



Housing Options (PREVENT1) Statistics in Scotland: 2019/20

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Introduction

This statistics bulletin provides information on Housing Options services in Scotland in the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

It 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.

The statistics in this publication are based on administrative data collected by local authorities in the course of providing Housing Options services that are available when households seek assistance for housing-related issues.

This bulletin focusses on data at a national level, however, local authority breakdowns are available in an Excel workbook, containing tables and charts and which can be downloaded: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/homelessness-statistics/>

This year's publication has introduced a number of changes compared to previous publications. The analysis has been significantly shortened with discussion focused mainly on national trends due to differences in how local authorities implement Housing Options (although data for local authorities is provided in the accompanying tables). Figures have been presented by financial year, where previously quarterly figures were produced. These changes have been introduced following consultation with stakeholders including local authorities through the Homelessness Statistics User Group and the Scottish Government homelessness policy team.

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:

homelessness_statistics_inbox@gov.scot

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

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/homelessness-statistics/>

¹ For more information on experimental statistics please see: <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/policies/official-and-national-statistics-policies/experimental-statistics/>

A Quick Guide to Housing Options

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure advice and information is available free of charge 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

When households seek assistance for housing-related issues from their local authority, they may be presented with advice on a range of housing options, including the opportunity to make a homelessness application. This is known as Housing Options and began to be implemented from around 2009.

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.

However, it is important to note that **Housing Options is not a statutory function**, but local authorities can use it in the delivery of their statutory duties.

A note on interpreting the figures

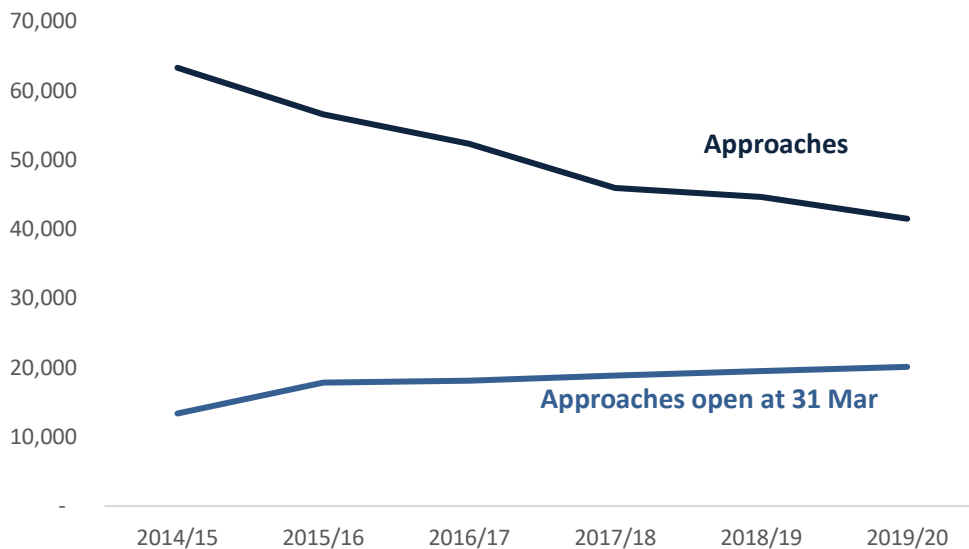
As local authority needs differ, it is appropriate to tailor service provision to the needs specific to each local authority. Therefore, the use and implementation of Housing Options varies greatly between local authorities.

For that reason, it is not appropriate to make direct comparisons between local authority Housing Options figures. Instead, local authority figures should be used to understand the delivery of Housing Options at an individual local authority level only.

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, the impact of coronavirus on Housing Options data will be extremely minimal.

Approaches for housing support



There were **41,476** approaches (from 38,710 unique households) in 2019/20. This was a decrease of 7% from 44,601 compared to 2018/19, and a decrease of 34% since 2014/15.

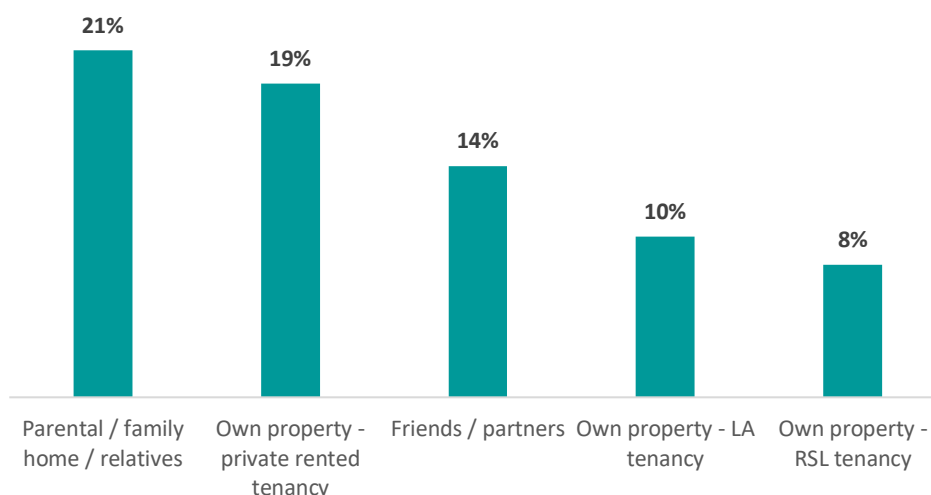
94% of households made one approach; with only 1% making three or more.

