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# Homelessness in Greater Glasgow and Greater Manchester

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An analysis of local authority homelessness data

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# Introduction

This Report analyses local authority homelessness data in Greater Manchester and ‘Greater Glasgow’ and seeks to understand the applicant population, including their needs and circumstances, as well as the effect the different English and Scottish policy approaches and legislation have on the lives of those experiencing homelessness, or the threat of it, within these two conurbations.

Homelessness is a blight on a country as wealthy and progressive as the UK, the victims of it are often the most vulnerable in society and it is increasing at a time when the resources available to respond to it are being stretched by ever stringent local authority budget cuts. Homelessness is inextricably linked to poor physical and mental health and wellbeing, substance misuse, vulnerability and violence. This Report adheres to the view espoused by Crisis (2016) that ‘a home provides roots, identity, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing. Homelessness is about the loss of all these’.

Data regarding homelessness is widely seen as inadequate, the UK Statistics Authority published an assessment of the homelessness data collated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and found that only the ‘statutory homeless figures’ could be considered ‘national statistics’ as the other homelessness related data was not robust enough and potentially misleading. This Report analyses the statutory homelessness figures and the prevention and relief activity data; the analysis is focused on this data only in order to obtain the most accurate picture possible of at least one section of the homeless population.

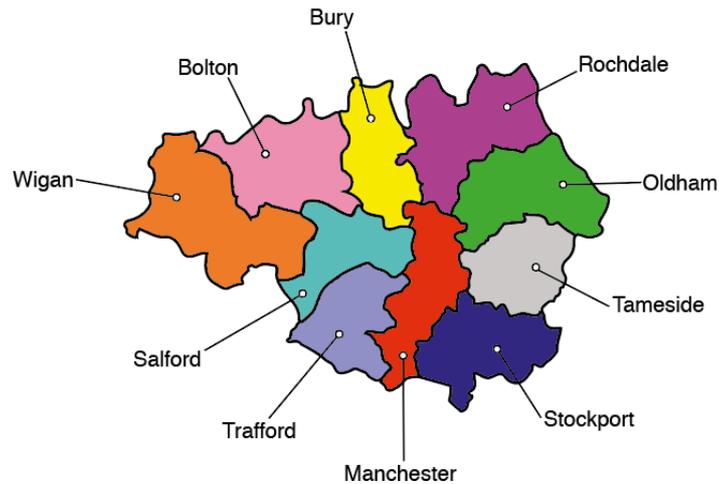
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All analysis is concerned with data for 2015/16 unless otherwise stated.

# The Localities

Greater Manchester is a county in England composed of 10 local authorities, with a population of 2,732,854:



'Greater Glasgow' is not an official administrative geography, but has been defined within this Report based on the area covered by the Glasgow City Region Deal that encompasses the following 8 local authorities and a population of 5,347,600:



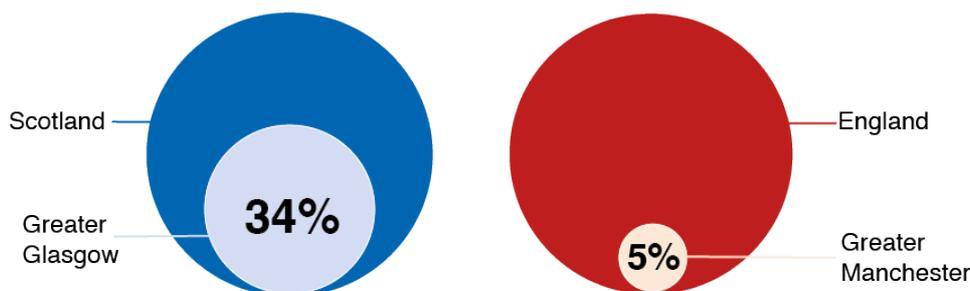
These two localities have been chosen as the focus of this analysis due to their prominence in the policy landscape of Scotland and England. Greater Manchester has negotiated a devolution deal that will see the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and local NHS gain control over their £6 billion health and social care budget as well as over elements of housing, transport and adult skills, amongst others. The espoused benefits of this include the ability to make decisions at the most appropriate (local) level, to 'transform' the lives of the population, and, have the freedom to be more innovative. Additionally, homelessness in the city of Manchester has become increasingly visible following homeless protests and camps that have recently received national media attention, all of which stands in stark contrast to its status as the apparent centre of the 'Northern Powerhouse'.

Greater Glasgow is part of this analysis due, in part, to what has been termed the 'Glasgow Effect', which is 'an excess of mortality beyond that which can be explained by current indices of deprivation' (Craig, 2010); the levels of mortality also impact dramatically on the overall figures for Scotland. Although this Report does not explicitly explore 'excess mortality', the links between this and homelessness/insecure housing are well established. From a policy perspective, Greater Glasgow has also been selected due to the highly complimentary commentary that's been made regarding national Scottish homelessness and housing policy, including from charities such as Crisis (2016) who have stated that 'Scotland has led the way on addressing homelessness...[and has] some of the most progressive legislation in the world'.

If these areas are located in Countries/counties with the best homelessness laws in Europe (Scotland), and the impending powers to 'create a new future for health and social care services' (Greater Manchester) (GMCA, 2016) then a combination of these factors could be a strong contributor to discovering what an ideal homelessness policy environment could be, and what options individual local authorities may have to solve the homeless/housing crisis within their communities.

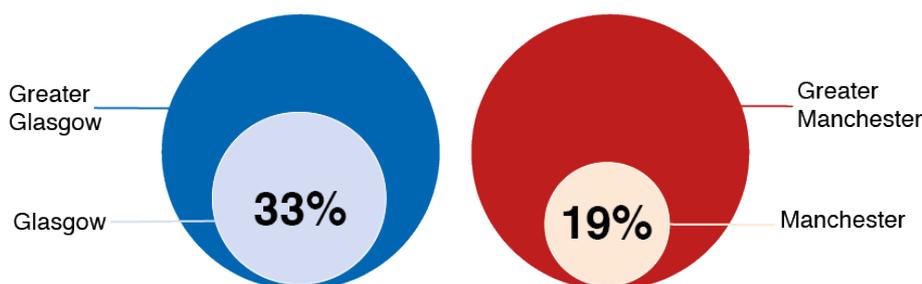
Finally, Greater Glasgow has also been selected due to its size as a proportion of Scotland as a whole; as displayed below, it accounts for over a third of the entire Country. Although it has almost double the population of Greater Manchester, the difference in proportion presented below is still stark, with Greater Manchester accounting for only 5% of England. As noted, Greater Manchester has been selected for reasons other than its size, but the differences in proportion between the two areas have been presented in order to contextualise the forthcoming data analysis:

Figure 1: Population of locality as a proportion of the Country



Although the areas may differ in terms of their proportion of their country, there are similarities in terms of the breakdown of local authorities, with both Greater Glasgow and Greater Manchester dominated by a single authority:

Figure 2: Population of largest Local Authority as a proportion of the Locality



Greater Glasgow and Greater Manchester also contain a wide variety of poor health and social care issues that can be linked to homelessness and insecure housing. In Greater Manchester:

- High proportions of Greater Manchester neighbourhoods feature among the most deprived in England as a whole, and 21% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) were in the top 10% most deprived in England. (Lupton *et al*, 2016).
- 30% of children are living below the poverty line.
- A baby girl born in Manchester can expect to live 15 years less in good health than a girl born in Richmond.

Similarly, well-known statistics for Greater Glasgow include:

- Mortality in West Central Scotland is higher, and improving more slowly, than in all comparably deindustrialised regions in Europe.
- Health inequalities throughout Glasgow are stark; life expectancy drops by between 1.2 years (females) and 2 years (males) for every railway station stop between Jordanhill and Bridgeton (McCartney, 2010).
- The recently released Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation revealed that Glasgow contained 56 of the 100 most deprived areas in Scotland.

The unwanted statistical hallmarks of deprivation, based on numerous criteria, are evident in both Greater Glasgow and Greater Manchester and this is another reason they have been chosen as the focus of this Report, the aim of which is to understand what can be learnt from official homeless statistics, and what recommendations or solutions to alleviate the issues can be found.

# Applications and Applicants

The way data is collected regarding homeless applications is markedly different in Scotland and England, therefore, a straightforward comparison is not possible as people, households and situations are counted differently in each locality. Even something as apparently simple as: ‘how many people applied to be homeless in 2015/16?’ cannot be directly compared due to the different processes and legislation within each Country. Consequently, this Report seeks to illuminate the divergences in data collection wherever possible, and ensure that all figures are appropriately contextualised.

In terms of the number of households making an application to their local authority, these are quantified in each locality as:

| Locality           | Quantity | Measurement  |
|--------------------|----------|--|
| Greater Glasgow    | 12,735   | Number of applications under the Homeless Persons legislation to Local Authority in Scotland |
| Greater Manchester | 6,684    | Statutory Homelessness applications for which decisions were taken by Local Authority        |

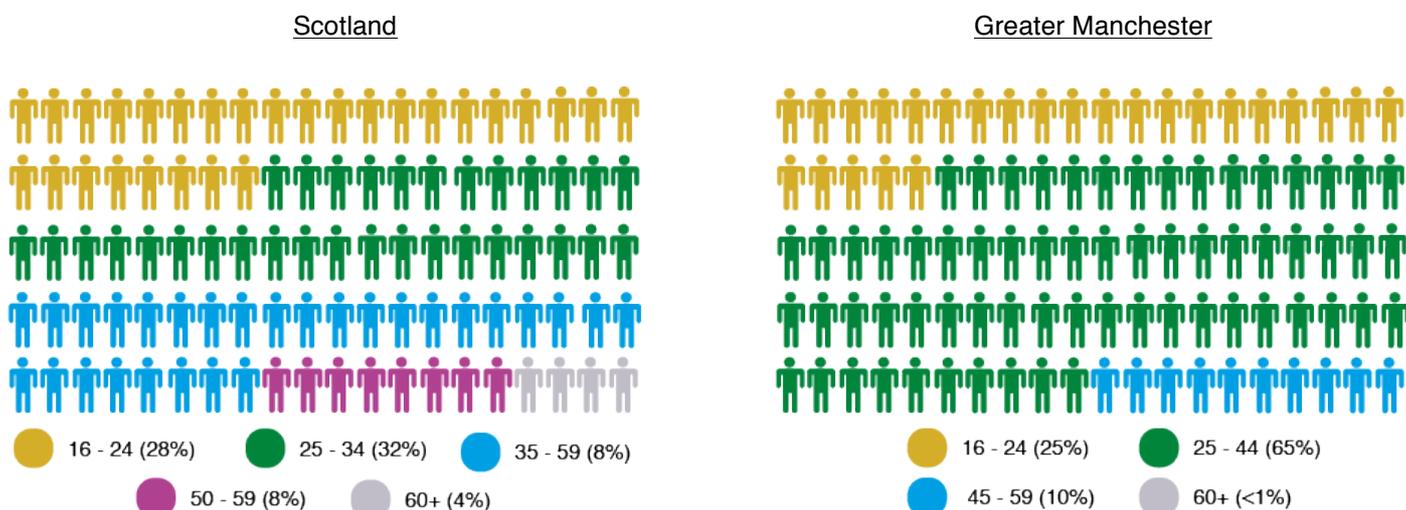
In line with the difference in population, the application figure for Greater Glasgow is almost double Greater Manchester. Similarly, the number of applications made in these areas as a proportion of the applications made for the entire country is also similar to the population breakdowns presented in Figure 2; Greater Glasgow applications account for 37% of all applications made in Scotland, and Greater Manchester applications account for 6% of those made in England – both localities increase their ‘share’ by 1 percentage point.

