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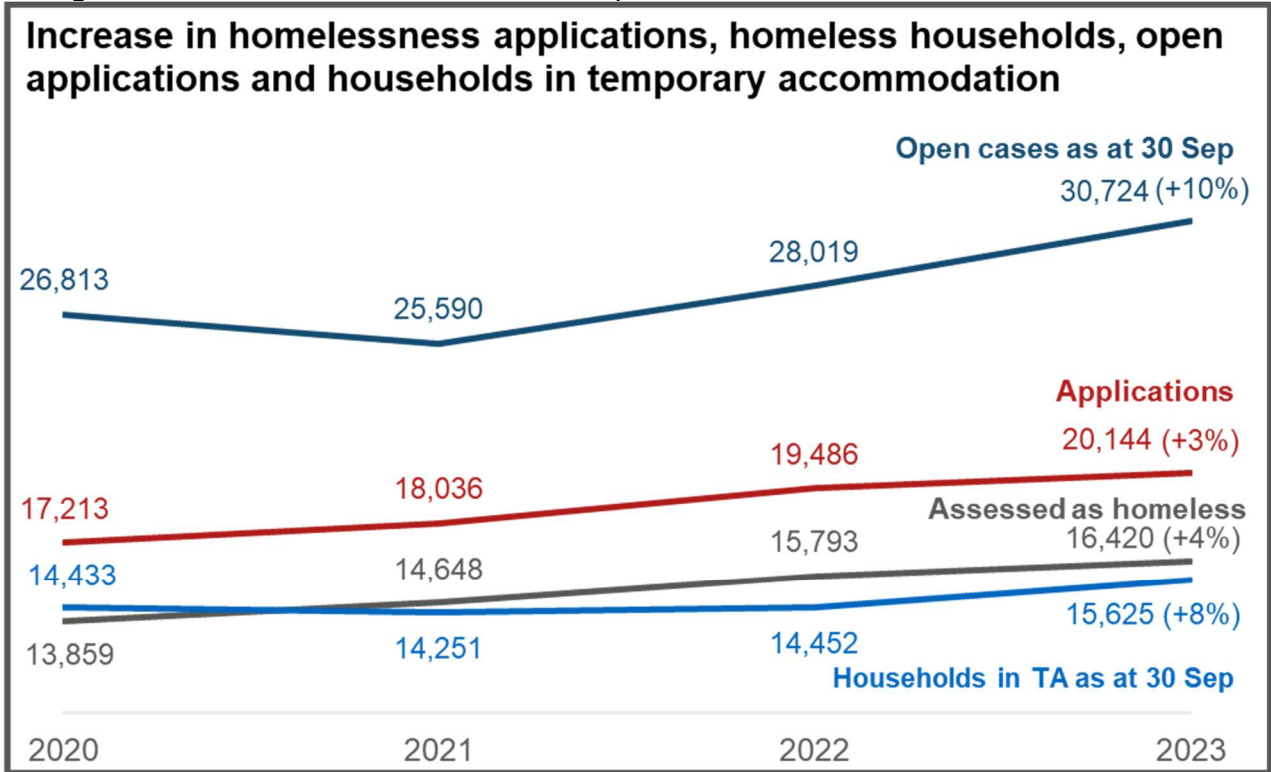
Homelessness in Scotland: Update to 30 September 2023


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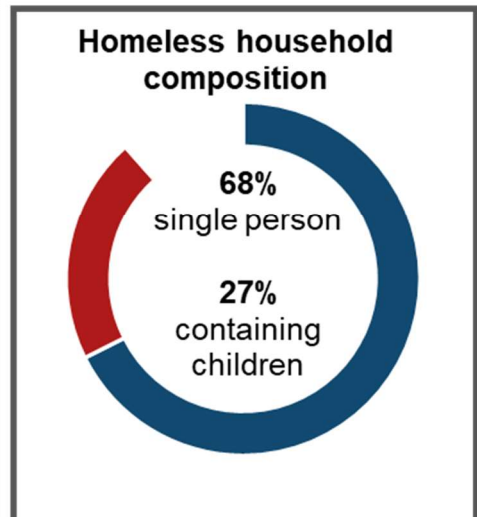
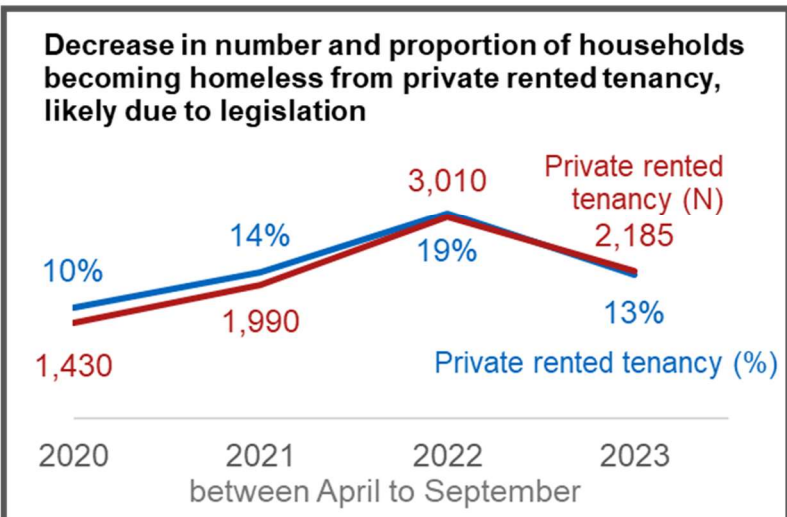
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Main findings: April to September 2023

Comparisons are with the corresponding periods in the previous years and percentage changes are shown between the latest two periods.




