislation, policy and practice can help to explain the trends shown in Chart 1. In 2001, Scottish homelessness legislation[1] extended councils' duties to non-priority need homeless households, with the priority need test being abolished on 31st December 2012[2]. Before 2002, the majority of homeless households in priority need were households with children. Following the 2001 extension duty there was a notable increase in the number of single people applying for homelessness assistance. These single people were also eligible for temporary accommodation. This can, at least in part, explain the increases from 2002/03. The sharper decrease shown from 2009/10 is likely due to the impact of the introduction of Housing Options services in Scottish local authorities, with a focus on prevention.

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[1] The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 extended councils' duties to non-priority homeless and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 set the longer term objective of phasing out the distinction between priority and non-priority homeless. See Summary of Homelessness Legislation for more details.

[2] In November 2012, the Scottish Parliament approved the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012.
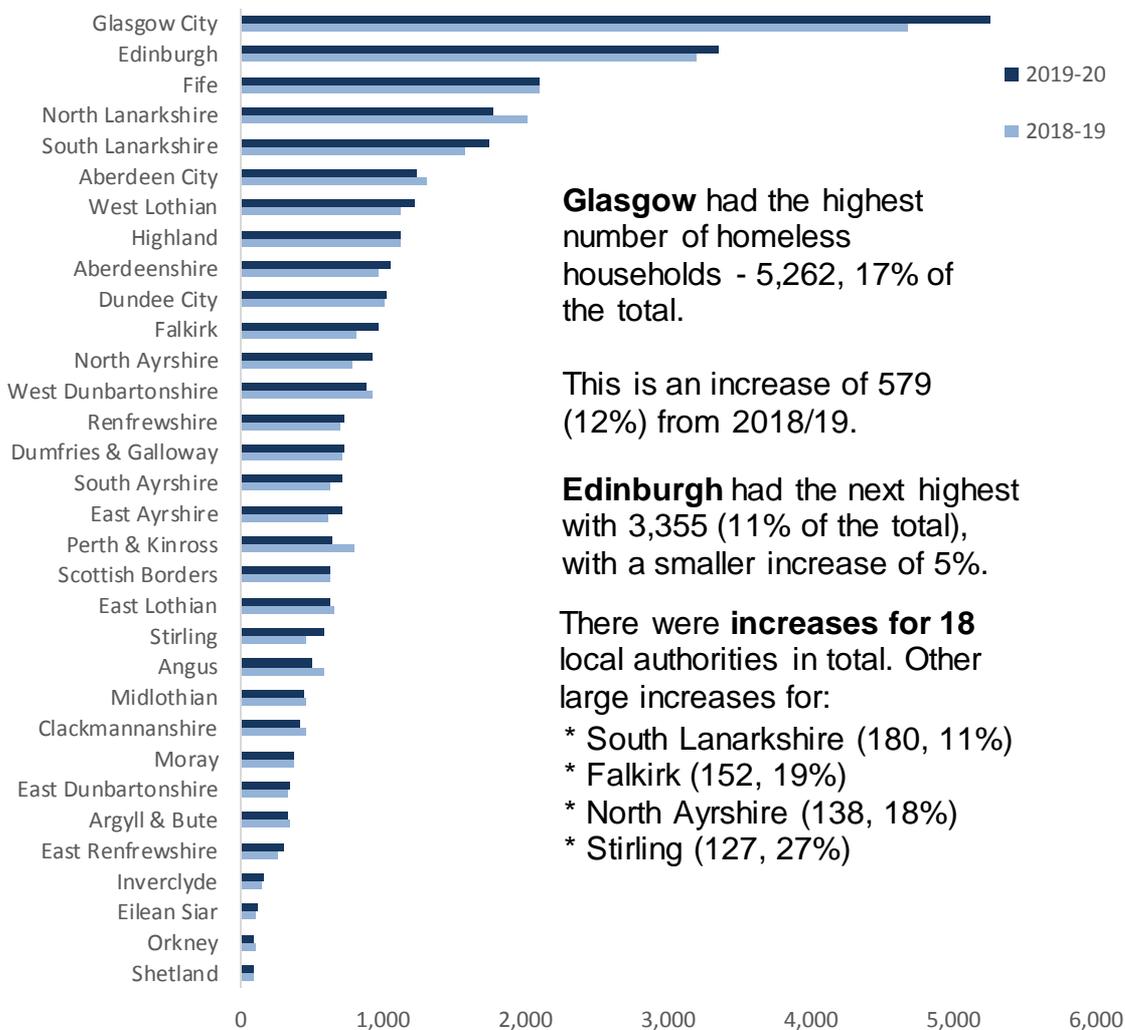
**Number of households vs number of people**

While data is provided and reported at a household level, local authorities record the number of people attached to applications, and it is therefore possible to understand how many people are affected by homelessness.

The 31,333 households assessed as as homeless in 2019/20 contained a total of 51,365 people. This included 35,654 adults (69%) and 15,711 children (31%) (Tables 12, 13 & 14).

Data is collected for the number of children in temporary accommodation, but not the number of adults. At March 31st 2020 there were 7,280 children in temporary accommodation, an increase of 485 (7%) compred to 6,795 the previous year. (Table 31)

**How does homelessness vary across Scotland?**

**Chart 2: Number of homeless households by local authority**



**Glasgow** had the highest number of homeless households - 5,262, 17% of the total.

This is an increase of 579 (12%) from 2018/19.

**Edinburgh** had the next highest with 3,355 (11% of the total), with a smaller increase of 5%.

There were **increases for 18** local authorities in total. Other large increases for:
* South Lanarkshire (180, 11%)
* Falkirk (152, 19%)
* North Ayrshire (138, 18%)
* Stirling (127, 27%)

Local authority figures can be found in Table 10 of the accompanying data tables.

Glasgow and Edinburgh also had the highest number of households in temporary accommodation, 2,557 and 1,868, respectively, as at 31st March 2020. Glasgow experienced an increase of 366 (17% from 2,191) from 2018/19 and Edinburgh an increase of 353 (23% from 1,515). (Table 29)

Comparing homelessness figures with the population for each local authority (i.e. rates) provides a useful insight as to how homelessness varies across Scotland.