As would be expected, Glasgow accounts for the largest share of approaches at 23% of the total. However, it is Perth & Kinross which has the highest rate of approaches per capita – 20.1 per 1,000 population compared to 8.5 nationally. This may be reflective of the fact that different local authorities use a different approach to providing their statutory duties.

Conversely, the number of open approaches has been increasing over time. At 31st March 2020 there were 20,095 open approaches compared to 19,510 at 31st March 2019 – an increase of 3%.

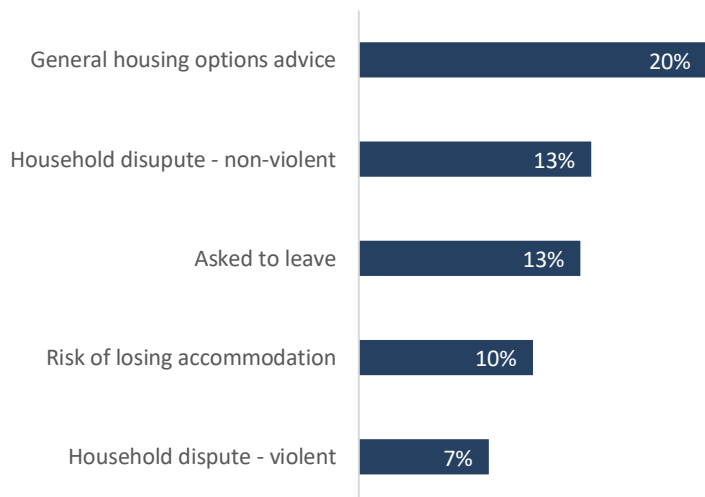
Household circumstances

The five most common property types of current or last settled address of households making an approach to local authorities for Housing Options support



These are similar to the most common properties reported when making a homelessness application in the same period.

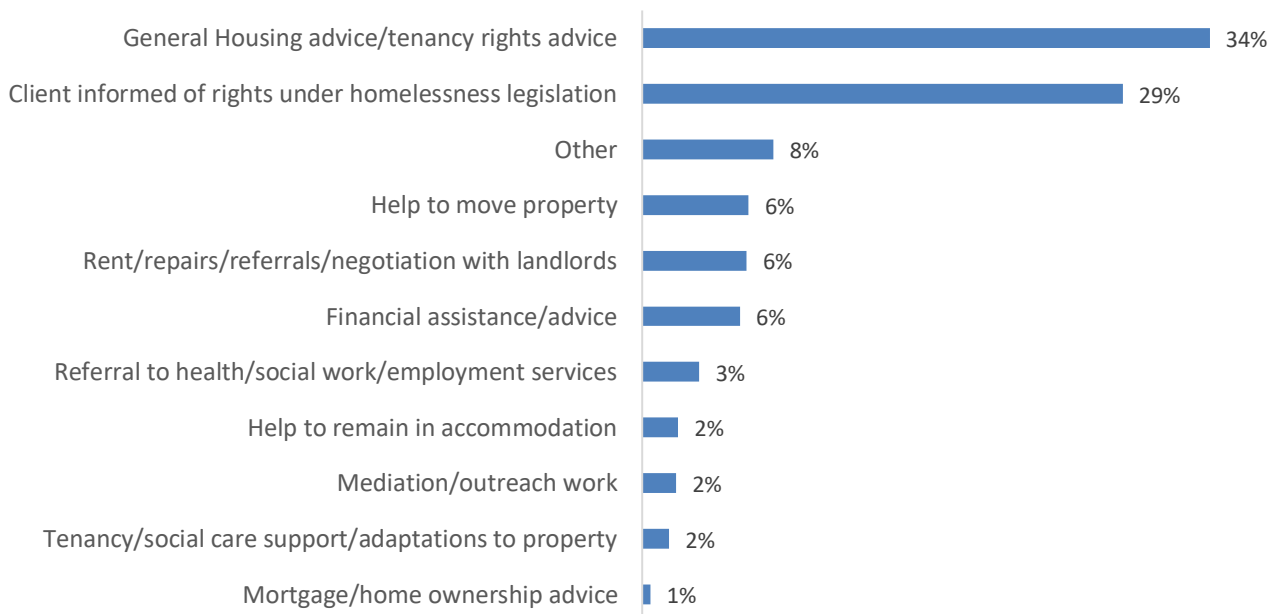
The five most common reasons for approach



Again, these are similar to the reasons specified for homelessness applications in 2019/20, although the categories don't match exactly. For example, 'General housing advice' is not applicable to homelessness applications.