 9,860 children in temporary accommodation as at 30 Sep 2023, an 8% increase compared to as at 30 Sep 2022 (9,125).




Rough sleeping

1,408 applicants reported rough sleeping during the previous three months (7% of all applications)

888 applicants reported rough sleeping the night before (4% of all applications)



 82% of unintentionally homeless households secured settled accommodation

Introduction

This statistics bulletin provides information on homelessness in Scotland in the six-month period from 1 April to 30 September 2023 alongside comparisons with the corresponding period in previous years. Quarterly breakdowns of data are provided from 2020 in the supporting tables.

The main purpose of this publication is to provide an indication of trends for key aspects of homelessness including applications, assessments, use of temporary accommodation and outcomes ahead of the annual publication, which includes a fuller set of information.

The statistics in this publication 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 our [supporting documents page](#).

What is the statutory duty of the local authority?

If a household is unintentionally homeless (or threatened with homelessness), the local authority must offer settled accommodation. Until this is available, the local authority must offer temporary accommodation.

If a household is intentionally homeless (or threatened with homelessness), 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, if it is required, while the household is awaiting an assessment decision.

The statutory duty lies with the local authority the household applies to. Up until 28 November 2022, if a household had no local connection to the one to which it applied, but to another local authority, they may be referred. From 29 November 2022, local authorities no longer have the power to refer an applicant to another local authority in Scotland on the grounds of their local connection.

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

More information on the duties local authorities have to assist people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness can be found in the [Code of Guidance on Homelessness](#)

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 likely 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. If the household is eligible for assistance. Households with no recourse to public funds are not eligible for homelessness assistance, though may be provided temporary accommodation while their status is assessed;
 - b. whether the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness;
 - c. if the household is homeless, whether this is 'unintentionally' or 'intentionally'; and
 - d. if unintentionally homeless, whether there is a connection to the local authority to which the application was made and/or to any other local authority. (Note: local connection legislation changed in November 2022).
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.

A note on interpreting the figures

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

That is, not all applications made between 1 April and 30 September 2023 will have an assessment or temporary accommodation placement within that same six-month period. Similarly, some assessments made between 1 April and 30 September 2023 will relate to applications received prior to this; and some temporary placements in this period 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 period, and therefore will not appear in the end of period snapshot of households in temporary accommodation.

To also note:

- it is possible for households to make an application and/or be assessed more than once in the same period (although this would be extremely unlikely in a six-month period)
- not all households assessed as homeless enter temporary accommodation

Where the publication refers to 'in the six-month period' this relates to the period 1 April to 30 September 2023, unless another year has been specified in the text. Where the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 are referred to in the publication (including charts), this relates to the respective six-month period 1 April to 30 September in each of the years.

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 (COVID-19)

There was a departure from longer-term trends for some aspects of homelessness following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions; this was particularly the case for the period April to June 2020. Caution should therefore be applied when making comparisons with the 2020 figures, however, these comparisons are in themselves useful in observing any changes in trends since the onset of the pandemic.

In response to the pandemic, local authorities made a huge effort to house all those in need (including those who would not otherwise be eligible for homelessness support). Only households housed in response to the pandemic with a formal homelessness application to a local authority and/or have a temporary accommodation placement recorded on management information systems will be included in the statistics presented in this publication.

In addition, measures were put in place over the COVID-19 period including: temporary [coronavirus legislation](#) (lifted on 30 September 2021) to protect renters; [mortgage payment deferrals](#) (introduced in March 2020); and a temporary ban on home repossessions.

Local authorities are still reporting the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on homelessness service provision. In particular, backlogs have built up due to restrictions limiting the ability to move households in to permanent accommodation, and the greater demand for temporary accommodation that resulted from households whose alternative arrangements were no longer viable.

These backlogs have more recently been further exacerbated by a shortage of tradespeople and building materials, as well as the increased cost of materials, both of which are limiting the ability to prepare properties for use (as settled and temporary accommodation).

Where findings are believed to have been impacted by COVID-19 these have been outlined within the relevant sections.

Impact of cost of living crisis

The [Cost of Living \(Tenant Protection\) \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) was introduced from 27 October 2022 in response to the cost of living crisis, to protect residential tenants from increases in rent and from eviction.