**Chart 3: Homeless households per 1,000 population (aged 16+), 2019/20**
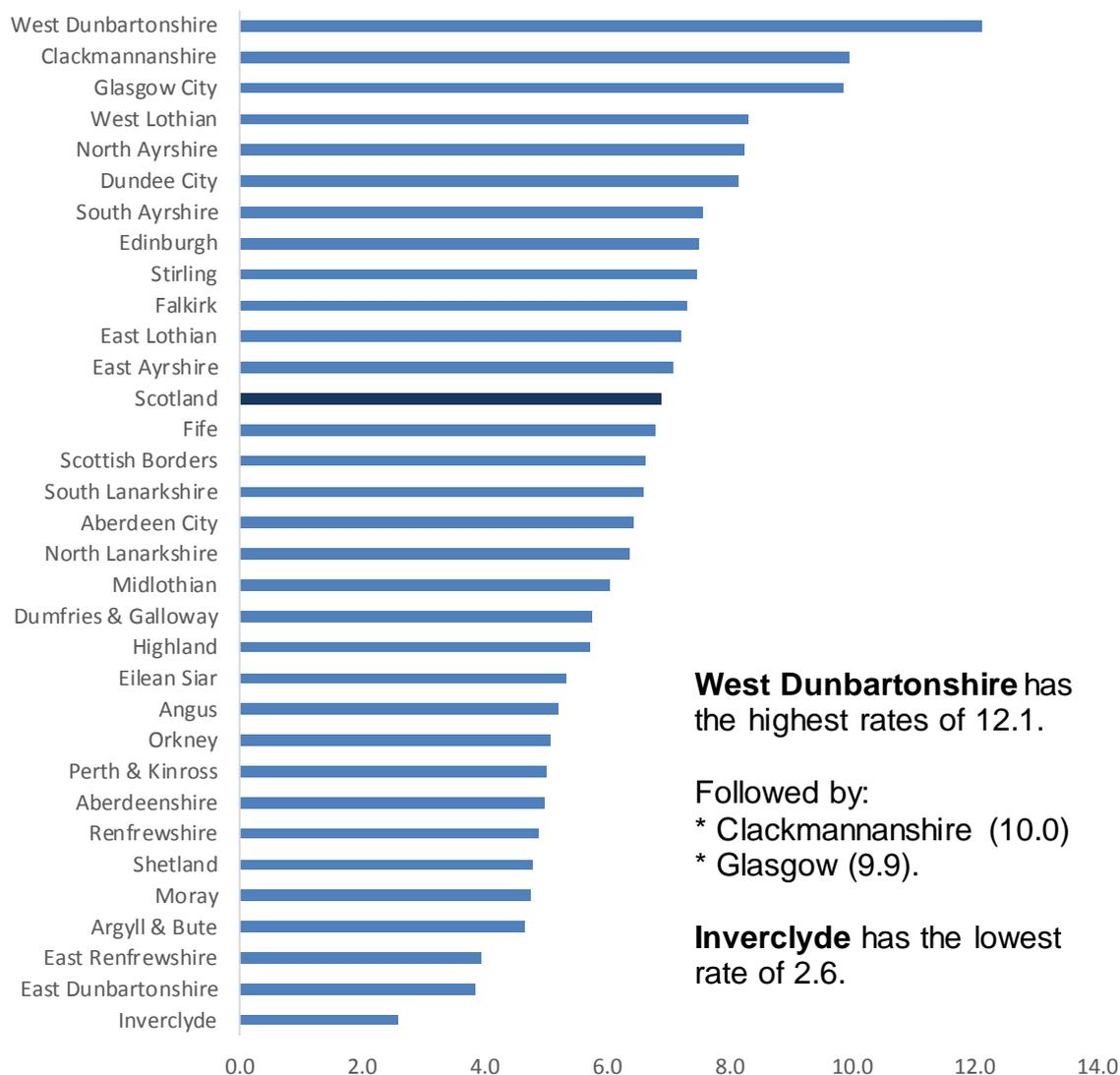


**West Dunbartonshire** has the highest rates of 12.1.

Followed by:
* Clackmannanshire (10.0)
* Glasgow (9.9).

**Inverclyde** has the lowest rate of 2.6.

Rates for homeless households can be found in Table 11 of the accompanying data tables.

As part of the assessment stage of a homelessness application, local authorities can investigate whether the applicant has a local connection to the authority to which they applied or to another local authority. This can be on the basis of residency, employment, a family connection or another special reason such as health reasons or education. Where a local connection with another local authority exists the local authority may refer the applicant to that authority, otherwise the duty lies with the authority the application was made to. A local authority may choose not to refer the household e.g. if an application was made for the reason of fleeing from domestic abuse.

In 2019/20, 91% of homeless households had a connection to the local authority to which they made their application. A further 5% had no local connection to any local authority within Scotland. This means, only 4% (1,195) of homeless households had a connection to another local authority other than the one they made an application to. The majority of these were in Glasgow (925, 77% of the total). As Glasgow chose not to refer any cases in 2019/20, this helps explain the disproportionately high levels of homelessness in Glasgow, although does not account for it fully. West Dunbartonshire's high rates of homelessness cannot be explained by those with a local connection elsewhere; 99% of those assessed in West Dunbartonshire had a local connection with that authority only. (Tables 21 & 54)

Interestingly, the use of temporary accommodation does not follow the same pattern (in terms of rates) as the number of homeless households at a local authority level. This implies some local authorities have a disproportionately high use of temporary accommodation, while others are disproportionately low.

**Chart 4: Households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 population (aged 16+), as at 31st March 2020**



**Midlothian** has the highest rate of 5.6.

Followed by:
* East Lothian (4.8)
* Glasgow (4.8)

**Perth & Kinross** has the lowest rate (0.5)
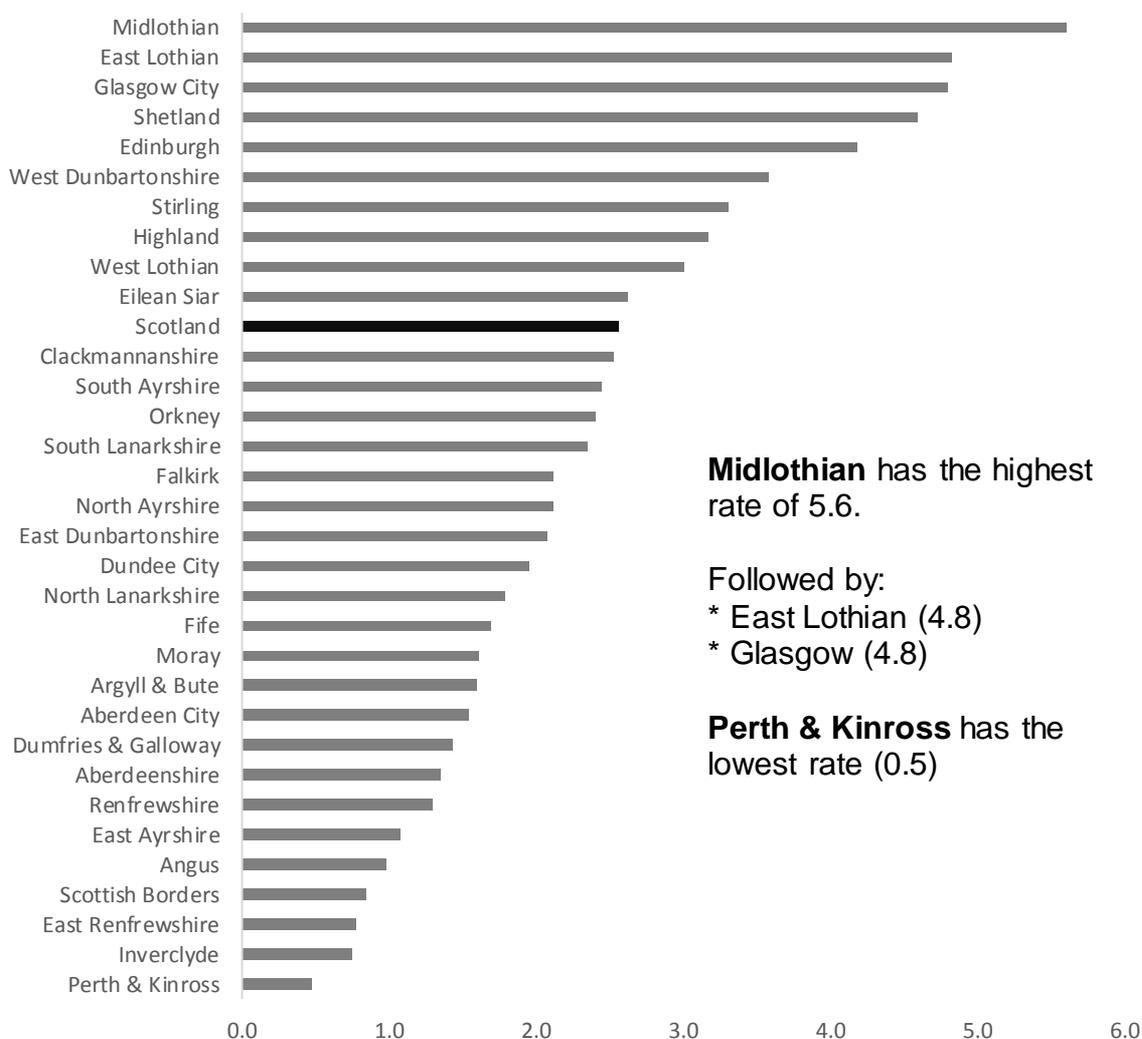
Rates for temporary accommodation by local authority are detailed in Table 35 of the accompanying data tables.

# Reasons for Homelessness and Prior Circumstances

**Key Points**

- Being 'asked to leave' and violent or non-violent household disputes are the most common reasons for homelessness.
- 45% increase in households becoming homeless from supported accommodation.
- 2,884 applications had a household member who experienced rough sleeping in the 3 months prior to their application, and 1,643 the night before.