Key demographic features of the applicant population in each locality are presented below; demographic data is not available at a local authority level in Scotland, so the figures below are for the country as a whole:

## Age:

The age breakdown is relatively similar for both Scotland and Greater Manchester with the majority of applicants aged between 25 and 59; Scotland has slightly more applicants aged below 24, and significantly more applicants aged over 60:

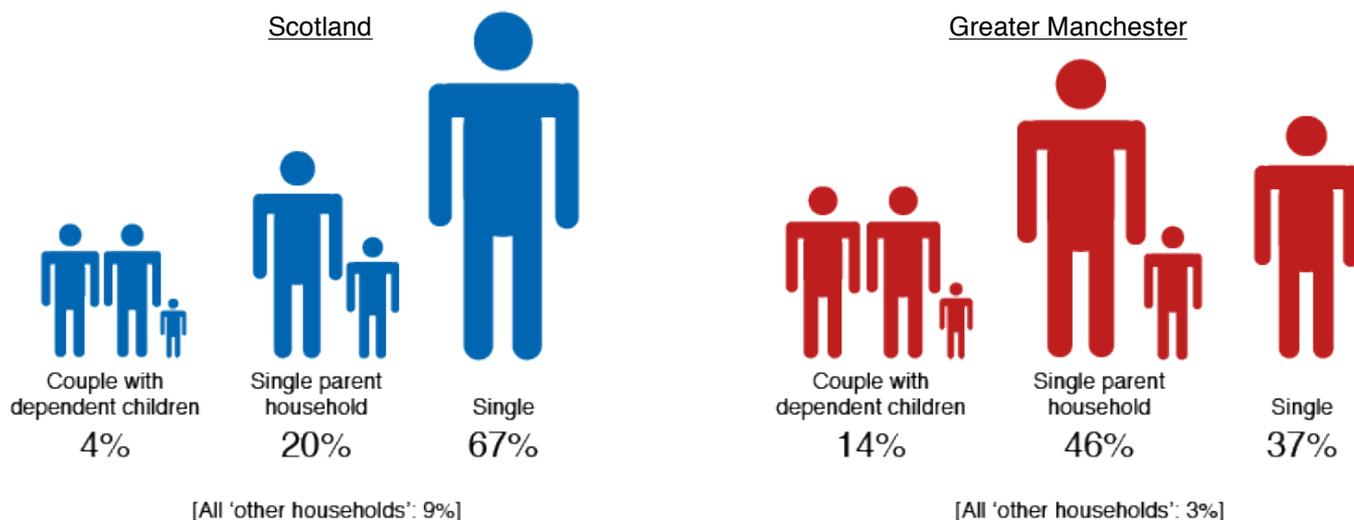
Figure 3: Age of applicants



## Household Type:

In terms of the composition of the households applying for help, this data is again only available for Scotland as a whole, and whereas Scotland collates data for all applicant households regardless of assessment decision, data for Greater Manchester is for applicants who were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. This difference explains why Scotland appears to have so many more ‘single’ household applicants than Greater Manchester, as these are the households that are less likely to be eligible in England, whereas, the inclusion of ‘dependent children’ in a household is a key eligibility factor. Both sets of data reveal that there are more single parent than couples with dependent children applicants:

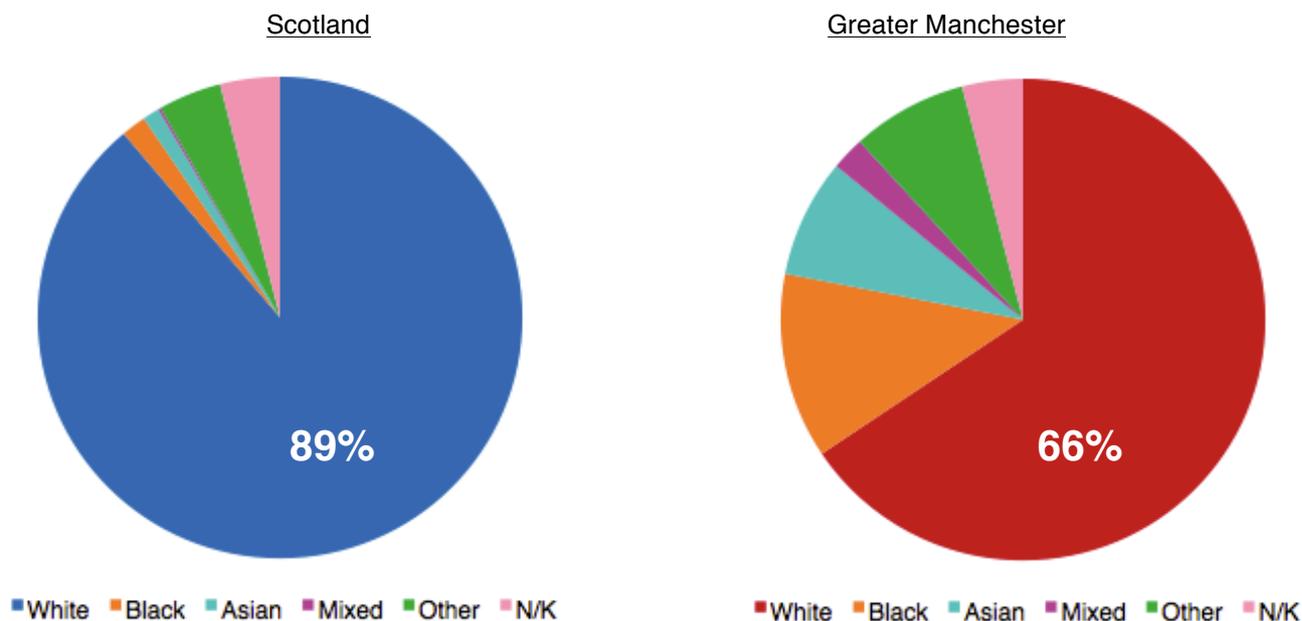
Figure 4: Applicant household types



**Ethnicity:**

Data regarding ethnicity is available for all applicants in Scotland and applicant households for which decisions were taken in Greater Manchester; the data generally correlates with the wider make-up of the populations, with more diversity present in Greater Manchester:

Figure 5: Applicant ethnicity



The demographic data presented above has been designed to give a brief insight into who is applying as homeless to their local authority. As demonstrated, there is little difference in regards to age and ethnicity, the major divergence comes from the type of household, with significantly more single households applying in Scotland. The prevalence of single households can be attributed to the differing legislation in place within the two countries, which impacts the application process.

# Legislation and Eligibility

The level of help available to a homeless, or at risk of homelessness, household is highly dependent upon which country they are applying in. The experience of households applying to their local authority in Greater Glasgow and Greater Manchester is significantly different.

In England, local authorities only have a main homelessness duty to those who are:

- In priority need
  - Because of: an emergency (flood, fire, etc.) / dependent children / pregnant woman / aged 16 – 17 / aged 18 – 20 and formerly ‘in care’ / vulnerable due to old age, physical disability, or mental illness or disability / drug or alcohol dependent / former asylum seeker
- Statutorily homeless
  - No accommodation available in UK or elsewhere – unreasonable for them continue living in existing accommodation (threat of violence, overcrowding, very poor conditions)
- Eligible for assistance
  - British citizen or have ‘right to remain’ and/or be ‘habitually resident’
- Unintentionally homeless
  - Not done anything, or failed to do anything, deliberately which resulted in loss of accommodation
- Have a local connection
  - Normal residence, employment or family associations, or due to special circumstances

If an applicant does not meet the above criteria, the local authority does not have a statutory obligation to provide help. Instead, under the Homelessness Act 2002 every English local authority must only have a *strategy* for preventing homelessness in their district and this strategy must apply to everyone. The strategy concerns prevention and relief activity which involves the local authority assisting people to obtain alternative accommodation or remain in their current one; actions include helping to resolve benefit problems, advice, mediation and negotiation. Although the strategy must be in place, the local authority is under no statutory obligation to help someone secure accommodation if they do not meet the above criteria for a main homelessness duty. Essentially, local authorities need only provide basic ‘advice’, to those households who are judged to not be in priority need and intentionally homeless.

The Scottish system was relatively similar, until the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and subsequent Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 which abolished or substantially amended the priority need, intentionality and local connection stages of the process. The changes, which came into full effect in December 2012, included:

- An end to priority needs testing and extension of duties to non-priority homeless households, ensuring they’re provided with temporary accommodation, advice and assistance.
- Local authorities no longer under a duty to carry out ‘intentionality investigations’ and, if they do deem applicants intentionally homeless, they must provide them with a short tenancy, with support, with a view to converting that tenancy to a full one by the end of a year.
- Greater emphasis on the support provision, ensuring that it is provided as part of the short tenancy and works to move households into a full tenancy.

The abolition of the priority needs test was described by Shelter (2003) as the ‘best homelessness law in Europe’ and Crisis (2016) have claimed that Scotland has led the way on addressing homelessness and now has ‘some of the most progressive legislation in the world’.

In contrast, the English system has been widely criticised as ‘essentially an all-or-nothing system that expects people to wait until they are very vulnerable before getting any entitlement to help’ (Mackie, 2016). The two main criticisms levied at the English system are the level of vulnerability required in order to be judged ‘in priority need’, and, the dismal quality of support available to those deemed ‘non-priority’.

The official designation of ‘priority need’ is set out in the bullet point list at the top of this page, but this does not tell the whole story, as ‘vulnerable’ is an extremely broad term. Applicants’ ‘vulnerability’ used to be judged based on the ‘Pereira Test’ whereby a person was deemed ‘vulnerable’ if ‘their circumstances are such that they would struggle more when homeless than the *ordinary street homeless* person’. This definition was widely criticised as it meant applicants were forced to ‘demonstrate that they are more vulnerable than an extremely vulnerable person’ (DCLG, 2016). Following Supreme Court rulings in 2015, the vulnerability assessment was changed so that applicants should now be assessed based on how vulnerable they are compared to the *ordinary person* facing homelessness. This is, arguably, still an arbitrary assessment and an added difficulty to the application process is what a recent DCLG

Committee report (2016) identified as a 'gatekeeping' problem, where people are actively discouraged from applying or too quickly deemed non-priority; the DCLG quoted Shelter who found that:

People underestimate how tenacious you have to be to get a homeless application taken...we cannot avoid the fact that there is a sharper form of gatekeeping as well, where people are just being incredibly poorly served by a public service. We have had pregnant clients, who should be automatically regarded as in priority need, told that they are not pregnant enough.

In order to receive help, an applicant's ability to prove they are 'in priority need' is essential, but, as demonstrated by DCLG and Shelter, proving priority is an extremely difficult thing to do. The English system has been widely described as 'two-tier' with those in priority need/entitled to help at one level, and those not in priority need/entitled to very little at the other. Shelter have linked such an approach to the 'deserving/undeserving poor' arguments that they claim 'have dogged social policy for centuries and led to policy being formed on the basis that homeless people deserved their lot' (Nicholson, 2005).

For the many applicants in the non-priority part of the English two-tier system, the local authority are still required to provide 'advice and guidance', but the same DCLG Report found this to be of generally poor quality with people given leaflets about charities or 'a list of letting agents and being told to go away'. Reductions in local authority funding and resources are undoubtedly a factor in the functioning of this system, which appears geared towards rejecting as many people from it as possible. It should be noted that the DCLG did find example of good practice in response to non-priority households, but the overwhelming evidence found the support offered nationally to be extremely lacking. IPPR North found there to be a 'worker lottery' where 'the information or guidance that an individual received can vary even within the same local authority or service, depending on who [applicants] speak to' (Rose *et al*, 2016).

The key difference between the English and Scottish system appears to be around the designation of 'priority' and the quantity of people who are eligible for support. Shelter argue that the more encompassing Scottish system has reframed the question asked to homeless applicants from, 'how can we test what you are eligible for?' to 'how can we help you?' (Nicholson, 2005).

The question this raises is, if the English system is so poor compared to Scotland, then the most obvious solution could be to emulate the 'most progressive legislation in the world' and abolish the priority needs test in England. However, the DCLG found that the 'Scottish housing market is significantly different to that in England, with, for example, a more stable private rental sector' therefore, local authorities have more options for where to house their applicant population.