Where figures are believed to have been impacted by cost of living crisis, these have been outlined within the relevant sections.

Impact of Ukrainian displaced people

In order to be able to quantify how many Ukrainian displaced people (UDP) are presenting as homeless, new response categories were added in to the HL1 data collection. Local authorities were asked to provide information backdated to June 2022.

31 out of 32 local authorities have been able to provide this information with their data returns that are used for this publication.

Between April and September 2023, there were 145 applications nationally from UDP households (defined as eligible for support as a result of being a Ukrainian national, lawfully present in the UK through an appropriate scheme). This accounts for less than 1% of all homelessness applications over this period. Data relating to UDP households has been made available in a separate workbook on our [supporting documents page](#).

Impact of changes to local connection legislation

Of the 16,420 households that were assessed as homeless between April and September 2023, 455 (3%) of these were reported as having no local connection to the local authority to which the application was made but to another local authority. It is difficult to determine with any certainty if the changes to local connection legislation has affected these proportions. Although the proportion with a local connection to another (Scottish) local authority only was 2% between January 2021 and March 2022, prior to this it had generally been 3% or higher (the only exception being April to September 2020, immediately following the COVID-19 outbreak).

Stock transfer authorities

For six local authorities – Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar, Glasgow, Inverclyde, and Scottish Borders – stock was transferred from local authority control to housing associations between 2003 and 2007. This should be borne in mind when interpreting figures at local authority level, particularly for outcomes by accommodation type.

The extent of homelessness in Scotland

Key Points



Increases in all of homelessness applications, households assessed as homeless, households and children in temporary accommodation, and open applications.

Applications, assessments, and households in temporary accommodation

Table A: Homelessness applications, assessments and households in temporary accommodation, April to September 2022 and 2023

Measure	2022 Apr-Sep	2023 Apr-Sep	Change	
			Number	Percent
Applications	19,486	20,144	658	3%
Assessed as homeless	15,793	16,420	627	4%
Open applications as at 30 September	28,019	30,724	2,705	10%
Households in temporary accommodation as at 30 September	14,452	15,625	1,173	8%

Over the six-month period 1 April to 30 September 2023, there have been increases in the number of: homelessness applications; households assessed as homeless; open homelessness applications; and households in temporary accommodation, compared to the same period in 2022.

This is the second year in a row increases have been experienced across all these measures. As at 30 September 2023, open applications and households in temporary accommodation reached the highest in the time series from 2003 and 2002, respectively.

The number of children in temporary accommodation has also been increasing over time. This reached 9,895 at 30 June 2023, and decreased very slightly to 9,860 at 30 September 2023. However, this still represents an annual increase of 8% on the 9,125 children in temporary accommodation at 30 September 2022.

Many local authorities have noted that the overall increase in applications, coupled with the reduction in the ability to provide settled accommodation to homeless households has led to increases in open applications and increases in temporary accommodation.

For local authorities that were able to provide explanations around the increases in applications, common themes emerged around: increased cost of living; less affordable housing as a result of increases in private sector rents and interest rates; and increased demand from asylum seekers, migrants and those from resettlement schemes.

Common reasons for inability to provide settled accommodation emerging from local authority feedback were: lack of staff capacity to meet increased demands; lack of affordable housing options, meaning it can take longer to find and provide settled accommodation; lack of supply of new affordable housing, affected by increased development costs; and on-going backlogs which built up as a result of COVID-19.

Intentionality

Of the 16,420 applications that were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in the six-month period in 2023, 16,085 (98%) were assessed as unintentionally homeless and 335 (2%) were assessed as intentionally homeless. Intentionally homeless households increased by 116 (53%) compared to last year, although they only account for 2% of all assessments.

Local authority differences

Applications

Twenty local authorities saw a numerical increase in applications between April to September 2022 and April to September 2023.

Glasgow experienced the largest numerical increase (343, 11%), followed by North Lanarkshire (222, 24%) and South Lanarkshire (217, 18%).

Other local authorities with large proportionate increases were: Midlothian (71, 26%); Perth & Kinross (92, 25%); and Inverclyde (36, 24%).

The largest numerical decreases were in Fife (96, 7%) and Dumfries & Galloway (86, 13%).

Open homelessness applications

Large increases in the number of open homelessness applications were experienced for: Edinburgh (898); South Lanarkshire (494); Glasgow (488); Falkirk (355); Aberdeen City (284) and North Lanarkshire (208).

Fife, Highland, Stirling and West Lothian had the largest decreases in the number of open homelessness applications, each between 124 and 129.

Households assessed as homeless

Large proportionate increases were experienced for: Perth & Kinross (120, 43%); Falkirk (120, 28%); and West Lothian (114, 27%).

East Renfrewshire has the highest proportionate decrease (100, 39%).

Temporary accommodation

Edinburgh (378, 11%), Glasgow (222, 7%), Aberdeen City (198, 69%), Fife (176, 21%) and Falkirk (120, 34%) have had the largest numerical increases between September 2022 and September 2023. Perth & Kinross has also experienced a high proportionate increase (24, 47%).