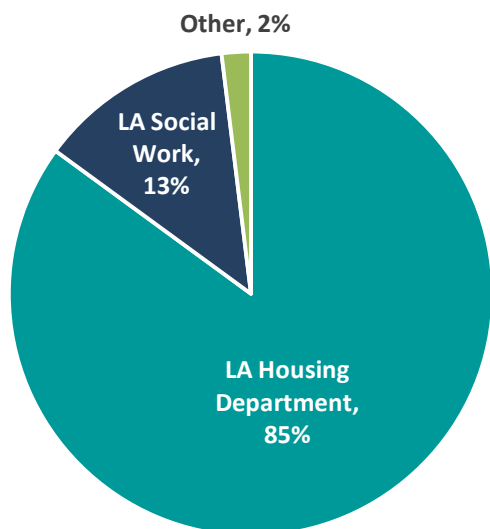
Prevention activity

Most prevention activity carried out was general housing advice or informing clients of their rights under homeless legislation



Again, there was large variation at local authority level. Some other activity more common amongst a small number of local authorities included 'financial assistance', 'negotiation with landlords' and 'help to move'.

Vast majority of activity undertaken by the local authority, particularly in the housing department



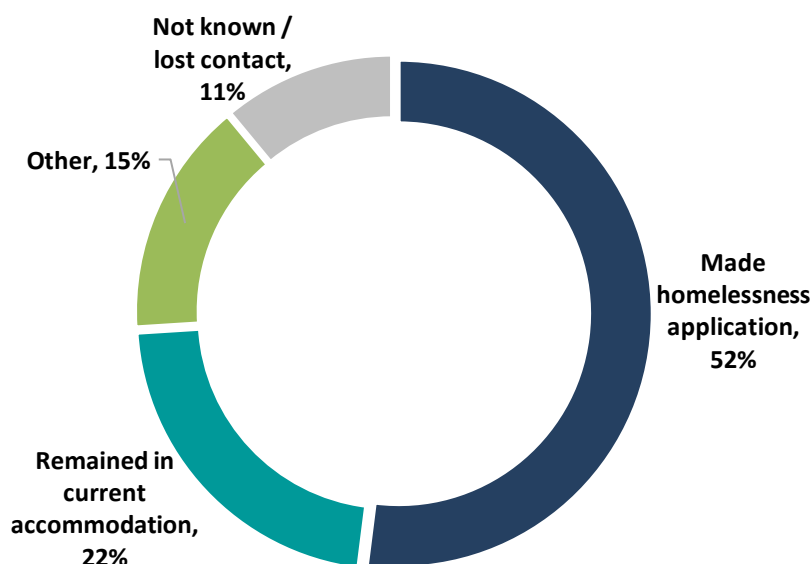
47% of activity involves providing active information, sign-posting or explanation only

53% of prevention activity was casework

East Lothian report a much larger proportion (9%) of advocacy work than any other local authority (0% for 28 out of 32).

Outcomes

Over half of approaches result in a homelessness application



Fife had a higher proportion than any other LA with an outcome of LA/RSL tenancy, 32% of outcomes compared to 4% across Scotland.

Note that while 4% had an LA tenancy as the outcome of their housing options approach, many of those who went on to make a homeless application will also go on to a local authority or registered social landlord tenancy.

Across Scotland, it took an average of 105 days to reach a final outcome on a housing option approach. This varied by local authority with North Lanarkshire taking 607 days on average to East Dunbartonshire taking 15 days on average.

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 Housing Options duties. 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-statement-for-hl1-hl2-hl3-and-prevent1-data-collections/>

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

Known issues with data

South Lanarkshire were not able to provide case level data for 2019/20 due to technical issues. Instead they provided aggregate level data the tables accompanying this publication. As a result we have not been able to carry out our usual level of quality assurance checks for South Lanarkshire data.

Legislation

Local Authorities can use Housing Options as a means of delivering their duty under [section 2 of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#).

To note: the provision of Housing Options services is not a statutory duty.

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

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

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