**Why do households make a homelessness application?**

**Chart 5: Main reasons for homelessness, 2019/20**



**3 most common reasons:**
* Asked to leave (24%)
* Non-violent dispute / relationship breakdown (19%)
* Violent / abusive dispute (13%)
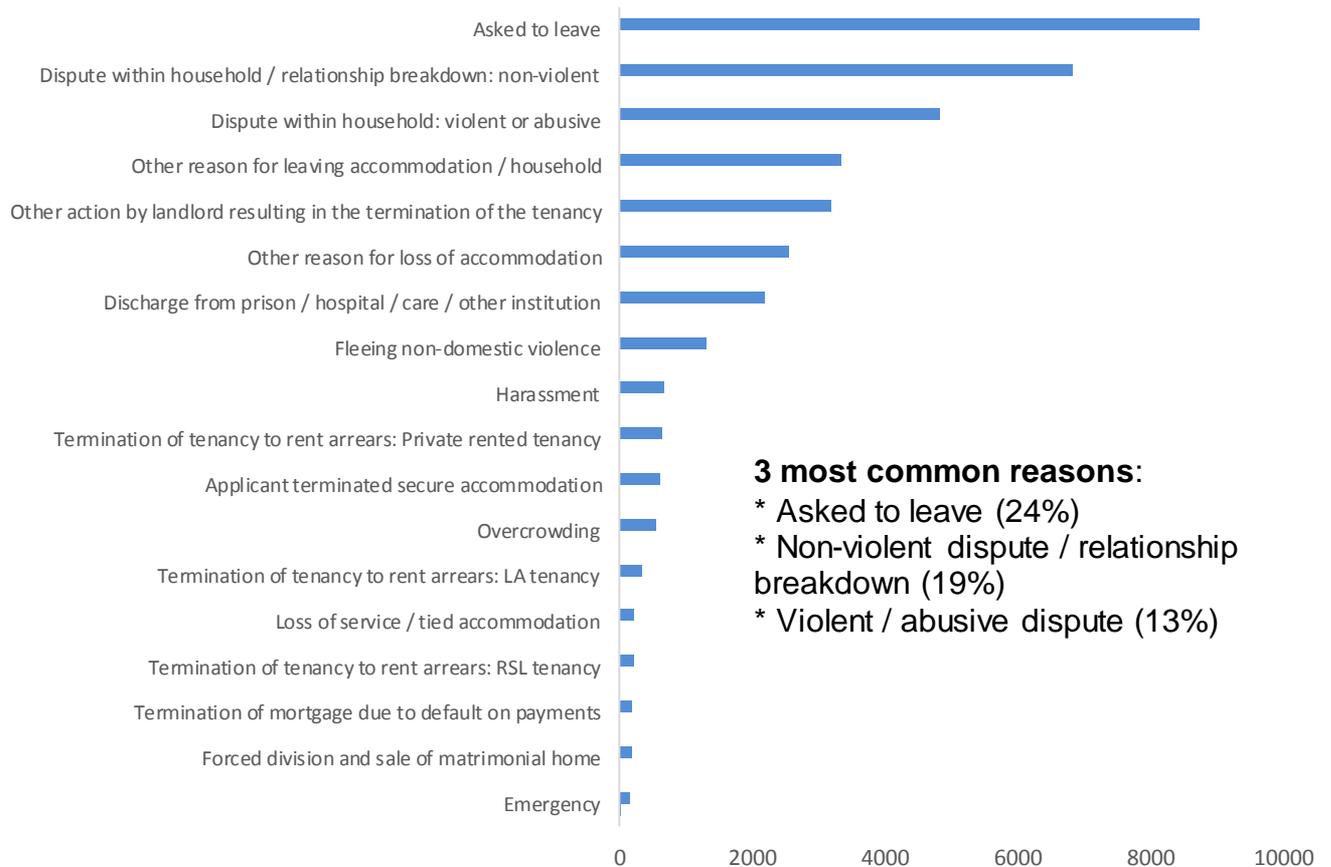
The proportions of main reasons have remained largely unchanged over time. (Table 5)

In 2019/20, 3,194 households gave 'Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy' as the main reason, accounting for 9% 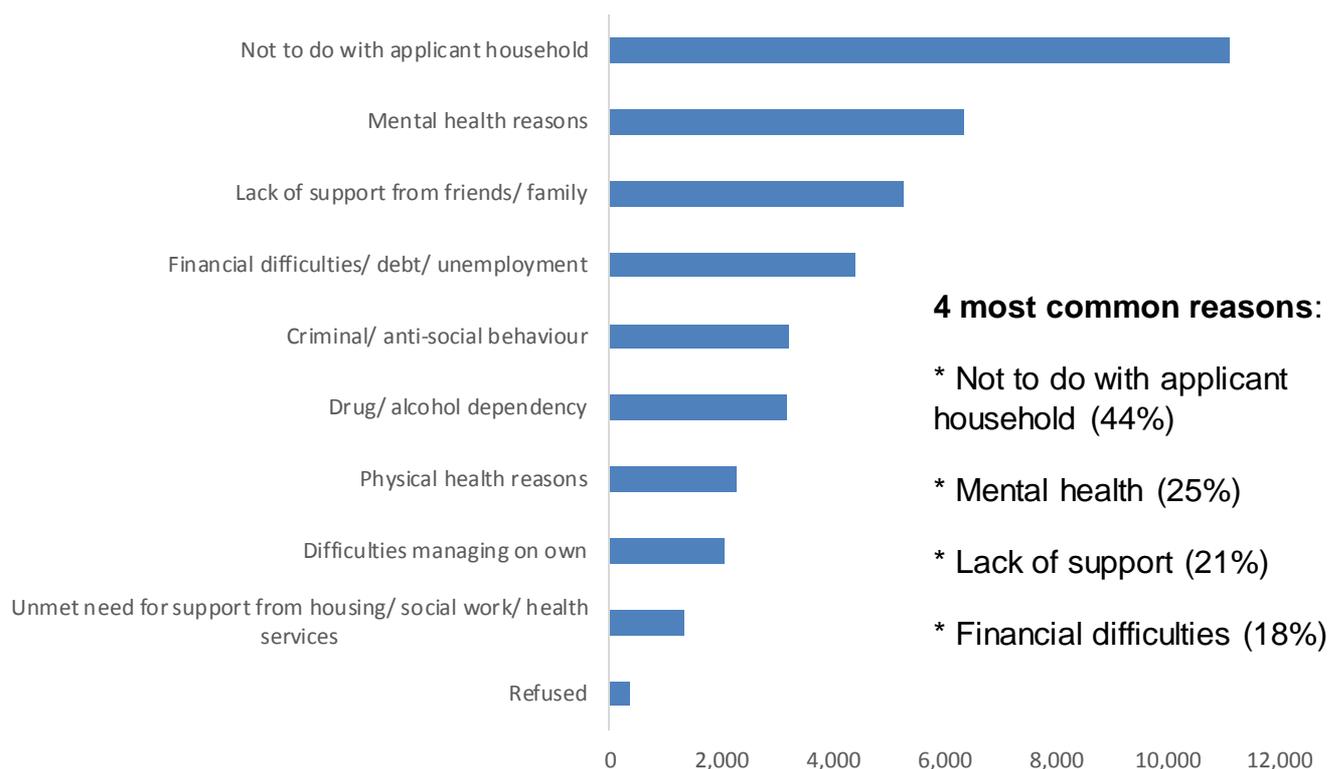of all applications. While this is a simlar proportion to 2018/19 (10% of applications), this was was a fall of 452 (12%) compared to 3,646 the previous year.

The application process also seeks to determine the underlying cause to help better understand the main reason given and so asks for additional reasons for failing to maintain the accommodation. 68% of homeless households provded additional reasons.