The largest decrease was in Highland (146, 23%), as a result of prioritising housing allocations to homeless households.

Reasons for Homelessness and Prior Circumstances

Key Points

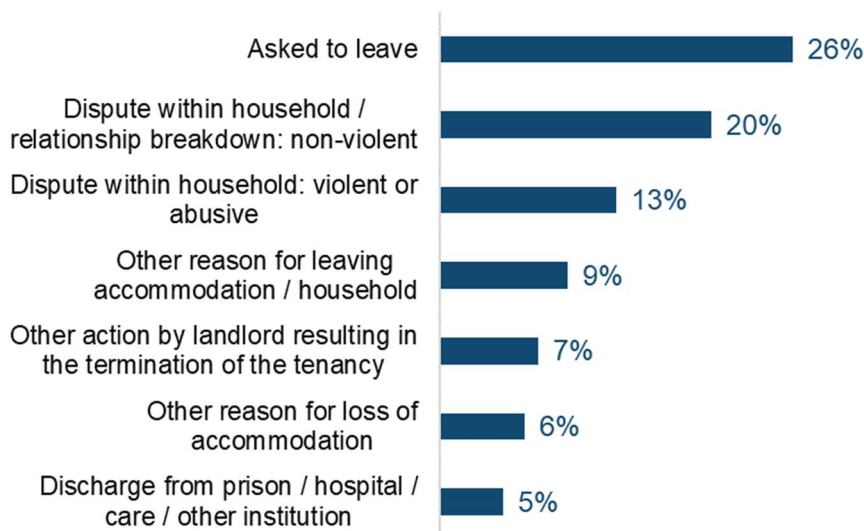
- Proportions becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy have been reacting to changes in legislation.

↑ Increases in the reporting of rough sleeping, particularly over the last quarter.

Reasons

Most common reasons for homelessness remain constant

Chart 1: Main reasons for homelessness, April to September 2023



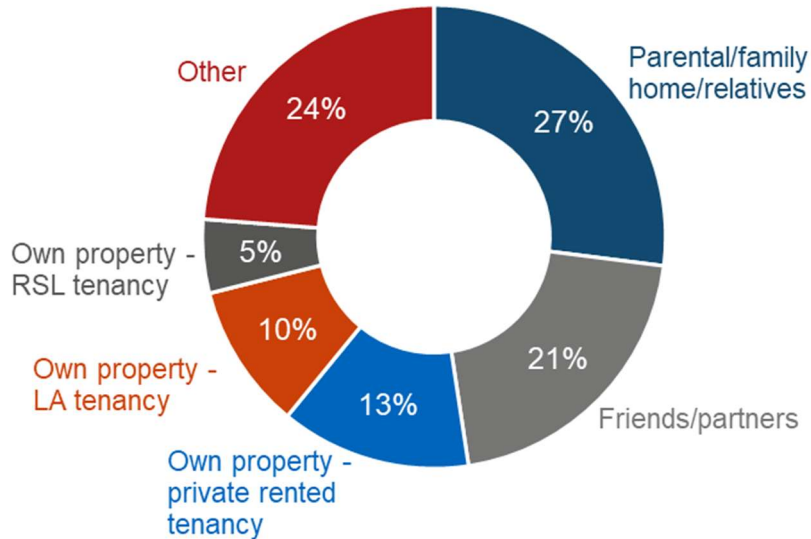
‘Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy’ has experienced the most fluctuation over the last few years. This is likely connected to changes in legislation, as can also be seen in the proportions becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy below.

Some applicants (76%) also provided additional reasons for homelessness. ‘Not to do with applicant household’ (51%) was the most common, followed by ‘mental health reasons’ (27%).

Previous property

Households becoming homeless from friends, relatives and partners account for nearly half of the total