Instead, England has drawn inspiration from the Welsh Government's 2014 Housing Act and is currently considering the Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17. According to St Mungos (2016) the, as yet unpublished Bill, proposes the following changes to the English system:

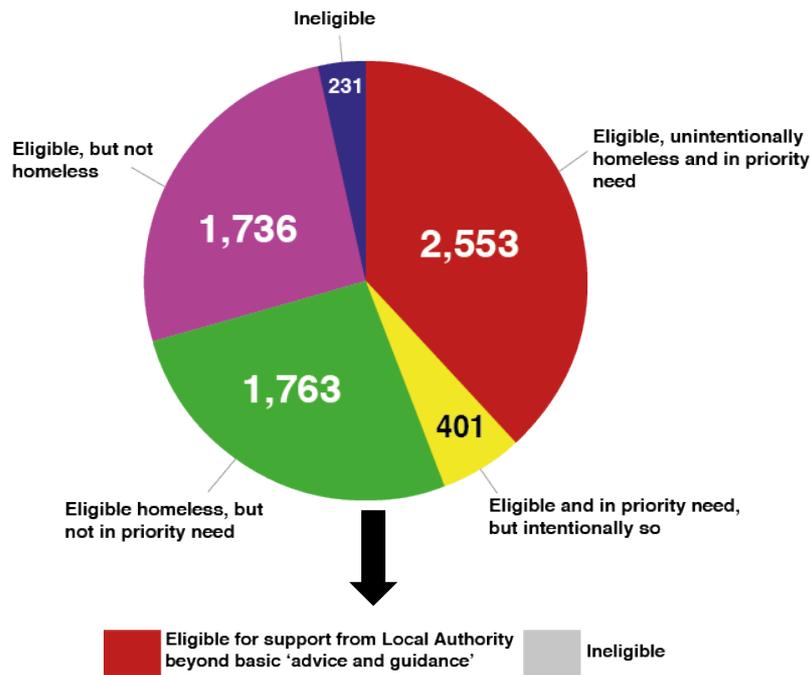
- A stronger advice and information duty – legislation to set out more clearly the types of advice and information the local authority must provide.
- A prevention duty for all eligible households – regardless of priority need or intentionality, local authorities would be required to demonstrate they are taking steps to prevent homelessness, and households would be considered 'threatened with homelessness' if they are at risk of losing their accommodation within 56 days, rather than 28.
- A relief duty for all eligible homeless people who have a local connection – regardless of priority need or intentionality, local authorities would have a duty to take reasonable steps to help secure accommodation for a period of 56 days (including offering accommodation in social housing, providing a grant or loan, or advice and advocacy to secure a tenancy in the private rented sector).
- A duty to provide emergency accommodation for people who are homeless and have nowhere safe to stay – entitled to emergency interim accommodation for a maximum of 56 days (on no more than 1 occasion every 6 months).

The legislation would maintain the current protection for priority needs groups, but as outlined above, the level of support for 'non-priority' and 'intentionally homeless' households would increase dramatically. In terms of the effect that the introduction of this Bill would have had on the homeless applicant population of Greater Manchester, in 2015/16 there would have been an additional 2,164 households eligible for support other than the bare minimal 'advice and guidance'.

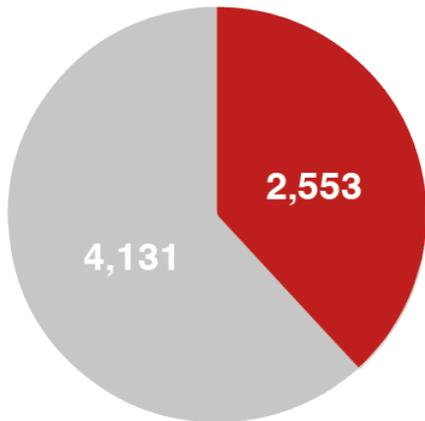
Figure 6 outlines the decisions taken in Greater Manchester in 2015/16 and how the current and potential legislation would influence who would be eligible for more than basic 'advice and guidance'. The increase between current decisions and those under the Homelessness Reduction Bill is significant, the only households still ineligible for any form of help would be those not deemed homeless or generally ineligible to apply:

Figure 6: Impact of Homelessness Reduction Bill on applicant eligibility in Greater Manchester

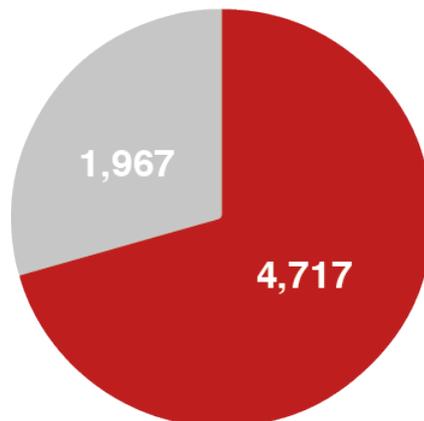
Decisions taken for applicant households in Greater Manchester in 2015/16:



Under current Homelessness legislation

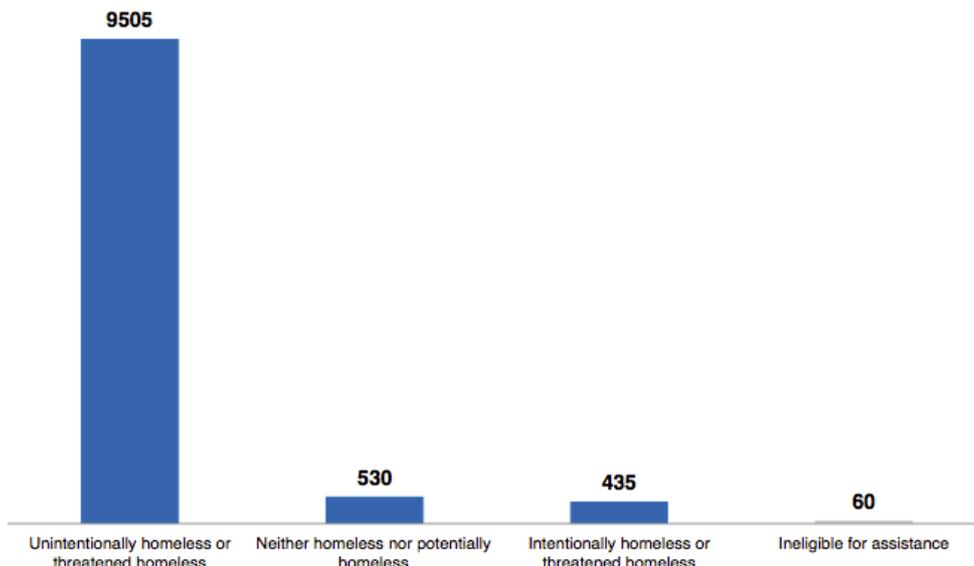


Under proposed Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016 - 17



Although Scotland does not make decisions based on priority need, all applications are still assessed for eligibility and in 2015/16 Greater Glasgow local authorities made the following decisions:

Figure 7: All homelessness assessment decisions in Greater Glasgow



90% of Greater Glasgow applicants were deemed 'unintentionally homeless' compared to only 64% of Greater Manchester; however, this may be due to the removal of the 'duty' to carry out intentionality investigations in Scotland. 'Ineligible' applications accounted for only 6% in Greater Manchester and 1% in Greater Glasgow.

# Needs and Reasons

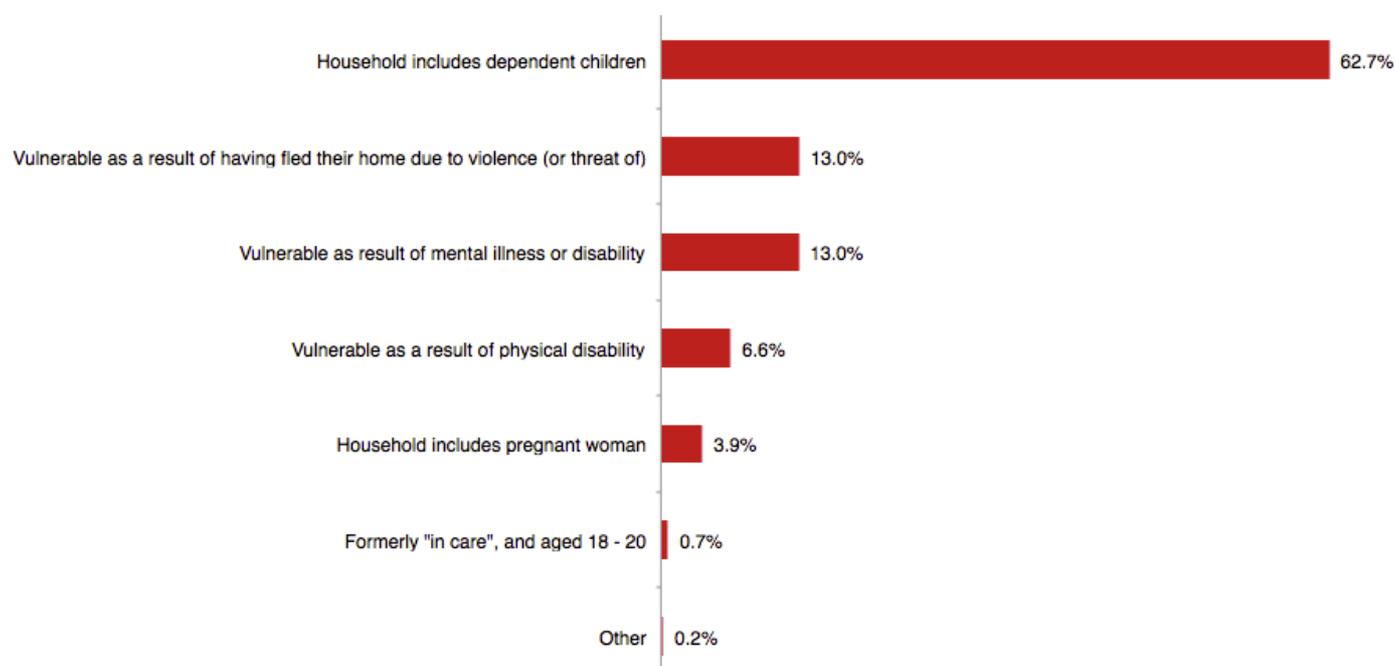
## Needs:

The previous section explored the legislative framework under which a household makes an application to their local authority, this section examines the circumstances that led households to that application; the needs they have, and the main reasons they have lost, or are at risk of losing, their last settled accommodation.

'Needs' are recorded differently in England and Scotland; the highly contested 'priority needs' test is used throughout English local authorities, and in Scotland, the application process seeks to identify the 'support needs for those assessed as homeless (or threatened with homelessness)'.

## Greater Manchester Needs:

Figure 8: Applicant households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, by priority need category – Greater Manchester



Within the English national dataset there are 17 'priority need' categories in total; the Greater Manchester applicant population are categorised within only 7 of these, which could raise questions as to the plausibility of the categorisation. For example, the data would suggest that throughout Greater Manchester no accepted applicant is 'in priority need' due to drug or alcohol dependency. Similarly, only 13% of applicants were accepted as in priority need due to 'violence or the threat of violence', however, 28% of applicants state that 'violence involving a partner' was the main reason they lost their last home (as presented in the upcoming Figure 10).

The disconnect between these two statistics (the priority and the cause) was highlighted in a recent article (Mackie, 2016) that looked at why domestic violence victims were disappearing from homelessness statistics; they found that although there has been a national increase in the number of people blaming a violent relationship breakdown for their homeless application, there was a fall in the number of people accepted as homeless for that reason. One explanation they present for this is that it is easier to demonstrate that there are dependent children in a household (the largest priority need category nationally and for Greater Manchester), than it is to evidence domestic violence, especially given cuts to legal aid.