**Chart 6: Additional reasons for failing to maintain accommodation, 2019/20**



4 most common reasons:

* Not to do with applicant household (44%)

* Mental health (25%)

* Lack of support (21%)

* Financial difficulties (18%)

'Not to do with the applicant household' includes reasons such as the landlord selling the property, fire, circumstances of other persons sharing the property or harassment by others.

Mental health reasons has experienced the largest increase from 8% of reasons in 2010/11 to 25% in 2019/20. In 2019/20, 6,357 applicants provided this as a reason. (Table 6)

**What are the prior circumstances of the homeless population?**

As part of the application process information is gathered on where the household became homeless from. Most commonly, households became homeless after staying with friends, family and partners. This ties in with the high levels of reasons given as dispute within household / relationship breakdown seen previously. In 2019/20, 7,355 (23%) become homeless from 'parental / family home / relatives' and 5,783 (18%) from 'friends / partners'.

These were increases from the previous year of 337 (from 7,018) and 274 (from 5,509), respectively (both 5%).

The next most common accommodation type a household became homeless from was 'own property – private rented tenancy'. In 2019/20, this accounted for 5,111 (16% of the total), which was a decrease of 246 from 5,357 (5%) from the previous year.

There was a large increase in the number of households becoming homeless from 'supported accommodation' – an additional 450 (45%) from 997 in 2018/19 to 1,447 in 2019/20.

736 (2%) noted becoming homeless from long-term sofa-surfing, an increase of 84 (13%) from 652 the previous year and 227 (45%) from 509 in 2012/13. A futher 149 households reported becoming homeless from long-term rooflessness (less than 1%). (Table 17)

Chart 7 shows how many households who made a homelessness application in 2019/20 reported previous experience of rough sleeping.

**Chart 7: Households experiencing rough sleeping, 2002/03 to 2019/20**
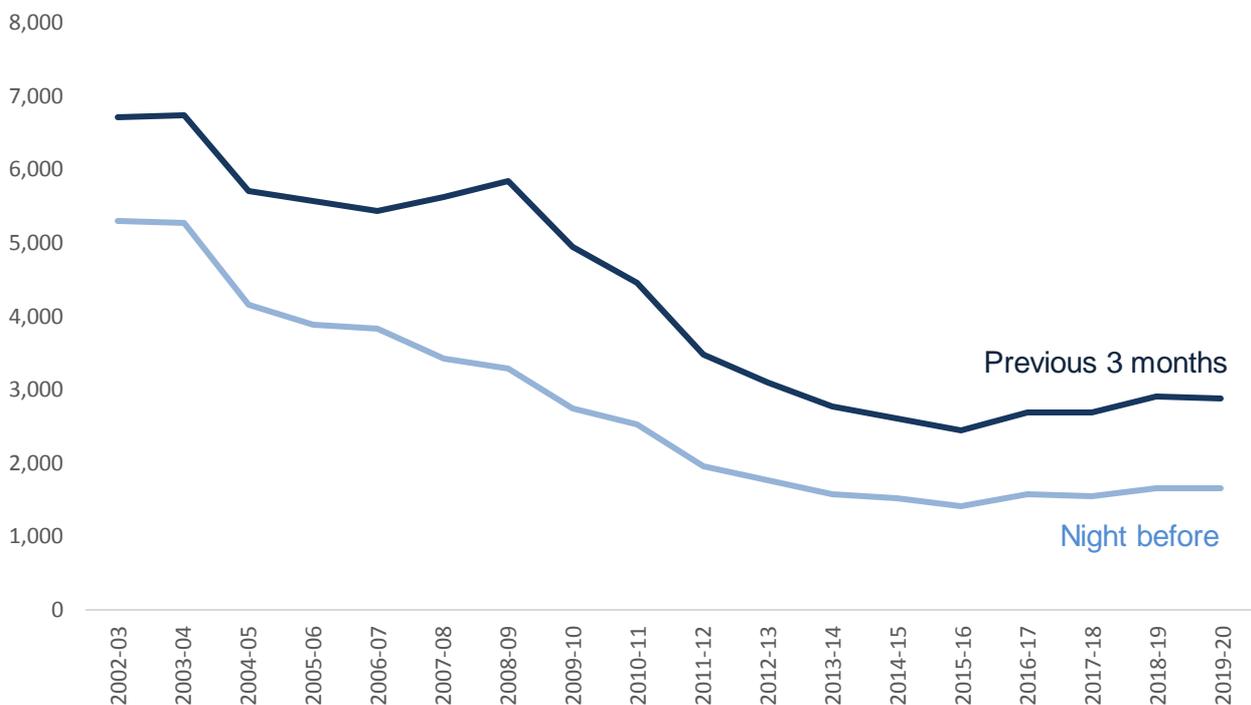


1,643 households (4% of all applications) included a household member who experienced rough sleeping the night before their application, and 2,884 households (8% of all applications) reported a household member experiencing rough sleeping in the three months prior to their application. (Tables 2 &3). The numbers reporting rough sleeping increase and decrease to refelct the trends in applications, although the proportions reporting rough sleeping have remained fairly constant since 2010/11.

There is notable variation between local authorities, with a high of 16% in both Dumfries & Galloway and South Ayrshire compared to a low of 0% in Midlothian and Falkirk reporting rough sleeping in the previous 3 months (Table 4).

# Characteristics of the Homeless Population

Based on the **31,333 homeless households** in 2019/20.

## Gender

**55% male
(17,301)
45% female
(14,032)**

## Age



Male    Female

33% of main applicants are aged 25-34 and 30% are aged 35-49.

There is a **higher proportion of female** applicants in the **younger** age groups:
**28%** vs **20%** under 25
**39%** vs **47%** 35+

Over time, there has been an increase in those 25+ and a decrease in those 24 and under for both males and females.

For the **51,365 people** within 31,333 homeless households

Child female 7,695
Adult male 19,550
Child male 8,015
Adult female 16,100

## Household Type



Single Person: 14,327 / 6,347
Single Parent: 1,445 / 5,338
Couple: 1,104
Couple with Children: 1,373
Other: 722
Other with Children: 677

**66%** are **single person** households, 69% of which are male.

In contrast, **79% of single parent** households are **female**.
**Single parent** households account for **22%** of the total.

**28%** are households **with children.**

## Ethnicity

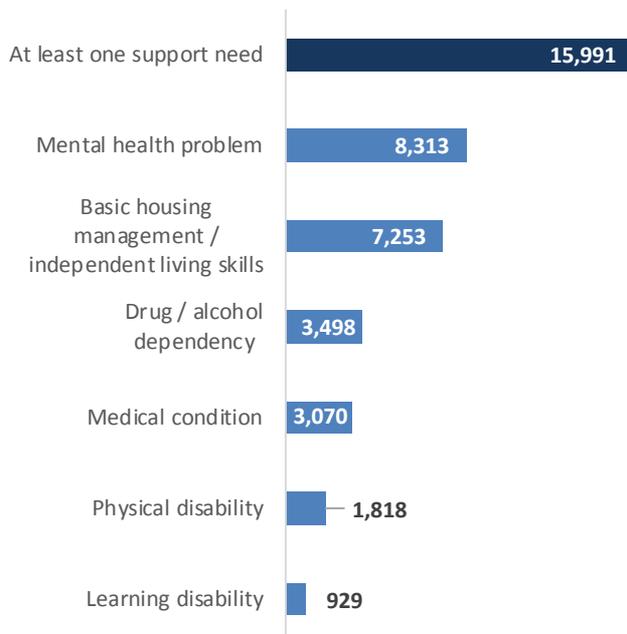| | |
|---|---|
| White | 23,429  3,605 |
| Other | 1,847 |
| Not known / Refused | 1,406 |
| Asian / Asian Scottish / Asian British | 430 |
| African | 353 |
| Caribbean / Black | 168 |
| Mixed / multiple ethnic groups | 95 |

**86%** were **White**, a decrease from 89% in 2002/03.

Over the same period:

- Scottish white ethnicity has seen a larger decrease with a drop from 84% to 75%.

- The proportion of 'Other' has increased from 1% to 6%.