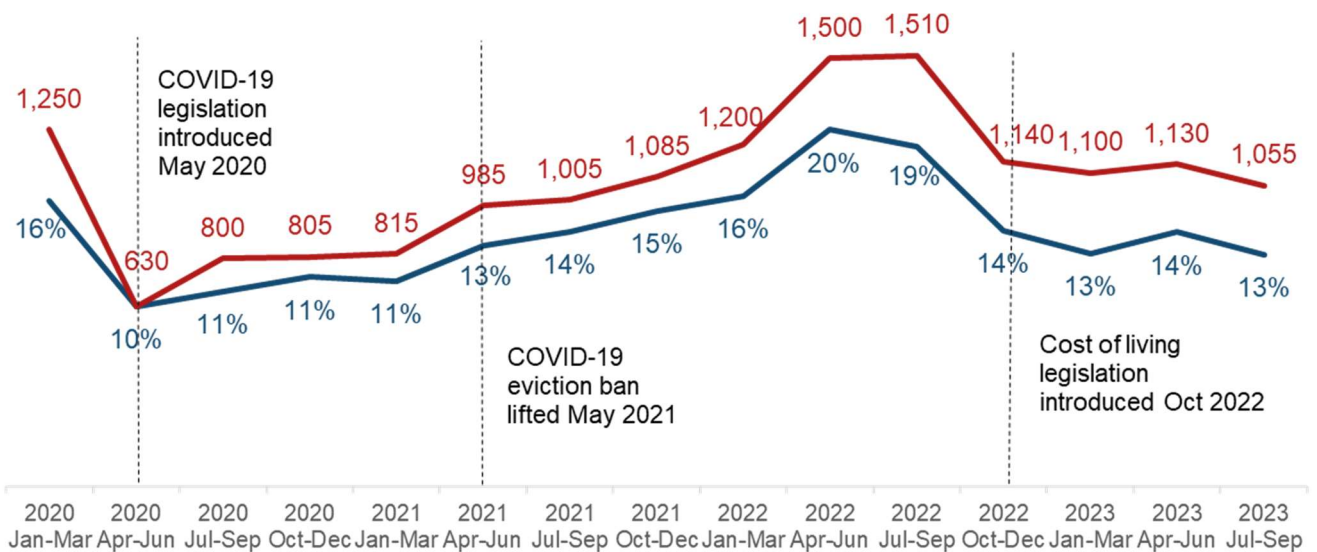
Chart 2: Property type from which the household became homeless, April to September 2023



As noted above, the proportion of households becoming homeless from a ‘Private rented tenancy’ has experienced the most fluctuation over the last few years.

Households becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy has been reacting to legislation changes

Chart 3: Number and proportion of households becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy, January 2020 to September 2023

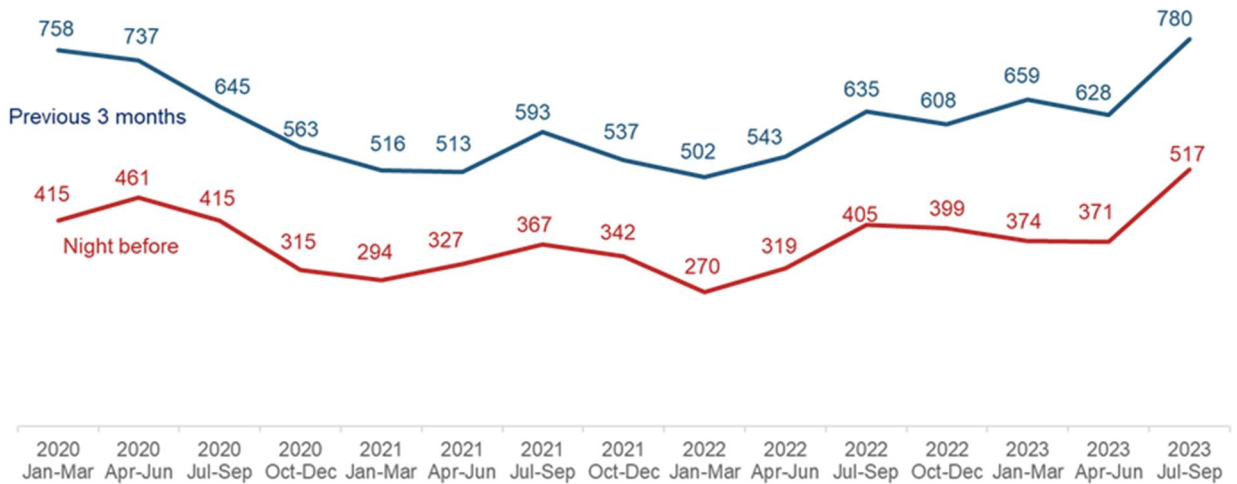


Rough sleeping

Over the six-month period 1 April to 30 September 2023, 888 households (4% of all applications) reported rough sleeping the night before and 1,408 households (7% of all applications) in the previous three months before their homelessness application.

There were particularly sharp increases in the reporting of rough sleeping over the last quarter

Chart 4: Households experiencing rough sleeping prior to making a homelessness application, quarterly, January 2020 to September 2023



Characteristics

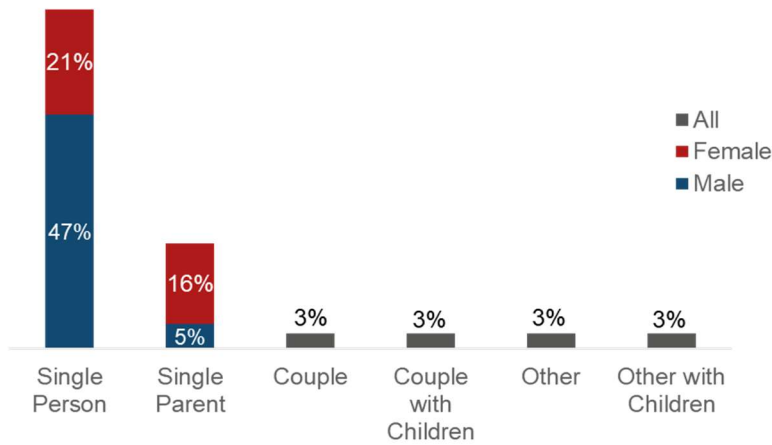
Key Points

- 27% of homeless households contain children, a decrease from 31% in 2022.