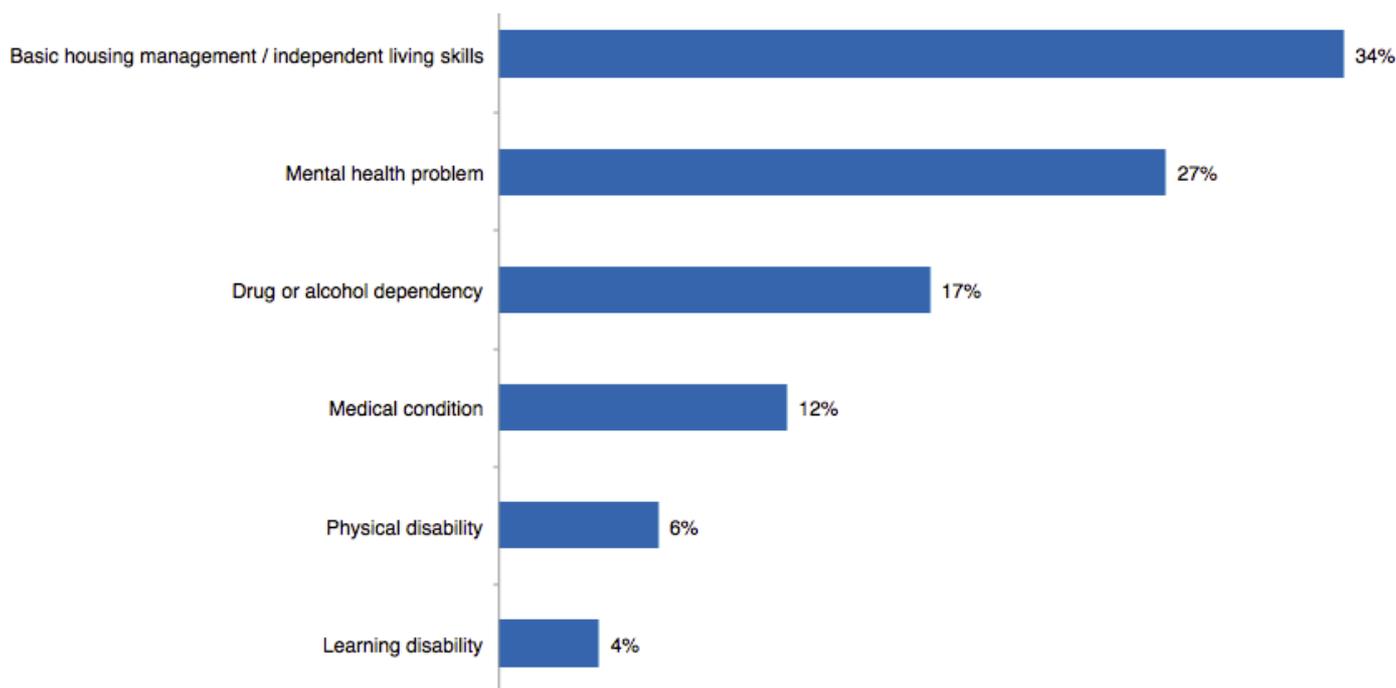
Consequently, any analysis must be conscious that this data is a representation of the statutory homeless *applications* and may not be fully reflective of the statutory homeless *population* and their circumstances.

## Greater Glasgow Needs:

In Scotland, data is collected on the 'support needs' of applicants identified as homeless or threatened with homelessness. Data regarding the specific 'support needs' is only available for the entire country, not the local authority. The data does put the Scotland-wide statistics into context by revealing that 44% of all applicants in Greater

Glasgow have at least one support need, and that there is inconsistency across the individual local authorities with levels of support need ranging from 23% (South Lanarkshire) up to 74% (Inverclyde).

Figure 9: Support need identified for those homeless (or threatened with homelessness) households - Scotland



The application process in Scotland allows for multiple support needs to be selected, and the data reveals that there were 10,051 more support needs identified than there were applications, emphasising the complexity and scale of the support required.

Unlike the English system which has 17 priority need categories, the 'support needs' in Scotland are broken down into only 6, and the most prevalent 'basic housing management / independent living skills' is incredibly broad. This form of categorisation limits analysis to a certain degree, and the lack of category correlation impedes comparison with Greater Manchester. However, a conclusion that can be drawn is that the prevalence of 'mental health problems' as a need in both Scotland and Greater Manchester is deeply telling of a system that deals with the most vulnerable in society. Indeed the DCLG (2016) report quotes research from Homeless Link that found that 45% of homeless people had been diagnosed with mental health problems, nearly double the rate found in the general population (25%).

### Reasons:

People become homeless, or threatened with homelessness, for a myriad of reasons and this is what makes the issue so incredibly complex; it is rarely merely the lack of a physical building to put people in (though lack of viable housing options cannot be dismissed) but the eminent housing association mantra of "you cannot deal with people and their houses separately" is of paramount importance in any attempt to understand the scale of the problem. Consequently, the data available regarding the reasons people have lost their last settled home provides a vital insight into the circumstances of households in Greater Manchester and Greater Glasgow:

### Greater Manchester Reasons:

Figure 10, overleaf, reveals that the main reason for the loss of last settled home for households in Greater Manchester was the 'violent breakdown of a relationship involving a partner', which accounts for 28% of all reasons provided. As stated earlier, this increase aligns with the increase in domestic violence nationally, but is mostly 'hidden' from official statistics, as it does not appear as strongly within the 'priority need' categorisation that requires a higher level of 'proof'.

Figure 10: Main reason for loss of last settled home for households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need – Greater Manchester

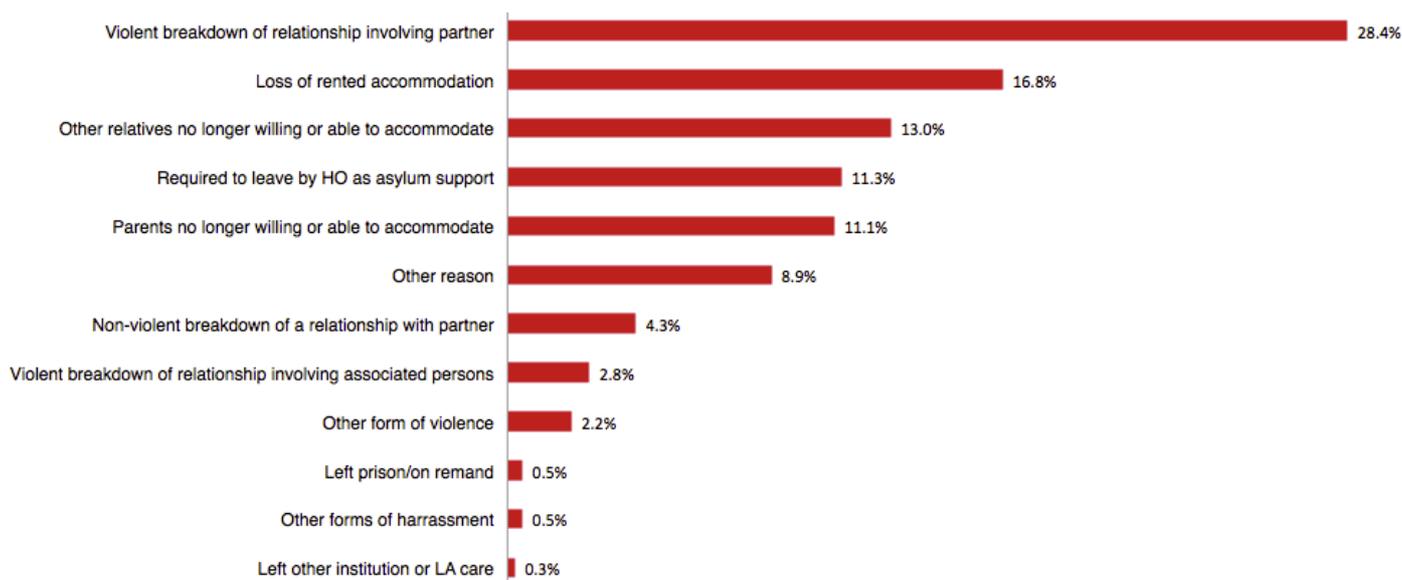


Figure 10 also reveals a relatively high proportion of households (11.1%) who have been ‘required to leave by the Home Office as asylum support’, which is people who, as a result of being given ‘leave to remain’ must now vacate the accommodation they were originally provided with by the Home Office when they arrived in the UK. This reason was recorded in Greater Manchester over twice as much as non-violent relationship breakdown, leaving prison and other forms of harassment. At face value this figure seems incredibly high for a conurbation that has only 5% of England’s total population, however, it was widely reported in 2015 that one in four asylum seekers in the UK live in Greater Manchester, and that this area has more asylum seekers than Wales and Scotland put together (Williams, 2015). Contextualised, the 11.1% rate is much more understandable, however, it does raise questions regarding the amount of additional support needs these applicants may have (e.g. trauma, stress, lack of familial support/local connection) and the additional resources that local authorities may have to employ (e.g. language services).

‘Loss of rented accommodation’ is the second most common reason given for loss of last settled home in Greater Manchester; this is an incredibly broad category that reveals very little regarding the underlying causes for this loss. Data for Scotland appears to address the potential lack of clarity by collating a wider range of data regarding the circumstances around households’ applications; however, once again this is only available for Scotland, not Greater Glasgow separately.

### Scotland Reasons:

Data for loss of last settled home in Scotland is more comprehensive than that available for Greater Manchester, and is presented as:

1. Main reason for making an application for homelessness (with the results split into: ‘reason accommodation is no longer available’ and ‘reasons for having to leave accommodation/household’)
2. Reasons for failing to maintain accommodation prior to application

Applicants are able to select more than one answer and Figures 11 and 12 present the applicant breakdown for Scotland. The variation in ‘reasons’ collated is narrow, as is the terminology, therefore overlap between responses is to be expected.

The data reveals that the main reason given for making an application is that households have been ‘asked to leave’, with over a quarter of all applicants in Scotland selecting this reason. The majority of the other reasons given are linked to personal circumstances and relationships, for example, household disputes (both violent and non-violent) together appear on 29% of all applications, this stands in stark contrast to monetary issues, such as rent arrears and mortgage details, which appear in only 5% of applications. This correlates with the Greater Manchester data, where domestic violence is the most prevalent ‘reason’ given, and further emphasises that homelessness is not just a lack of physical shelter or the money to pay for it, but a highly complex social issue involving incredibly vulnerable people.

Figure 12 presents the reasons households have failed to maintain their accommodation in Scotland; 31% of applicants state that it was ‘not to do with their household’, it was factors beyond their control such as the landlord selling the property, fire, circumstances of other persons sharing previous property, or harassment by others. The remaining 69% of reasons for failing to maintain accommodation are again very personal, and linked to the individual

circumstances of applicants' lives, particularly their health and wellbeing. Key issues identified include mental health, lack of familial/social support and drug/alcohol dependency. These figures link very closely to the identified support needs of applicants previously presented in Figure 9.