## Support Needs

| | |
|---|---|
| At least one support need | 15,991 |
| Mental health problem | 8,313 |
| Basic housing management / independent living skills | 7,253 |
| Drug / alcohol dependency | 3,498 |
| Medical condition | 3,070 |
| Physical disability | 1,818 |
| Learning disability | 929 |

**51%** were identified as having **at least one support need** – an increase from 49% last year and 32% in 2009/10.

**27%** identified a **mental health** problem, an increase from 25% last year and an additional 827 households.

There is considerable variation between local authorities - 85% in South Ayrshire vs 19% in East Dunbartonshire with at least one support need. This may indicate differences in local reporting practices.

### Armed Forces

3% had a member which was previously a member of the Armed Forces

### Looked After

6% had a household member aged under 25 that was formerly looked after by a Local Authority in Scotland

Proportions have largely remained the same in the past decade, although numbers have reduced in line with reductions in homeless households.

Data can be found in accompanying tables 18, 20 and 23-28.

# Temporary Accommodation

**Key Points**
- 61% of temporary accommodation used is in the social sector.
- 36% of homeless households had no temporary accommodation placement and 35% had one; 4% had 5 or more.
- Households spent 184 days in temporary accommodation on average.
- There were 4,595 cases of households not being offered temporary accommodation in 2019/20. Most of these were in Glasgow.
- There were 500 breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order. Most of these were in Edinburgh.

**Sources of temporary accommodation data**

Since 2002, local authorities have provided aggregate snapshot information relating to households in temporary accommodation. While this allows trends to be explored over time, understanding around individual placements and how these relate to assessed households is not possible from the snapshot data. Therefore, since 1$^{st}$ April 2016 placement level information on households in temporary accommodation has been provided to enable a more rounded picture of the use of temporary accommodation.

The snapshot data shows 11,665 households in temporary accommodation as at 31$^{st}$ March 2020. The placement level returns show that there were 12,074 temporary accommodation placements open at 31$^{st}$ March 2020 – 409 (4%) higher than the snapshot returns. Differences may be explained by the returns including different types of temporary accommodation and the placement level returns experiencing a lag in cases being closed.

Both of these figures show households in temporary accommodation at a point in time and, as such, will include those who have recently entered temporary accommodation as well as those who have been in temporary accommodation for a longer period of time (including prior to the reporting year).

**Change to the reporting of temporary accommodation**

Previously, reporting of temporary accommodation was based on households where there was a 'final' temporary accommodation placement within the reporting year, regardless of whether or not the homelessness case was closed. In reality this meant that, for example, a household which exited their second temporary accommodation placement in a reporting year, which would go on to enter a third temporary accommodation placement in a subsequent reporting year, would be considered as 'exiting' temporary accommodation. Given this will not reflect the true extent of temporary accommodation usage across the entirety of homelessness cases, figures relating to average time spent in temporary accommdation, number of placements etc. will be skewed. For this reason, a household is now only considered to have 'exited' temporary accommodation in a reporting year if their their homelessness case has closed.

**How many people entered temporary accommodation? How many exited?**

21,546 households entered a first temporary accommodation placement in 2019/20. To note, these will include households who made a homelessness application prior to 2019/20. 19,011 households exitied their final temporary accommodation placement in 2019/20.

These figures give a net difference of 2,535 more households entering temporary accommodation than exiting. This ties in with the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation which can be seen in the snapshot figures, although the numbers will not match given the differences outlined.
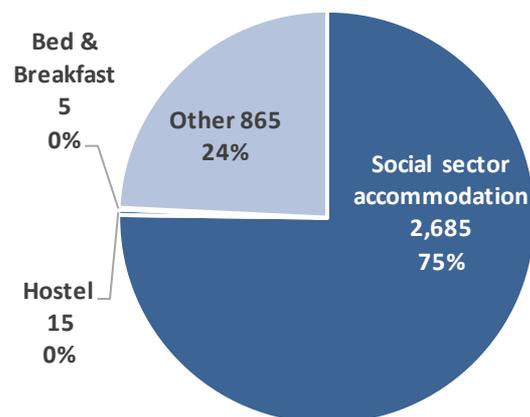
**What types of temporary accommodation are used?**

**Chart 8: Type of temporary accommodation used as at 31st March 2020**
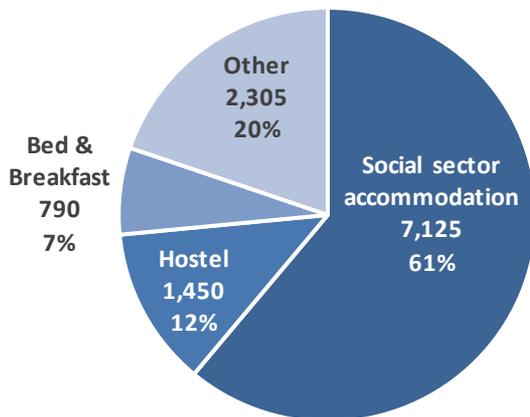
**a) all households**                    **b) households with children**



The above chart shows that social sector accommodation is the majority of temporary accommodation used. Three quarters of households with children were in temporary accommodation as at 31st March 2020 compared to 61% overall. There are extremely low levels of use of hostels and bed & breakfast accommodation for households with children. (Tables 32 & 33).

Data from the placement level data collection can provide further insight in to the total use of temporary accommodation over the lifecycle of homelessness cases. However, it is difficult to make direct comparison with the snapshot data as different categories of temporary accommodation are used between the two returns.

There were 35,606 homelessness cases that closed in 2019/20, and from these a total of 39,400 temporary accommodation placements were taken up. 39% of temporary accommodation placements were in local authority ordinary dwellings or housing association/registered social landlord dwellings; 27% of placements were in hostel accommodation; and 22% of placements were in bed and breakfast accommodation. The higher proportions of hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation in the placement level

returns (49% vs 19%) indicates that these types of temporary accommodation are more frequently used than the snapshot data suggests. However, this can be explained by the fact that the average duration for stays in these types of accommodation is much shorter - for example, 33 days in bed and breakfast compared to an average of 96 days for all temporary accommodation – and therefore they accound for a much smaller proportion of the overall use of temporary accommodation. (Tables 42 & 43)

Data on the number of placements and average length of time will help improve understanding of the ways in which different types of temporary accommodation are used.

**How many temporary accommodation placements do households typically have?**

**Chart 9: Number of temporary accommodation placements for applications closing in 2019/20**
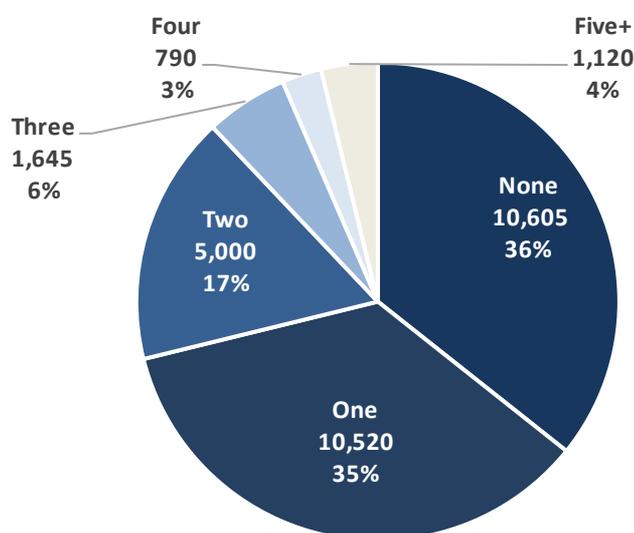


There is variation in the number of placements between local authorities. Only 7% of homeless households in Shetland (5 out of 70) did not have any temporary accommodation placements, compared to 70% (450 out of 645) in Scottish Borders, although caution should be applied for local authorities with small numbers of households. In Edinburgh, 19% (485 out of 2,575) of homeless households had 5 placements or more (Table 37).