Just over half (56%) of main applicants of homeless households were male in 2023.

The majority of homeless households are single adult

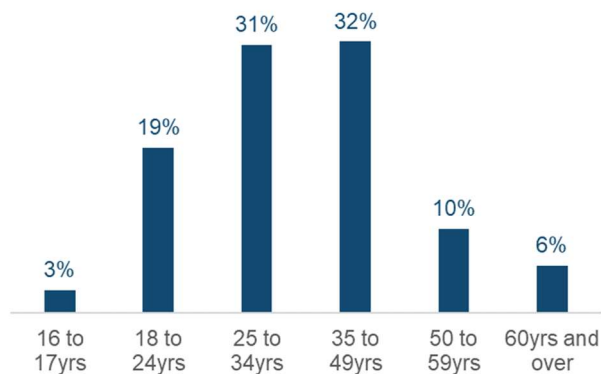
Chart 5: Household type (households assessed as homeless), April to September 2023



27% of all households assessed as homeless contained children. This is a decrease from 31% over the same six month period in 2022.

Nearly two-thirds of main applicants of homeless households are aged between 25 and 49 years old

Chart 6: Age of main applicant (households assessed as homeless), April to September 2023



Between April and September 2023, 83% of main applicants stated they were of White ethnicity.

Temporary Accommodation

Key Points

- Households spent an average of 216 days in temporary accommodation
- 1,575 instances of households not being offered temporary accommodation

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 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 15,625 households in temporary accommodation as at 30 September 2023. The placement level returns show that there were 16,165 temporary accommodation placements open at 30 September 2023 – 540 (3%) 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 period).

Reporting of temporary accommodation

Between April and September 2023, 24,077 temporary accommodation placements were entered and 23,741 were exited. This is a net difference of 336. This is not quite the same as the increase of 586 households in temporary accommodation between 31 March and 30 September 2023 from the HL2 data, however, this is likely due to the differences in the collections outlined above. Total number of placements is a useful measure for showing the overall scale of temporary accommodation usage. However, placement level analysis alone provides limited insight due to the often very transient nature of the use of temporary accommodation. It is not unusual for households to enter and exit multiple placements, with or without gaps in between.

When considering certain aspects of temporary accommodation such as number of placements, average time spent in temporary accommodation etc., the true extent of this can only be fully understood once a household's homelessness application has been closed.

How many households entered temporary accommodation for the first time? How many exited for the last time?

Between April and September 2023, 11,927 households entered a first (ever) temporary accommodation placement. This may include households who made a homelessness application prior to this. Over the same period, 9,437 households exited their last (ever) temporary accommodation placement. A household is considered to have 'exited' temporary accommodation in a reporting period only if their homelessness case has closed and their last associated temporary accommodation placement is within that period.

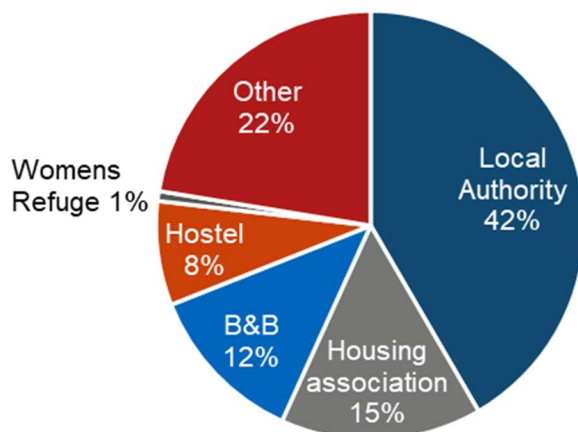
These figures give a net difference of 2,490 (21%) more households entering temporary accommodation for the first time than exiting for the last time. This relates to the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation which can be seen in the snapshot figure, although the numbers will not match given the differences outlined above.

Edinburgh had the largest numerical difference with 547 more households entering than exiting. The next largest was Glasgow with a net difference of 454 more households entering than exiting.

What types of temporary accommodation are used?

The most commonly used temporary accommodation was local authority accommodation

Chart 7: Types of temporary accommodation used, as at 30 September 2023



The use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation experienced the largest increase from 1,473 households in September 2022 to 1,907 in September 2023 (29%).

Some local authorities noted the rise in the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation has resulted from the increase in general demand for temporary accommodation.

The 'Other' category includes 'newer' types of temporary accommodation such as rapid access accommodation, community housing and shared tenancies, which can be deemed suitable.

Local authority (furnished), housing association and other temporary accommodation remain more commonly used for households with children compared to all households. Hostel and Bed & Breakfast accommodation are used much less for households with children.