Figure 11: Main reason for making an application for homelessness to a Local Authority – Scotland

Key: ■ Reasons accommodation is no longer available ■ Reasons for having to leave accommodation/household

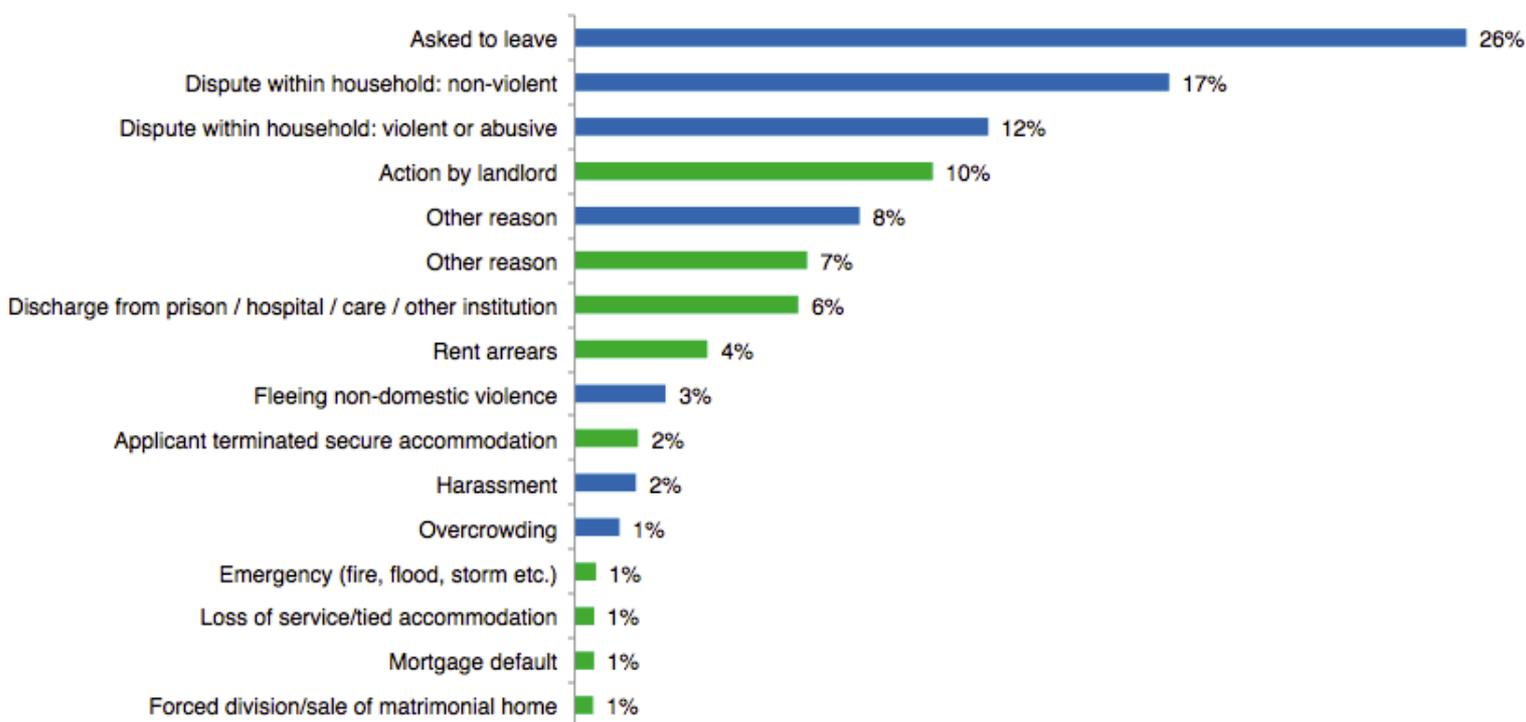
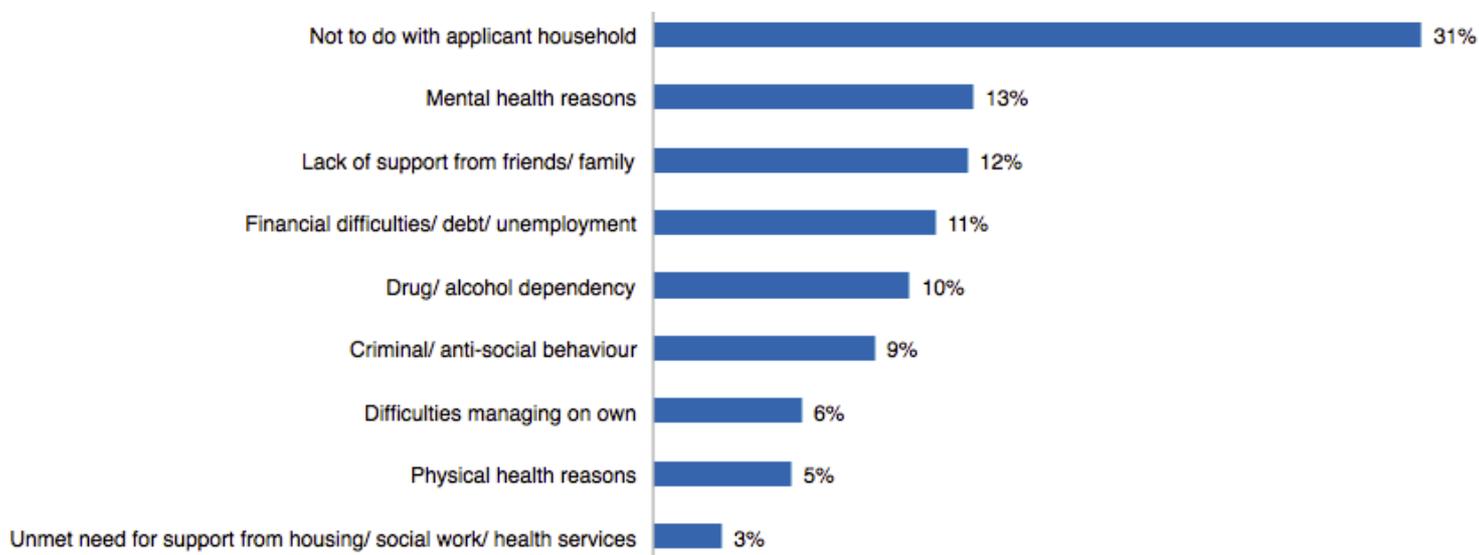


Figure 12: Reasons for failing to maintain accommodation prior to application – Scotland



It must again be noted that Figure 11 and 12 are for Scotland as a whole, not Greater Glasgow; due to the large population share Greater Glasgow has of the entire Country, it can be assumed that there will be some consistency with the national figures, but these are by no means a direct reflection of all the Greater Glasgow homeless applicants.

# Prevention Activity

As part of, or alongside, the homeless application process, local authorities in both England and Scotland undertake prevention activities in order to try and alleviate the issues that are leaving households homeless, or at the risk of becoming homeless. This section examines the different approaches taken in Greater Manchester and Greater Glasgow.

The key difference between the prevention activity in England and Scotland is when the activity occurs. In England, prevention activity occurs outside the statutory homelessness framework, so it is separate to the application process explored so far in this Report. In Scotland, the prevention activity occurs before the application process begins and acts as a precursor to applying.

This section of the Report shall present the structure of prevention activity and the available data for Greater Manchester and Greater Glasgow separately, before analysing the two together.

## Prevention in Greater Manchester:

As explored in the Legislation section of this Report, English local authorities only have a statutory duty to provide accommodation for those households who are eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, for the households who fall outside of that categorisation, local authorities are only required to have a *strategy* in place for preventing homelessness. Homelessness prevention refers to:

Positive actions taken by the local authority that provides someone with a solution for at least the next six months. This is done by either assisting them to obtain alternative accommodation or enabling them to remain in their existing home.

As previously stated, there is much criticism regarding the quality of prevention activity in England, particularly the ‘advice’ element, with anecdotal evidence stating that this amounts to nothing more than handing over some estate agent leaflets. The following data is therefore viewed with an awareness of the potential limitations or inadequacy of activity.

Data for Greater Manchester prevention activity is collated for ‘households who were able to remain in their existing home’ as a result of local authority prevention and relief activity. In 2015/16 there were 9,172 cases of homelessness prevented as a result of:

Figure 13: Homelessness prevented in Greater Manchester – households able to remain in existing home as a result of:



## Prevention in Greater Glasgow:

Scotland utilises an approach known as Housing Options for households seeking advice for housing-related issues from their local authority. The approach is designed to help households become better informed about their housing options so they ‘can make an informed choice on whether to make an application for homelessness, or whether

perhaps another option is more suitable'. Housing Options is available to anyone seeking assistance from the local authority as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

In 2015/16 there were 17,440 approaches to local authorities in Greater Glasgow; data for type of activities undertaken (Figure 14) is presented for the two year period between April 2014 to March 2016, so the below covers a slightly longer time period than the other data in this Report, but has been broken down into percentages for ease of analysis/comparison:

Figure 14: Housing Options activities by Local Authority, during 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2016 – Greater Glasgow



As stated, in Greater Glasgow Housing Options prevention activity occurs prior to the homelessness application process, so unlike the Greater Manchester data, all the activity above did not 'prevent homelessness' it was merely undertaken by the local authority. Between April 2014 and March 2016, 54% of households who approached Housing Options went on to make a homeless application, 33% remained in their current accommodation or gained an alternative, and 13% lost contact with the system.

### Prevention Analysis

The prevention activity data shows the strongest correlation between Greater Manchester and Greater Glasgow, with both dominated by advice activities, particularly benefit problem solutions and informing applicants of their rights under homeless legislation. The extensive deployment of these activities implies a lack of knowledge amongst applicants as to what they are entitled to, particularly in Greater Manchester where 37% of successful prevention activity was the resolution of housing benefit problems.

These issues regarding knowledge of entitlement were explored by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland who, alongside work with the Trussell Trust and Oxfam entitled *Emergency Use Only*, explored the factors driving food bank use. The Report (CPAG, 2015) found that the use of food banks was often caused by an immediate income crisis 'linked to the operation of the benefits and tax credits system with common problems including sanctions, reductions in disability benefits and long waits to access benefits'. What they further describe as 'immediate, acute financial crisis' and 'life-shock' they found to be linked (in between half and over two thirds of cases where additional data was collected) to 'the operation of the benefits system'.

Homelessness and food bank use, and their causes, are not mutually exclusive; not everyone who uses a food bank is homeless, or even vulnerably housed (the report found that only 3.4% of referrals to Trussell Trust food banks in Scotland were due to homelessness), but the 'acute income crisis' defined by CPAG as 'a specific identifiable event which [leaves] a household without any income at all or with their income dramatically reduced' could be clearly viewed as a clear cause or strong contributing factor towards a household making a homeless application. The fact that the most successful preventative action undertaken by local authorities is the resolution of benefit problems or providing advice on tenants' housing rights, aligns with CPAGs assertion that poverty and crisis can be caused, or at least exacerbated, by the benefits system.

CPAG highlighted that the benefits system was seen as 'complicated, remote and at times intimidating' and that there was a lack of 'clear communication about what help was available or how to access it', particularly for those who had

never previously claimed. In these cases, the problem may not concern entitlement to benefits, but the administration of them.

A report by the Salford City Partnership (2016) also explored the impact of benefit conditionality and sanctions, they found that 'strict benefit conditionality, the threat of and use of benefit sanctions...cause damage to the wellbeing of vulnerable claimants and can lead to hunger, debt and destitution'. The Report argued that sanctions cause rent arrears where Housing Benefit is affected placing accommodation at risk; they further highlighted the following impacts of sanctions that affect Housing Benefit:

- Damage to people's health due to anxiety about rent arrears on top of a sanction.
- Increased pressure on Council's homelessness service and the City's advice services.
- Wasted resources as claims are unnecessarily stopped and additional forms generated requiring processing by the Council.

The effect on mental health is of particular concern given the high quantity of applicants in both Greater Manchester and Greater Glasgow who cited mental health problems as a priority/support need (Figures 8 and 9).

CPAG and Salford City Partnership both found that the existing system is overly complicated and can be alien to those trying to navigate it; prevention activity data for both Greater Manchester and Greater Glasgow appears to show that local authorities are using the majority of their prevention resources to try to help people understand what they are entitled to and what their rights within the system are.