Use of temporary accommodation also varies by household type. Only 33% of 'single person' and 'couple with children' homeless households had no temporary accommodation placements in 2019/20. This compares to 50% of 'other' household types (households with multiple adults), 44% of 'other with children' and 41% of 'single parent' households. 'Couple' households were most likely to have higher number of placements, with 6% having 5 or more placements compared to 1% for 'other' households and 4% overall (Table 38).

**How long do households spend in temporary accommodation?**

The chart below shows that for homeless applications that closed in 2019/20 that took up temporary accommodation, households with children were likely to spend more time in temporary accommodation than those without. Note that total duration is calculated by summing the time a household spends in individual placements, excluding time between placements when a household is not in temporary accommodation. As a result the time a household spends in temporary accommodation may not be continuous.

**Chart 10: Average duration (days) in temporary accommodation, 2019/20**
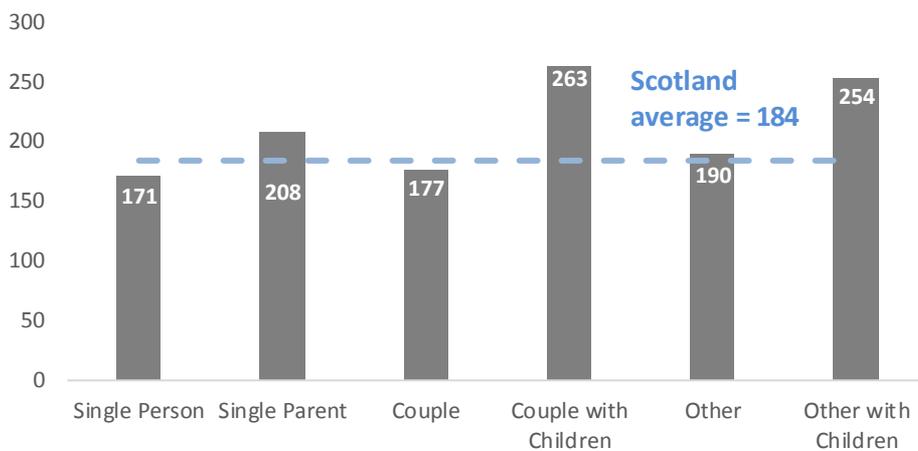


Looking at average duration at a placement level shows duration varies by accommodation type with social sector temporary accommodation having higher durations than other types of accommodation. The average length of stay in housing association accommodation and local authority dwellings was 231 and 131 days, respecitvely, compared to 33 days in bed & breakfast accommodation. This confirms the expected shorter-term use of bed & breakfast and hostel accommodation.

**Chart 11: Average length (days) of temporary accommodation placement, 2019/20**
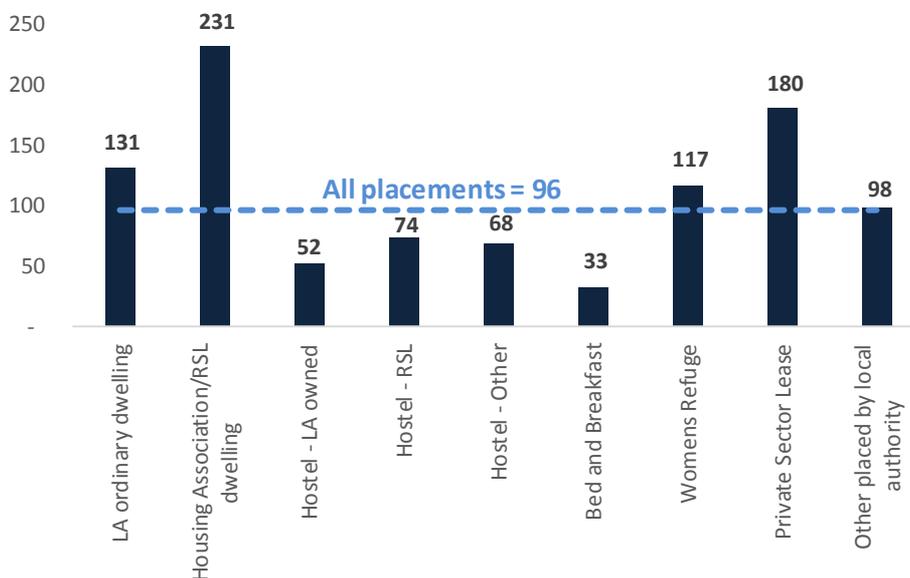
## How often do applicants refuse temporary accommodation?

A household can choose to refuse an offer of temporary accommodation made by the local authority. In 2019/20 there were 5,526 cases of households refusing offers of temporary accommodation. This was an increase of 1,299 (31%) compared to 2018/19. There was a particulay high increase in Glasgow, which increased by 95% from 978 to 1,906. (Table 44) To note, a household that has refused an offer of temporary accommodation may accept a subsequent offer.

## How often do local authorities fail to provide temporary accommodation?

A local authority is required to indicate when they do not offer any temporary accommodation to a household and are therefore acting unlawfully. During 2019/20, there were 4,595[3] instances of households not being offered temporary accommodation (Table 45). The majority of these cases (3,385) were in Glasgow.

## How often do local authorities breach unsuitable accommodation legislation?

A breach is encountered when a household with a pregnant member and/or child is in unsuitable temporary accommodation for more than 7 days. In 2019/20 there were 500 breaches; this compares to 645 breaches during 2018/19. The majority of breaches (375) during 2019/20 were in Edinburgh. (Table 46)

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[3] The City of Edinburgh Council have previously been unable to report 'not offered' places via their placement level temporary accommodation return due to technical issues. These technical issues have been resolved and not offered information is now supplied as part of the regular data return from 2019/20. Backdated information for 2018/19 has been provided by the City of Edinburgh Council.
Not offered figures published in January 2020 for Edinburgh were much smaller in magnitude as they reported the number not accommodated as a result of temporary interviews only. Figures published now refer to not offered placements resulting from both temporary interviews and out of hours presentations. The difference to previously published figures are: for April 2018 to March 2019 – 1,079 vs 410; and for April to September 2019 – 210 vs 175.

# Outcomes

**Key Points**
- 82% of households secure settled accommodation, increasing from 63% in 2002/03.
- 6% of homeless households had previously been assessed as homeless in the previous 12 months, and 15% in the previous 5 years.

Homelessness cases are closed once the local authority has fulfilled its statutory duty or contact has been lost with the applicant household for 28 days. Local authorities provide information on the circumstances and outcomes of homelessness cases once they have been closed.

**How often do local authorities lose contact with applicants?**

For households assessed in 2019/20, contact was maintined for 95% of those assessed as unintentionally homeless and for 93% assessed as intentionally homeless.

The proportion of applicants maintaining contact has increased slightly over time for unintentionally homeless households, from 88% in 2007/08. For intentionally homeless households, the proportion has declined slightly in recent years, falling from 96% in 2009/10. (Table 47)

**What are the outcomes for homeless households?**

Of the 27,002 unintentionally homelessness cases that closed in 2019/20 (where contact was maintained and the outcome was known), 82% (20,806) secured settled accommodation as their outcome.[4] Settled accommodation here is defined as a local authority tenancy (which accounted for 46% of outcomes), a tenancy with a registered social landlord (30%) or a private rented tenancy (5%).

The remaining outcomes were 'Not known (contact maintained)' (8%), 'Other (known)' (8%), 'Returned to previous/present accommodation' (5%), 'Moved in with friends/relatives' (4%) and 'Hostel' (1%).