How long do households spend in temporary accommodation?

For cases that closed between April and September 2023, where there was at least one temporary accommodation placement, households spent an average of 216 days in temporary accommodation.

How often do applicants refuse temporary accommodation?

A household can choose to refuse an offer of temporary accommodation made by the local authority. There were 3,610 refusals of temporary accommodation between April and September 2023. This is 30 (1%) less than the same period for 2022.

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.

Between April and September 2023, there were 1,575 instances of households not being offered temporary accommodation – 60 for April to June and 1,515 for July to September. This is a considerable increase from the 345 in the same period in 2022.

This large increase is attributed to Glasgow, who had 1,355 instances of not being able to offer temporary accommodation between July and September, compared to less than 5 in all previous quarters back to October to December 2020. Glasgow has noted this increase is due to the council reducing its use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

An additional seven local authorities reported at least one instance of not offering accommodation over the six month period in 2023. The next largest was Edinburgh (145), which has decreased from 325 in 2022. The others were Aberdeen City, Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Fife, Highland and Stirling.

How often do local authorities breach unsuitable accommodation legislation?

Important! These figures should be treated with caution due to:

- a) reporting anomalies and inconsistencies;
- b) uncertainty caused by the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) legislation in May 2020; and
- c) the existence of COVID-19 exceptions between May 2020 and September 2021.

See below for further details on these.

Between April and September 2023 there were 2,335 reported breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order (UAO) across twenty-two local authorities. This is a notable increase from the 1,555 reported in the same six month period in 2022.

Edinburgh accounted for the largest number of breaches (760). There were particularly large increase in the reporting of breaches for: Aberdeen City (from 5 to 245), Dumfries & Galloway (from less than 5 to 160); Dundee City (from less than 5 to 110); and West Dunbartonshire (from less than 5 to 70).

Reporting anomalies and inconsistencies

Increased scrutiny of the data brought about by changes in legislation and the introduction of COVID-19 exceptions uncovered anomalies and inconsistencies in the reporting of breaches. Through this process, it became clear that this was exacerbated by a lack of consistent interpretation of unsuitable accommodation legislation and data collection guidance.

In May 2022, enhanced data collection guidance was issued to local authorities to clarify reporting requirements and, in turn, ensure consistency and improve quality. While the vast majority of local authorities have been able to update their management information systems in line with the enhanced guidance in time for this publication, not all have.

In addition, some errors have been identified for local authorities who have implemented changes. This is to be expected over the transition period. The vast majority of errors identified have been corrected in time for publication, although there are still some outstanding.

Therefore, issues persist around comparability and correctness of this data.

Additional quality assurance processes have been incorporated to pick up errors quickly and close working with local authorities is ongoing to ensure that consistent reporting against updated guidance is implemented as quickly and as correctly as possible.

Changes in legislation

Prior to 5 May 2020, a breach was encountered when a household with a pregnant member and/or child is in unsuitable temporary accommodation for more than 7 days. From 5 May 2020, this was extended to all households. Therefore, breaches figures before and from the 5 May 2020 are not comparable. To also note, this falls in the middle of a reporting quarter.

COVID-19 exceptions

Temporary exceptions were put in place to allow local authorities to provide households with accommodation in response to COVID-19. The legislation noted that a placement was not considered unsuitable if:

- a person in the household has symptoms of coronavirus and the household requires to isolate; or
- the accommodation is required to provide temporary accommodation to ensure that a distance of 2 metres can be maintained between a member of the household and a person who is not a member of the household in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus; or
- the local authority is unable to place the household in suitable accommodation as a result of the impacts of coronavirus on temporary accommodation supply in the area, provided that where a household includes a child or a pregnant woman, the household is not placed in unsuitable accommodation for more than 7 days.

The first two of these came into effect in May 2020 and the third came into effect on 30 September 2020.

A household placed in unsuitable accommodation for longer than 7 days where an exception did not apply must still be recorded as a breach.

All exceptions ceased on 30 September 2021. Again, this means that data will not be comparable across the series.

Outcomes

Key Points

- 82% of unintentionally homeless cases secured settled accommodation as an outcome. This compares to 84% in 2022

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.

Cases closed

Over the six-month period in 2023, there were 15,220 applications closed that had been assessed as unintentionally homeless. This is an increase of 10% compared to 2022.

Lost contact

Contact was maintained for most households assessed as unintentionally homeless (96%, the same as last year) and intentionally homeless (93%, also the same as last year, although bearing in mind these are based on relatively small numbers).