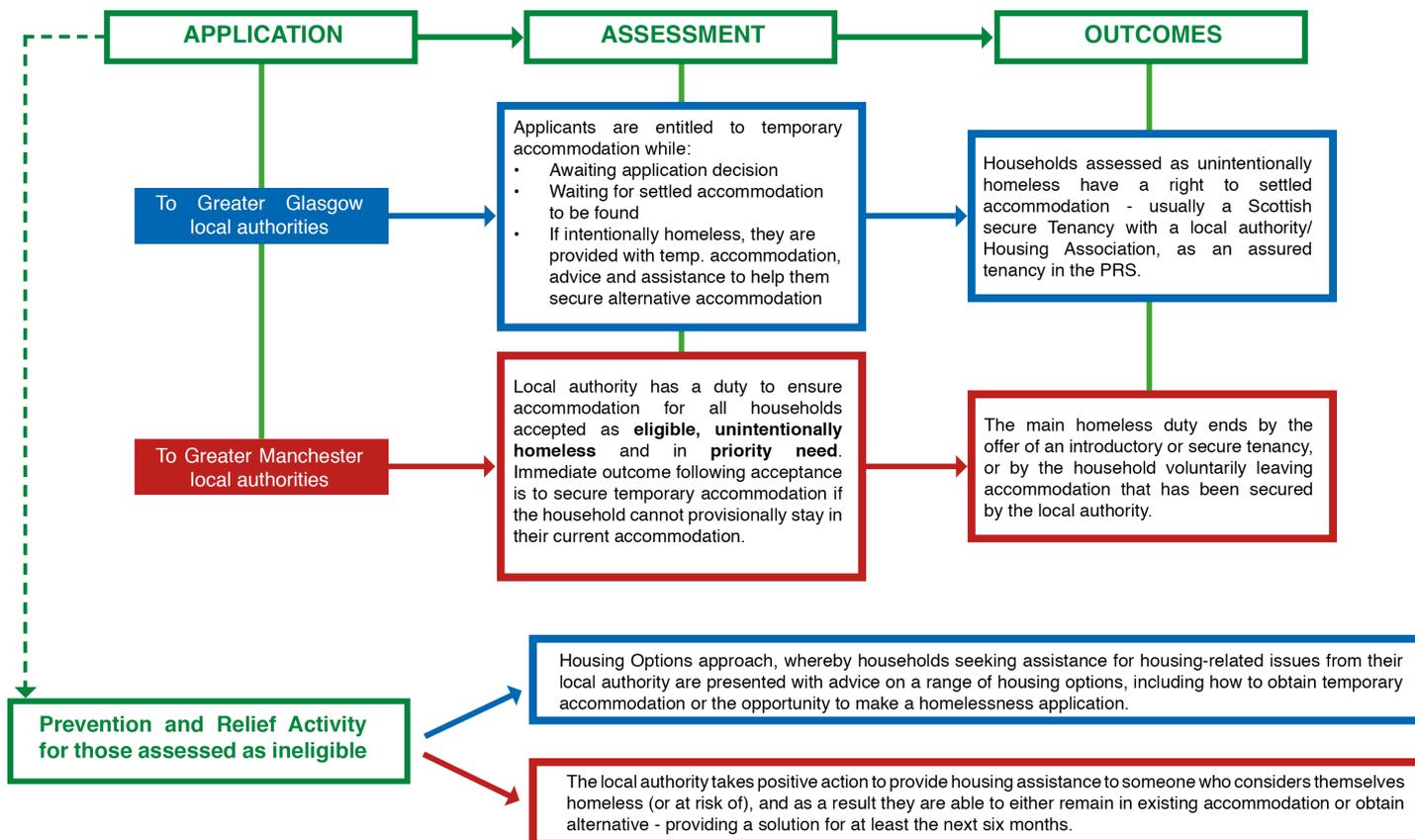
Finally, the majority of preventative activity in both localities appears geared towards those in social housing and the private rented sector (PRS), with mortgage advice/arrears intervention accounting for only 1% of activity in Greater Manchester and 0.2% in Greater Glasgow. The dominance of households from the social housing/PRS sector is also prevalent in the outcomes data, which is the focus of the next section of this Report.

# Outcomes

Outcomes in statutory homelessness data refers to the type of accommodation applicants are housed in, either during or at the end of the application process, additional outcomes can include the withdrawal of an application or a loss of contact with the system. Data regarding the final and intermediate destination of applicants is an important area of analysis as it facilitates an understanding of where a population's most vulnerable end up living, and the physical resources/stock a local authority has to address the level of housing need.

Figure 15 presents a brief overview of the application process that leads to the 'outcomes' explored in this section of the Report. Both Scottish and English systems follow the same basic trajectory, whereby an intermediate outcome (usually temporary accommodation) occurs at the 'assessment' stage, before the final outcome at which point the local authority is able to relinquish their statutory duty. Each system also has underlying 'prevention and relief' activity:

Figure 15: Outcomes trajectory in Greater Glasgow and Greater Manchester



Outcomes data is collected differently in Scotland and England, with the following information of concern to this Report:

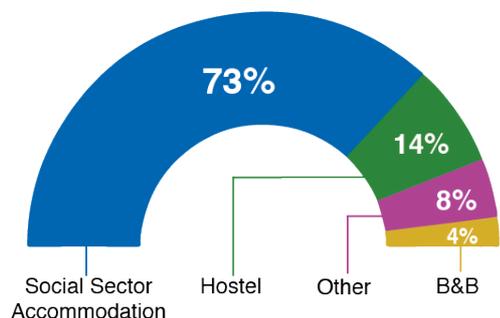
- Scotland
  - Outcomes for households assessed as homeless (intentional and unintentional)
  - Households in temporary accommodation
  - Housing Options outcomes (prevention activity)
- England
  - Immediate outcomes where applicant found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need
  - Applicant households accommodated by local authority at the end of each quarter
  - Form of accommodation households assisted to obtain following prevention and relief activity by local authority

## Temporary Accommodation

During the 'assessment stage' of the Greater Manchester outcomes trajectory, applicants found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are provided with immediate accommodation whilst the local authority carries out their main homeless duty (which is the offer of an introductory or secure tenancy). In 2015/16, 67% of Greater Manchester applicant households were 'placed in temporary accommodation for the foreseeable future' while

they awaited a secure tenancy (other applicants either made their own arrangements, or ended the application). There is a similar system in Scotland, whereby homeless applicants may be placed in temporary accommodation while their application is being assessed, or they are awaiting the offer of a 'permanent let'. In 2015/16 there were 3,894 households in temporary accommodation in Greater Glasgow, and that temporary accommodation took the form of:

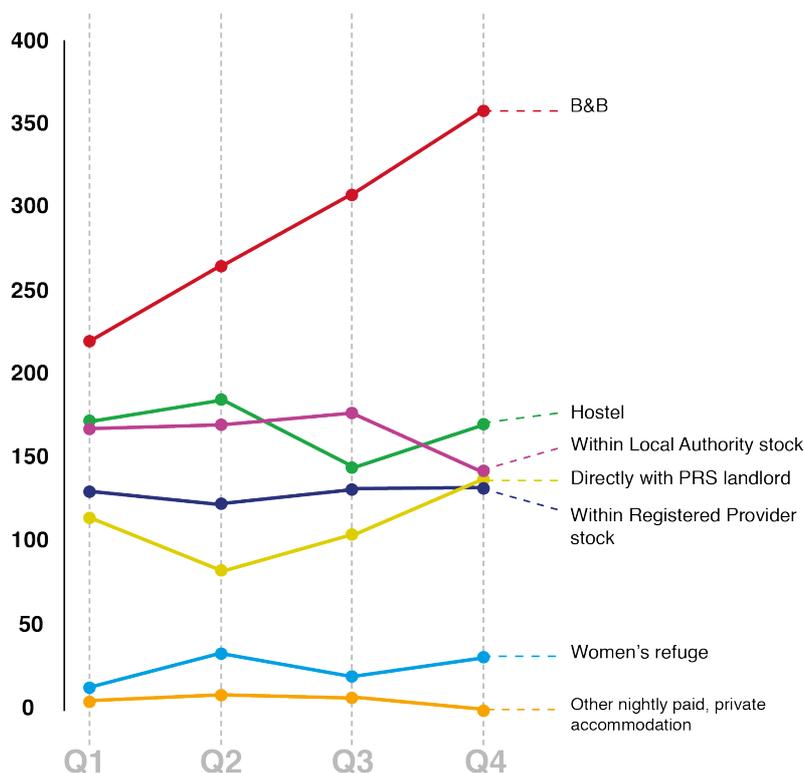
Figure 16: Households in temporary accommodation by type of accommodation – Greater Glasgow



In Greater Manchester temporary accommodation took the form of:

Figure 17: Applicant households accommodated by Local Authority in Greater Manchester

[NB: This data reflects the number of households being accommodated by the local authority on the last day of each quarter – it is a snapshot of the position on a single day, not a measure of the number of placements made in total during that quarter. Consequently, it has been presented in line graph form for Quarters 1 – 4 during 2015/16.]



The most striking difference between Greater Manchester and Greater Glasgow is the different levels of hostel and B&B use for households in temporary accommodation during the assessment stage of their application. B&Bs are the most common accommodation type in Greater Manchester in every quarter in 2015/16; in Greater Glasgow, B&B use is the smallest of all available options. However, caution is needed given the fairly broad 'social sector accommodation' terminology used in Greater Glasgow, it could be assumed that this compares with the 'local authority stock' in Greater Manchester, but further detail is not available to confirm this.

Although Figures 16 and 17 present the 'stop-gap' accommodation for households applying as homeless, and should therefore be a temporary measure only, Crisis in Scotland (2016) found that 'typical stays in temporary accommodation are now over seven months and for some people it can be up to two years'. Similarly the designation of 'temporary accommodation for the foreseeable future' in the Greater Manchester data could also be interpreted as

fairly ominous, given that local authority temporary accommodation time limits are often only applicable to households with dependent children.

There is even less restriction on how temporary, 'temporary accommodation' is for those households who are ineligible for statutory help and for whom these forms of 'temporary' accommodation become their only option. As explored earlier in this Report, a household's eligibility is highly dependent on their circumstances and ability to prove they have the required level of vulnerability and priority need. Data regarding the destination of those deemed ineligible is scarce, with local authorities under no obligation to record the further outcomes of those who have been rejected from the system; these people are left to secure their own accommodation, which can often be temporary, insecure and unsupported.

IPPR North undertook a 3 year research project (2014 – 2016) on the lives of homeless people in unsupported temporary accommodation and found that official figures 'only identify a fraction of those households' because they don't include those for whom no legal duty applies or those who self-refer; they quote research from Shelter which found that the use of 'private B&Bs and hostels is 5-10 times greater than that reported in quarterly government data'.

Not only is the data lacking, but according to IPPR North, so is interest in those housed in this way, they argue that:

The fact that as a nation we do not know the number, situation or names of single homeless households living in these conditions exemplifies how little priority and attention these groups have been given by mainstream public services

Aside from the sheer quantity of people officially and unofficially housed in temporary accommodation, the reason it is a vital part of any analysis of homelessness is the generally poor condition of the type of accommodation available, and the vulnerability of those people housed within it.

IPPR North found some temporary accommodation to be 'the type of accommodation that should not exist in a modern, wealthy country like ours' and that it is 'appalling, unsafe and deeply counterproductive for individuals with complex and challenging needs'. The research found a culture of bullying, substance misuse and intimidation amongst inhabitants and from landlords, and poor quality maintenance, lack of security, and rodent infestations within the actual buildings. Similarly, the 'Glasgow homeless hostel scandal' (McKenna, 2014), brought to light in 2014, found conditions of some hostels to be 'hellish' and 'condemned as worse than 'Soviet gulag' by the Scottish Parliament (Ferguson, 2014). Aggravating this, in Scotland, Crisis (2016) found that the use of temporary accommodation rose by over 170% between 2002 and 2011.

These appalling conditions are not limited just to the hostels and B&Bs examined by IPPR North; recent reports (Adams, 2016) on parts of Govanhill in Glasgow found that vulnerable families were living in substandard homes, with some deemed to be 'below tolerable' and without running water. The investigation found that 'slum landlords' were changing the locks of properties due to be demolished and renting them out to vulnerable families.

The English Housing Survey (quoted by IPPR North, 2016) estimated that 29% of properties in the private rented sector do not meet the Decent Homes Standard, compared to only 15% of social housing properties. IPPR North found that 'housing benefit is not conditional on the quality of the property and the local authority property inspection and enforcement regimes are often informal, reactive, under-resourced and generally inadequate'.

The absence of quality (or even minimum standards) as a precursor to housing benefit is worthy of contempt given the sheer amount of housing benefit that is being paid to the private rented sector. Private landlords received twice as much housing benefit last year (£9.3 billion) than they did a decade go, something which the National Housing Federation are said to have called 'madness' and that 'had these [claimants] been living in social housing instead of renting from private landlords, taxpayers would have saved huge sums of money' (BBC, 2016).

One of the key barriers to alleviating these issues within the private rented sector is that it is often the only option available to people; with demand often exceeding supply, there is little incentive to invest in the quality of the stock, IPPR North (2016) argues that 'when the housing market is strong, landlords are able to maintain high occupancy rates, and so maximise returns, without improving or maintaining accommodation'.