The proportion of unintentionally homeless households securing settled accommodation has increased over time, from 63% in 2002/03 to 82% in 2019/20. Intentionally homeless

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[4] The way in which the proportion securing settled accommodation is calculated has changed. Previously this was calculated by including cases where contact was not maintained and the outcome was not known. These have now been excluded from the calculation on the basis that there is no way of knowing whether these households have secured settled accommodation (or would have gone on to). The exclusion of these cases increases the proportion securing settled accommodation from that reported in previous publications; a full-time series on the new basis is available in the publications tables.

households are less likely to secure settled accommodation, with 45% doing so in 2019/20. (Tables 48 & 49)

**Local connection referrals**

In 2019/20, 170 homeless households were referred to another local authority. This number has fallen from 390 in 2005/06. This decline has largely been driven by Glasgow, which referred 0 cases in 2019/20 compared to 150 in 2005/06. (Table 54)

**Is there a return to homelessness?**

In order to understand the longer-term outcomes for homeless households, and whether outcomes upon case closure are sustained, there is interest in 'repeat homelessness' i.e. where households previously assessed as homeless re-enter the homelessness system at a later point in time. Chart 12 shows the proportion of households assessed as homeless that were previously assessed as homeless in the last 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 years[5] from 2007-08 to 2019-20. There were 1,774 households (6%) that had previously been assessed as homeless in the 12 months prior to their most recent assessments, increaseing to 4,780 (15%) in the previous 5 years. These proportions have increased in 2019/20 following decreases since 2014/15. (Table 15)

**Chart 12: Households assessed as homeless that have previously been assessed as homeless in the previous 1 to 5 years**



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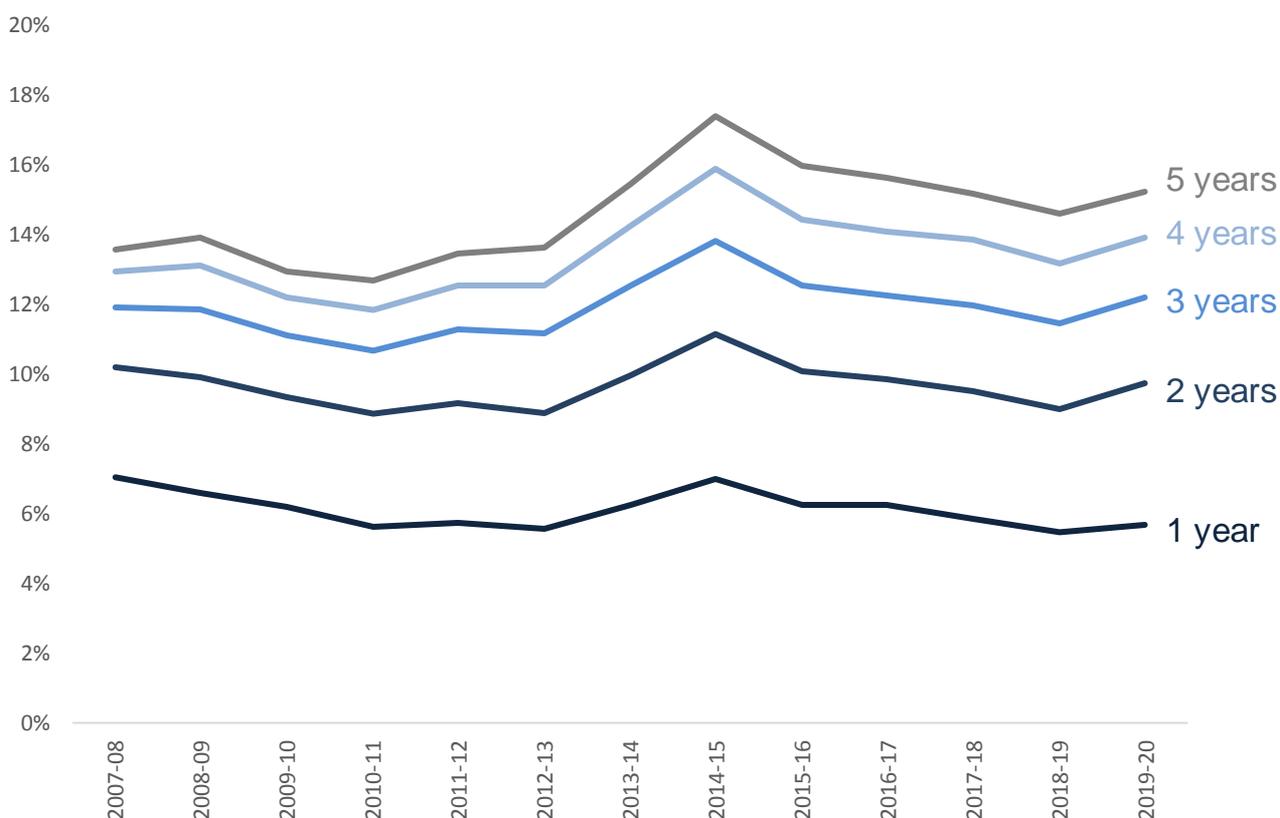
[5] This is an expansion to repeat homelessness figures reported in previous publications where this was reported at a national level over a 12 month period only.

There is significant local variation between local authorities with respect to repeat homelessness. For example, 12% of households assessed as homeless in Inverclyde had previously been assessed as homeless in the 12 months prior to their assessment, compared to 0% in Orkeny and Shetland, though all are based on relatively small numbers. (Table 16)

**Were Housing Support assessments carried out and housing support provided?**

Upon closing a homelessness case, local authorities are required to assess whether any housing support services are required by the household for any cases assessed as unintentionally homeless and where it has reason to believe that support would be beneficial. It also has a duty to provide that support if needed.

Across Scotland, assessments for housing support needs were carried out in 76% of cases where there was a duty to assess in 2019/20. Housing support was provided in 38% of all cases, although support was not provided for 12% of cases where a support need was identified. In 23% of cases where there was a duty to assess, no assessment took place and no support was provided. (Table 55)

# How Long Does it Take to Complete the Homeless Application Process?

**Key Points**
- It takes an average of 16 days for a case to be assessed. This has fallen from 29 days in 2004/05.
- It takes 224 days on average from assessment to closure for cases assessed as homeless.

**How long does it take for an application to be processed?**

In 2019/20 it took 16 days on average for a case to be assessed following an application. This has fallen over time from an average of 29 days in 2004/05. Again there is considerable variation among local authorities, with Edinburgh taking 7 days on average to assess each case compared to 30 in Shetland. (Table 22)

The time taken from assessment to closure varies depending on the outcome of the assessment. For homelessness cases that closed in 2019/20 it took an average of 224 days from assessment to closure. For households not assessed as homeless, where the local authority does not have a duty to provide temporary accommodation or permanent settled accommodation, the average was 26 days. (Tables 52 & 53)

The time taken to close homelessness cases has increased significantly over time. In 2002/03 it took 33 days on average for a case to be closed. This is likely due to the extension of duties local authorites have to homeless applicants.

**Chart 13: Average number of days taken to close homelessness applications assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness**
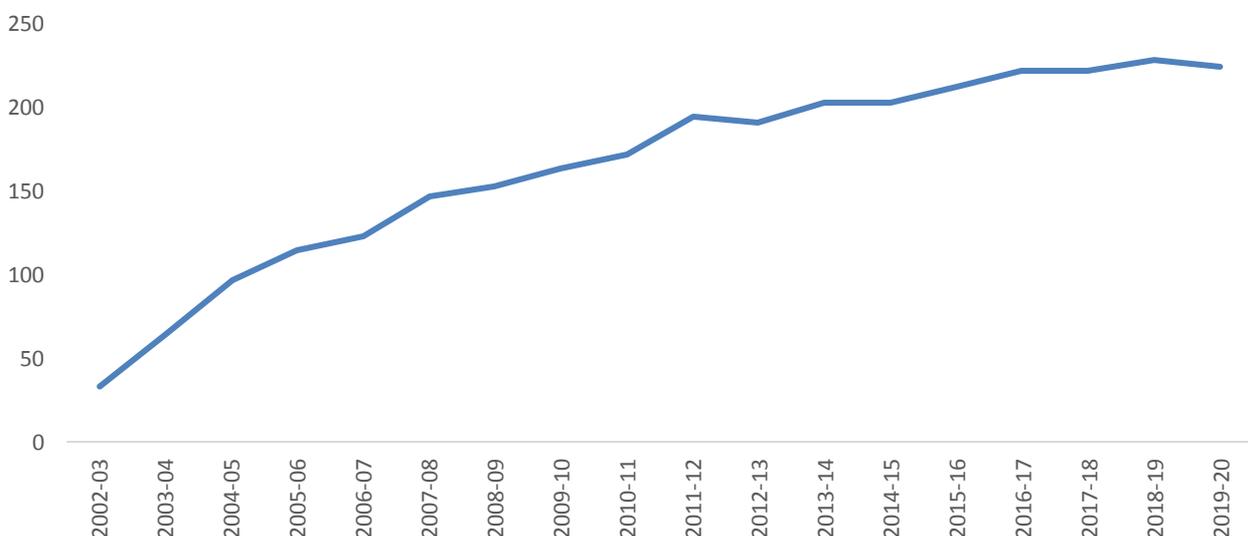
# Notes on Tables