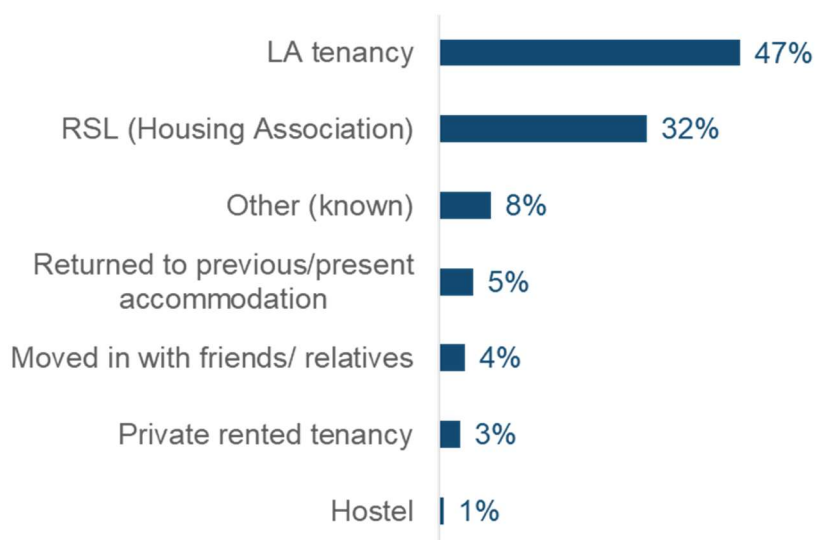
Outcomes

Of the 13,730 unintentionally homeless cases that closed in the six-month period (where contact was maintained and the outcome known), 82% secured settled accommodation. This is slightly lower than 84% in 2022.

Settled accommodation here is defined as a local authority tenancy, a tenancy with a registered social landlord or a private rented tenancy.

Local authority tenancy and registered social landlord accommodation account for the vast majority of outcomes for homeless households

Chart 8: Outcomes for households assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness, April to September 2023



The proportion of intentionally homeless households securing settled accommodation increased from 38% to 49%. However, these are based on relatively small numbers and are therefore particularly susceptible to natural fluctuation.

Housing support assessments

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 77% of cases where there was a duty to assess between April and September 2023. Support was provided for 39% of all cases, although support was not provided for 5% who were identified as needing it. In 22% of cases where there was a duty to assess, no assessment took place and no support was provided.

Notes on Tables

All of the tables and charts in this publication are available in electronic format on the [supporting documents page](#).

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.

[Data Protection Impact Assessment and Quality Assurance Statement for HL1, HL2, HL3 and PREVENT1 data collections](#)

Updates to previous statistics

The data we use in this publication is collected from local authorities on a quarterly basis. As a result these figures are updated on an ongoing 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 10,763 homeless applications were made in January to March 2023, but our annual 'Homelessness in Scotland: 2022 to 2023' publication gave a figure of 10,538. This is a difference of 225 applications, or approximately 2%. A table comparing the annual number of applications is included in the tables accompanying this publication.

Known data quality issues

There are other data quality issues of which we are aware:

- There are a small number of 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 homelessness 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 and Orkney do not include all temporary accommodation placements used, and therefore understates the number of households in temporary accommodation within these councils.
- There are inconsistencies between local authorities in the reporting of breaches of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020. From May 2020 to September 2021 exceptions were put in place in response to COVID-

19 which caused confusion for some local authorities, particularly around when the extension of the legislation (from only households with pregnant women and/or children to all) should commence. Local authorities were able to capture different levels of information regarding breaches around this time (i.e. whether an exception could or could not be applied) which has implications for data comparability. In May 2022, enhanced guidance was issued to provide clarity around the reporting of breaches. It was anticipated that this should relate to all data from 1 April 2022, however, not all local authorities have managed to correctly implement changes to management information systems as yet, and therefore over the transition period, there will remain inconsistency and inaccuracies within the data.

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 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 31 December 2012, it also determined whether the applicant had a priority need. However, from 31 December 2012, the [priority need test was abolished](#).

The Local Authority may then test 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. There were changes in legislation from November 2019 which give local authorities the power to assess for intentionality, rather than it being a legal duty to do so. Local connection with an authority can be based on residency, current employment, family associations or other special reasons. From November 2022, local authorities no longer have the power to refer an applicant to another local authority in Scotland on the grounds of their local connection. However, the power to refer applicants with a local connection to an authority in England and Wales remains, provided they do not have a local connection with the authority receiving the application. Only applicants who are assessed as being unintentionally homeless may be referred to another authority.

[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 they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere. A person is also homeless if they have 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 they will become homeless within two months. A person is intentionally homeless if they deliberately did or failed to do anything which led to the loss of accommodation which it was reasonable for them 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](#).

[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 31 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 31 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.

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 21 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 on Homelessness](#).

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 [Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2020](#) extended the order to include all households, rather than just those containing children or a pregnant woman.

The [Housing Support Services \(Homelessness\)\(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) came into force on 1 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. There is [guidance available for local authorities on their Housing Support Duty to Homeless Households](#).

Summary of Local Authority duty to homeless households:

Unintentionally homeless

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 (outwith Scotland). The receiving Local Authority must then secure settled accommodation for the applicant.

Intentionally Homeless

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

Potentially homeless, unintentionally so

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

Potentially homeless, intentionally so

Provide advice and assistance to help retain accommodation.

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