'Slum landlords' are, thankfully, a minority and there is an enormous amount of high-quality private rented accommodation, let by reputable and professional landlords. However, this is often off-limits to the most vulnerable in society; the DCLG (2016) quoted research by Crisis that found that only 45% of landlords were willing to let to tenants in receipt of housing benefit, and only 18% to homeless households. This issue is exacerbated further by the four-year freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) announced in the summer 2015 budget, which means that, in a climate of ever increasing rent rises, people are being priced out of areas/accommodation types, and finding themselves having

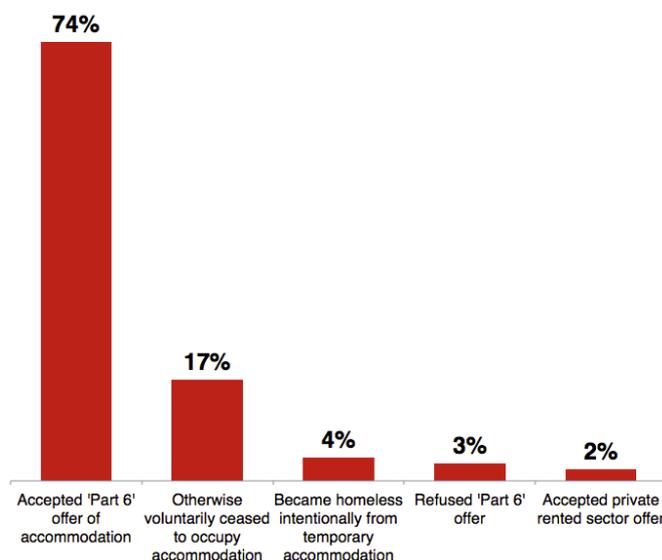
to either apply as homeless to their local authority, or try to find the cheapest accommodation possible. The Fabian Society recently claimed that ‘the rising cost of rented housing could turn out to be the greatest social challenge of the 2020s’ (Butler, 2016). The culmination of rising rents, frozen benefits and discriminatory landlords can lead to the desperate situations found in places such as parts of Govanhill or the unsupported, temporary accommodation identified by IPPR North.

The bedroom tax is also adding further pressure onto local authority resources, with more tenants in need of smaller properties. The DCLG (2016) presented evidence from Manchester City Council who stated they were finding themselves in positions where ‘there are 22 general needs one-bedroom flats available and there are 4,616 people who are waiting for that flat who have a housing need of some kind’. The scale of the problem of homelessness and insecure housing is being heightened by benefit freezes and alterations, and the decreasing ability local authorities have to respond.

### Final Application Outcomes

Data regarding the final ‘destination’ of homeless households who have made an application to their local authority is, again, recorded differently in Scotland and England. In Greater Manchester the final outcomes concern what occurred in order for the local authority to end their main homelessness duty to a household:

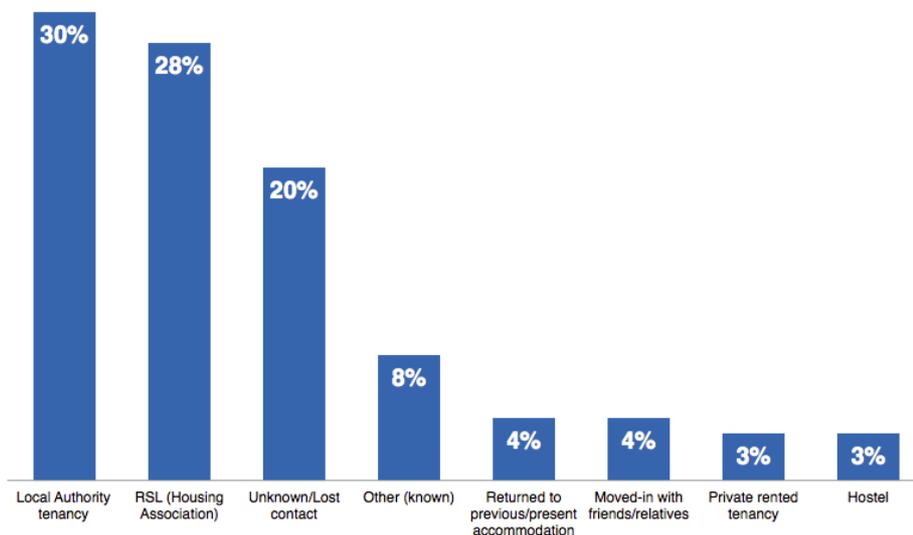
Figure 18: Applicant households for whom a main homelessness duty was ended, and who have left temporary accommodation – Greater Manchester



[NB: A ‘Part 6’ offer of accommodation is a secure or introductory tenancy of accommodation held by the local authority or another housing association.]

In Greater Glasgow, the outcomes data is predominantly concerned with the final form of accommodation applicants are housed in:

Figure 19: Outcomes for households assessed as unintentionally and intentionally homeless and threatened with homelessness – Greater Glasgow



Data for both areas reveals that local authority or housing association tenancies were the most common outcome; the range of outcomes appears wider in Greater Glasgow, but this is due to the restrictions placed on when an English local authority can officially discharge their duty; a hostel or move in with friends/parents would not be acceptable in the English system.

The data highlights the relatively high quantity of households who either remove themselves from the system or lose contact; 20% of households in Greater Glasgow lose contact with the system or their circumstance become unknown, and, in Greater Manchester 24% of outcomes involve a household removing themselves from the system somehow. Due to the lack of follow-on information, it is unclear whether these households simply make their own accommodation arrangements, or become part of the ‘hidden homeless’, vulnerable to rough sleeping or the conditions identified by IPPR North.

### Prevention Activity Outcomes

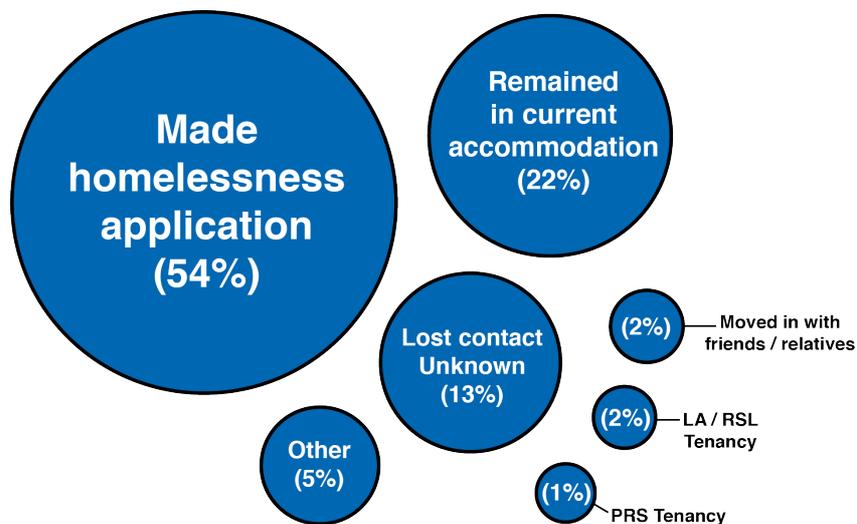
As explored earlier in the Report, both Scottish and English local authorities undertake prevention and relief activities for households who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. A direct comparison of the prevention outcomes data for both localities is complicated because the prevention activity occurs at different points in the system:

- In Greater Glasgow: the prevention activity occurs prior to the application process, so one of the main ‘outcomes’ of this activity is a household making an application to their local authority. Prevention activity is undertaken as Housing Options.
- In Greater Manchester: the prevention and relief activity focuses on applicants who have been deemed ineligible for statutory support. The data collected is for the type of alternative accommodation households are assisted to obtain.

As a consequence of the timescale during which the prevention activity occurs, the largest outcome in Greater Glasgow is the household making an application for homelessness to their local authority:

Figure 20: Housing Options Outcomes by Greater Glasgow Local Authorities

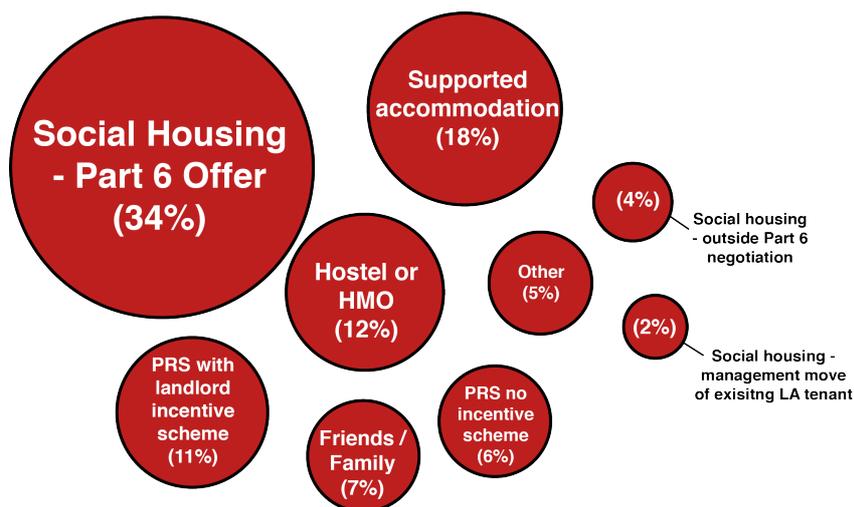
[NB: These figures are for 2014 – 2016, so cover a slightly longer period than all other data in this Report.]



These figures indicate that households are approaching Housing Options in immediate need and in situations where applying under the Homeless Persons Legislation is the most appropriate next stage response to their circumstances. The second largest outcome is for a household to ‘remain in current accommodation’ and this enforces the value of the prevention activities being undertaken, which is dominated by advisory work as outlined in the earlier Figure 14.

Greater Manchester prevention outcomes data is concerned solely with the type of accommodation households are assisted to obtain, and, as with the main applicant outcomes (Figure 18), a Part 6 offer of social housing is the most common occurrence:

Figure 21: Homelessness prevented or relieved in Greater Manchester – household assisted to obtain alternative accommodation in the form of:



More households are assisted to obtain accommodation within the private sector when it includes the ‘landlord incentive scheme’ (11%), than when it does not (6%); this data supports the research by Crisis which found large proportions of private sector landlords were unwilling to let to those who were homeless or on housing benefit.

Drawing any final conclusions from the outcomes presented is complicated by the lack of robustness in the available data. For example, it is not possible to track the linear trajectory of households from the beginning of their application through to the outcome they achieved, due to the different points at which data is collected, and the quantity of households who simply disappear. For example, 6,684 households were assessed in Greater Manchester, but outcomes data covers 3,590 households; likewise, 12,735 households applied in Greater Glasgow, but outcomes data covers only 9,555 households. The limitations of homelessness data are well established and this is compounded by the fact that local authorities do not monitor applicants once they are assessed as ineligible for statutory support, or if they simply ‘lose contact’ with the system.

This Report has attempted to counter these limitations, principally by presenting the data in percentage breakdowns, so although it may not be possible to accurately see how many households moved from homeless to a local authority tenancy, it is at least possible, for example, to determine that local authority tenancies are being used more than hostels as a final outcome in Greater Glasgow. However, it is vital that these limitations in homelessness data are resolved, and that local authorities, and related health and social care services, are fully aware of the quantity of people homeless and vulnerably housed within their communities. If an area is unaware of the scale of its ‘hidden homeless’ then the appalling circumstances identified by IPPR North in temporary accommodation, or in parts of the private sector in Govanhill, can occur and increase, leaving households vulnerable, and the demand for public sector services ever higher.

This Report will now conclude with a series of recommendations, gleaned from both the data and a review of the related research and critical thinking.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

Greater Glasgow and Greater Manchester both contain the unwanted statistical hallmarks of high deprivation and need; they are home to some of the most deprived localities in the UK and this is reflected in the levels of homelessness explored in this Report. These two conurbations are essential benchmarks upon which to examine the homelessness legislation and processes within England and Scotland, sitting as they do, in the apparent policy spotlight of their respective countries.