All of the tables and charts in this publication are available in electronic format at:
https://www.gov.scot/collections/homelessness-statistics/

The statistics included in this publication are based on administrative data collected by local authorities in the course of carrying out their homelessness activities. This data is collected from local authorities and quality assured by the Scottish Government on a quarterly basis. Details about the data we collect, our quality assurance process, and how we engage with users to improve our statistics are outlined in our quality assurance statement.

https://www.gov.scot/publications/data-protection-impact-assessment-and-quality-assurance-statment-for-hl1-hl2-hl3-and-prevent1-data-collections/

**Updates to previous statistics**

The data we use in this pulbication is collected from local authorities on an quarterly basis. As a result of this figures are updated on an on-going basis and may differ from those previously published. This may be a result of delays in some cases being reported to the Scottish Government due to IT issues, quality assurance processes and delayed entry of data – particularly at the end of the financial year.

For example, this publication estimates that 36,771 homeless applications were made in the 2018/19, but the previous 'Homelessness in Scotland: 2018 to 2019' publication gave a figure of 36,465. This is a difference of 306 applications, or approximately 1%. A table comparing the annual number of applications is included in the tables document accompanying this publication.

**Known data quality issues**

In addition to issues just outlined, there are other data quality issues of which we are aware:

- There are a small number temporary accommodation cases on the Scottish Government temporary accommodation placement database that are recorded as open but are linked to homelessness applications that we know to be closed. This occurs when a local authority fails to provide an update for these cases after the placement is closed. In these cases we have taken the approach of using the close date of the homeless application as the exit date of the temporary accommodation placement. This may have the impact of inflating the length of time these households are recorded as using temporary accommodation.

- Snapshot data about temporary accommodation provided by Fife does not include all temporary accommodation placements used, and therefore understates the number of households in temporary accommodation in Fife.

# Comparability with Other UK Homelessness Statistics

Because of the substantial differences in legislative frameworks and data collection methods that exist across the UK care needs to be taken in comparing homelessness statistics across the four countries.

In September 2019 the Office for National Statistics published the UK homelessness: 2005 to 2018 report, which assessed of the comparability and coherence of existing UK government homelessness data sources.

Also published in September 2019, the GSS Homelessness Interactive Tool allows users to explore the similarities and differences between how key concepts relating to homelessness are defined across the four UK countries. It allows users to explore an applicants' process through each of the different homelessness systems and enables users to visualise the different definitions of homelessness currently being used for official statistics and how these compare.

# Summary of Current Legislation

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, now consolidated into Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, introduced statutory duties on Local Authorities to assist those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (potentially homeless), including providing accommodation in certain circumstances.

The legislation currently requires Local Authorities to make inquiries into the circumstances of applicants to satisfy themselves whether the applicant is homeless or potentially homeless. Once the authority is satisfied this is the case, prior to 31st December 2012, it also determined whether the applicant had a priority need. However, from 31st December 2012, the priority need test was abolished (see Paragraph 24). The Local Authority then tests whether the applicant became homeless intentionally and, in some cases, whether the applicant has a local connection with another authority in Scotland, England or Wales. A local connection with an authority means that the applicant normally resided in that area from choice, either because he/she was employed in or had family associations with it, or for other special reasons.

Section 24 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, defines homelessness for the purposes of the Act as follows. A person is homeless if he/ she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere. A person is also homeless if he/ she has accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it, for example because of a threat of violence. A person is potentially homeless (threatened with homelessness) if it is likely that he/ she will become homeless within two months. A person is intentionally homeless if he/ she deliberately did or failed to do anything which led to the loss of accommodation which it was reasonable for him/ her to continue to occupy.

Section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, defined the categories of household regarded as having a priority need for accommodation. Further details can be

found in the Code of Guidance on Homelessness. This is available on-line at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 amends the 1987 Act and requires councils to provide a minimum of temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to all applicants assessed as homeless, regardless of whether they have been assessed as being in priority need. The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 is more long-term in scope, notably introducing a phasing out of the distinction between priority and non-priority applications. The ultimate aim of the Act was to ensure that everyone assessed as being unintentionally homeless was entitled to settled accommodation from 31st December 2012.

In November 2012, the Scottish Parliament approved the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012 which gave effect to this commitment. From 31st December 2012 the priority need test for homeless households was abolished. As a result, from this date, all unintentionally homeless households are entitled to settled accommodation.

**Summary of Local Authority duty to homeless households:**

Unintentionally homeless [and in priority need][6]

Provide temporary accommodation until settled accommodation has been secured.

Settled accommodation is defined as:

- A Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST)

- A Private Residential Tenancy

If the applicants have previously been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years, or if they are subject to an anti-social behaviour order - a short Scottish Secure Tenancy can be offered.

In some circumstances, the Local Authority can provide non-permanent accommodation. These circumstances are laid out in the Homeless Persons (Provision of Non-permanent Accommodation) (Scotland) Regulations 2010.

Under certain circumstances, a Local Authority may apply a local connection test and refer the applicant to another Local Authority. However, the receiving Local Authority must then secure settled accommodation for the applicant.

Intentionally Homeless [and in Priority Need / Homeless and not in Priority Need]:

Provide temporary accommodation for a reasonable period of time, advice and assistance.

Potentially homeless, unintentionally so [and in Priority Need]:

Take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available.

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[6] If before 31st December 2012.

<u>Potentially homeless, intentionally so [and in Priority Need / Potentially Homeless and not in Priority Need]:</u>

Provide advice and assistance to help retain accommodation.

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 came into force on 6 December 2004, and is intended to prevent the routine use of unsuitable temporary accommodation for households with family commitments. Under this Order, Local Authorities cannot put households with children and pregnant women into temporary accommodation which is not suitable, unless exceptional circumstances apply. Unsuitable accommodation is defined in the Order as accommodation which does not meet standards relating to the physical properties of the accommodation (the physical standard), its proximity to health and education services (the proximity standard) and its suitability for use by children (the safety standard).

The 2004 order was revoked by The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014, which came into force on the 21st November 2014. The 2014 order adds the additional requirement that the accommodation must be wind and watertight.

While the Order provides for exceptional circumstances, in which accommodation which does not meet the physical and/or proximity standards may be used, the safety standard must always be met. Further details can be found in the Code of Guidance available on-line at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366

The 2014 Order specifies that the local authority may provide an applicant with temporary accommodation which does not meet the requirements set out by Article 5 of the Order, but for no longer than 14 days in total in respect of that person's application. The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2017, which came into force in October 2017, reduces the number of days from 14 to 7 days before a 'breach' is recorded for the applicant remaining in such unsuitable accommodation.

The Housing Support Services (Homelessness)(Scotland) Regulations 2012 came into force on 1st June 2013. These Regulations make provision in relation to the duty of Local Authorities to assess whether some persons found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness ("an applicant") need housing support services.

Regulation 2 prescribes four types of housing support services which apply for the purposes of that duty. If a Local Authority has reason to believe that an applicant may be in need of one or more of these services, it must assess whether the applicant, or any person residing with the applicant, is in need of such support. If so, the Local Authority must ensure that the service is provided to the person who needs it. Further information on these regulations can be found at:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/3279/2.

# A National Statistics Publication for Scotland

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

## Correspondence and enquiries

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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 http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats

☐ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors.

☐ 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 Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please register your interest at www.gov.scot/scotstat
Details of forthcoming publications can be found at www.gov.scot/statistics

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