As revealed throughout this Report, homelessness is an incredibly complex issue affecting the most vulnerable in society; the differences in the separate approaches adopted by England and Scotland highlight that there is no easy, all encompassing answer to relieving the growing homeless and housing crisis in the UK. However, the data and the related critical thinking and research highlights some potential changes that could work to help alleviate these issues and have informed these final recommendations:

## **SUPPORT THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION BILL IN ENGLAND**

This Report supports the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016 and the new model (outlined by Crisis (2016)), which would:

- Place a stronger duty on local authorities to help to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants regardless of priority need status, local connection or intentionality.
- Extend the definition of threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days to provide local authorities with more flexibility to tackle homelessness at a much earlier stage.
- Place a new relief duty on local authorities requiring them to take reasonable steps to help to secure accommodation for all eligible homeless households who have a local connection.

This Report agrees with Greaves (2016) that ‘helping people before they are in serious need is the way forward and this legislation could be the catalyst for change we so desperately need’. However, this Report’s enthusiasm for the Bill is punctuated with an awareness of the concerns expressed by local authority housing practitioners that, without additional resources (money, staff, time etc.), the increased workload resulting from the Bill will make it incredibly difficult to implement; the additional help and delivery reach required of services under the Bill will only be achievable if bolstered by adequate funding. At the time of writing this Report, the Bill is due a second reading in the House of Commons at the end of October, where these issues will hopefully be addressed.

## **STRONGER PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES**

Existing prevention and advisory activity in both England and Scotland have been accused of being too ‘light touch’ (Crisis, 2016) and failing to help households who approach their local authority in housing need; this has to change and move beyond simply handing people leaflets. Advisory services are absolutely key to this, anyone approaching the system must be made fully aware of their entitlements and the process they are about to enter. The Salford City Partnership (2016) research advocated the bolstering of advisory services and recommended for their locality that ‘Salford City Council, all social housing providers, NHS Salford, the GMCA, Big Lottery and other relevant commissioners and funders [should] explore investment in free, independent and impartial advice to maintain and build on current welfare right and debt advice services’. We believe such an approach should be taken throughout the UK.

The link to benefit entitlement/sanctions and the effect this has on recipient households also requires attention, and we support the recommendations made by *Emergency Use Only* (cited in CPAG, 2015) which, although made in regards to foodbank use, we feel are extremely relevant in regards to homelessness, these include:

- Improve access to short-term benefit advances from the DWP – increase awareness, simplify the claims process and improve data collection to identify individual support needs
- Reform benefit sanctions policy and practices – clarify communications
- Ensure Jobcentres provide an efficient and supportive service for all clients and ensure advisors are fully aware of, and are able to respond to, mental health problems
- Improve access to appropriate advice and support

Approaches to homelessness must be made before households reach crisis point, adopting a stronger prevention and early intervention approach would also save cash-strapped local authorities significant amounts of money. Crisis (2016) argues that intervening at an early stage can make savings of between £3,000 and £18,000 per person in the first year, particularly for health and criminal justice services.

## **GREATER SUPPORT FOR THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL COMPLEX NEEDS AND HOUSING FIRST**

As set out throughout this Report, homelessness is an affliction most often suffered by those who already have complex needs, such as poor mental and physical health, substance misuse issues or are the victims of domestic violence. Greater support is needed to tackle and identify these problems.

One potential option is the Housing First model that focuses on homeless adults with complex needs. The model, founded in the USA, sees housing as a basic human right that should be provided immediately and on an open-ended basis; people are not required to address their issues, for example abstain from alcohol or drugs, before receiving help. Shelter (2008) summarises the model's two key convictions as:

1. Housing is a basic human right, not a reward for clinical success
2. Once the chaos of homelessness is eliminated from a person's life, clinical and social stabilisation occur faster and are more enduring

The model involves a Housing First agency leasing private sector tenancies and renting these to service users, allowing providers to control access and ensure it is effectively targeted at the most vulnerable; the properties are 'scattered' through a locality to avoid clustering of tenants with complex needs, for example, those at different stages of the drug and/or alcohol recovery process. Although the central purpose is very strongly geared towards housing first, not treatment, comprehensive support services are offered to tenants, with harm reduction a key element of the approach. As part of the programme, tenants are required to pay rent, abide by tenancy conditions, and agree to a weekly visit from a support worker. The support services are tailored to individual need and are designed to promote housing stability and individual wellbeing. One report (Briggs, 2014) quotes statistical results from the USA that found that '85% of Housing First participants do not return to homelessness, and many end up tackling mental illness, unemployment or addiction in housing and on their own terms'.

There are a number of projects throughout the UK that use elements of, or have directly piloted, the Housing First model, including Action Housing and Support in Derbyshire, Inspiring Change in Manchester, and Turning Point in Glasgow. Homeless Link (2015) undertook a comprehensive study of services that have applied the model within the UK and found that the approach was viewed positively by both service users and practitioners, they further calculated that the model could deliver potential overall public expenditure savings of £15,000 per person, per annum. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation also calculated that 'scaling up Housing First in the UK could save around £200million per annum after two years in relation to the current group of homeless adults with the most complex needs' (Robson, 2016). Homeless Link is now working to create and support a national movement of Housing First services across the UK.

As well as addressing complex needs, the wider homelessness system needs to change in order to better identify what these needs actually are. One approach may be to amend the needs categorisation used so it is more reflective of individuals' actual issues, for example, domestic violence should be readily and easily identified on the 'priority need' testing undertaken in England. If households are becoming homeless due to violence, or the threat of it, this needs to more prominently recorded, it cannot be the case that domestic violence victims 'disappear' from the system because it is easier, for example, to prove that they have dependent children (Marcus, 2016).

## **IMPROVE THE FORM, USE AND REGULATION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

Temporary accommodation could be described as a 'necessary evil' in a housing climate as severely stretched as the UK; it cannot be avoided when there is a lack of secure tenancies in appropriate housing available for people to access immediately. However, the current stock of temporary accommodation requires immediate reform, and this Report supports the recommendations made by IPPR North (2016) which include:

- New formal, local bodies – temporary accommodation boards – should be established to bring together the activities of neighbouring housing authorities, public services and the homelessness sector. These boards should gather, maintain and monitor information about local bedspaces and the individuals within them.
- Temporary accommodation boards should create and maintain live 'greenlists' of acceptable local bedspaces and 'exclusion lists' of unacceptable bedspaces using the data they gather and aggregate.
- A clear set of standards should be developed for the unsupported temporary accommodation submarket
- Temporary accommodation boards should be charged with developing a single tenancy agreement for local bedspaces and tenants should be supported to make complaints
- Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that proper placement and in-tenancy support exists to help individuals manage their stay and to prevent their cycling in and out of unsupported temporary accommodation.

This Report would also advocate that 'temporary' should mean temporary, and that there should also be a defined time limit for stays for households without dependent children.

Furthermore, the actual design of temporary accommodation, particularly hostels and supported accommodation, should be more concerned with the complex needs of its, often vulnerable, inhabitants. Work undertaken in the USA by 'Design Resources for Homelessness' (Pable, 2016) and the Skid Row Housing Trust, seeks to positively impact the physical design of environments to assist homeless/formerly homeless people, providing comfort and enabling recovery. Identified good practice design features include lower-walled cubicle spaces (rather than four walled rooms) for domestic violence victims; beds that could be easily turned into sofas to promote dignity for residents and allow them to have visitors; or convex mirrors in corridors so residents are able to avoid unwanted interactions. The work seeks to identify 'small features that make a big difference', and is a relatively low-cost approach that could, potentially, drastically improve the conditions in temporary accommodation.

### **REGULATE THE STANDARDS OF PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR ACCOMMODATION**

The term 'slum landlord' should not exist in the UK and no one should be living in accommodation without running water, natural light, or heating, or with mould, rodent infestation or general decay. Any property being paid for by Housing Benefit should be subject to a stringent set of quality and maintenance standards that are inspected by local authorities. There also needs to be a better reporting and complaints process that tenants can use securely and without fear of 'revenge-evictions'. Such standards should be rolled out as widely as possible within the entire housing market and any landlord in breach should be banned from letting any further property.

### **REASSESS CHANGES TO THE BENEFIT SYSTEM**

Intense overhaul of the benefit system under the Coalition Government has had a deep impact on those most vulnerable to homelessness, this Report believes the following changes to the benefit system should be scrapped or amended:

- Universal Credit being paid directly to the individual, rather than the housing benefit element sent directly to the landlord. This has resulted in an increase in arrears and eviction risk for tenants and a greater reluctance from landlords to let to tenants in receipt of these benefits, forcing people to then turn to the worst corners of the housing market. We believe that administering funds in this way should be stopped when it is clear recipients are struggling to manage their finances or pay their rent appropriately.
- Local Housing Allowance frozen for four years. This is incongruous in a housing market where some rents are rising faster than inflation, and once again limits households' options to the very cheapest properties.
- 'Bedroom tax' or the 'spare room subsidy' has been widely criticised as unfair and discriminatory; it should be scrapped unless the appropriate type of housing stock is available for people to be rehoused in; there are nowhere near enough smaller bedroomed properties to adequately meet demand.

### **SCRAP 'RIGHT-TO-BUY' IN ENGLAND AND BUILD MORE AFFORDABLE SOCIAL HOUSING**

The policy of allowing local authority housing tenants to buy their property at a reduced rate, introduced in the 1980s, has recently been scrapped, or is due to be, in Scotland and Wales, and this Report supports the recommendation that England follows suit. The right-to-buy scheme has been cited as a key contributing factor in the shortage of housing in the social rented sector, with local authorities having failed to replace the sold stock. It was recently revealed that the number of homes replaced under the scheme fell by more than a quarter in 2015 and that around 40% of council flats sold through the scheme are thought to be owned by private investors and are likely to now be being rented out at market rates (Osborne, 2016).

As established throughout this Report, homelessness is not just about the lack of physical buildings, but the lack of stock does undeniably effect local authorities' ability to house those most in need, as well as exacerbating the more general housing crisis in the UK. Similarly, as much importance needs to be placed on building affordable social housing as is currently lavished on the national (government) obsession with private home ownership. Parity of esteem is vital to ensure housing options and aspirations are reflective of everyone's needs and budgets.

### **SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES FROM DEVOLUTION AND INTEGRATION**

Health and social care integration is a key policy focus in both Greater Manchester and throughout Scotland (see Lifeline Project's Infographic on Integrating Health and Social Care in Scotland and GM). Current plans require the NHS, local authorities and third sector providers to work together to achieve the best health outcomes for their communities. A combination of these organisations is also vital when addressing homelessness, as the forthcoming service commissioning and delivery structures may be able to more collaboratively address the multiple, complex needs of homeless households.

In terms of devolution, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2016) describes it as 'one of the defining political agendas of our times' and that local authorities, although facing 'unprecedented reductions to their budgets', have greater powers in vital areas which they can harness to help those most in need.

The Greater Manchester devolution deal includes control of the £300 million Housing Investment Fund, but nothing specific regarding homelessness or other housing at this stage, although the GMCA did task the Greater Manchester Housing Needs Group to come up with proposals for specific powers (further details of which are not currently publicly available) (Spurr, 2016). The GMCA, NHS and third sector providers need to work collaboratively to ensure that homelessness is not ignored, or bandied between 'housing' or 'health' agendas without any clear definition of who is responsible; specific powers need to be devolved so that commissioners and providers have the autonomy and resources at their disposal to deliver innovative solutions.

IPPR has already found that, in terms of health devolution, evidence in Greater Manchester had 'quickened the pace of reform (getting consent for controversial reforms much more quickly) and increased the quality of reform (bringing on partners who would otherwise have been reluctant to be involved)' (Quilter-Pinner, 2016); this momentum needs to spread to the homelessness agenda.

### **COLLECT BETTER DATA**

Finally, in order to facilitate an understanding of the homeless population in the UK, the data collected needs to be more robust. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on capturing the 'hidden homeless' to ensure that resources are appropriately matched to the actual level of need. The DCLG Committee (2016) identified the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) as an example of good practice that should be rolled out nationally. CHAIN is a multi-agency database recording rough sleeping in London which continually records all contact made by outreach teams every day of the year, and produces a much more accurate picture of street homelessness than the official local authority rough sleeper count. Further efforts need to be made to identify what happens to those deemed ineligible for statutory support or who simply 'lose contact' with the system.

Data is of paramount importance to the efforts to end homelessness as it is only by knowing who needs help, that we can begin to determine how to help them.

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