



Together
we will end
homelessness

The homelessness monitor: Great Britain 2022

Beth Watts, Glen Bramley, Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Lynne McMordie, Hal Pawson & Gillian Young. Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University; City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

September 2022



The homelessness monitor

The homelessness monitor is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments across Great Britain. Separate reports are produced for England, Scotland, and Wales.

This report takes stock of homelessness across Great Britain in 2022 (or as close to 2022 as data availability will allow), and analyses key trends in the five year period running up to 2022. It also highlights emerging trends and forecasts some of the likely future changes, identifying the developments likely to have the most significant impacts on homelessness.

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About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. We help people directly out of homelessness, and campaign for the social changes needed to solve it altogether. We know that together we can end homelessness.

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Disclaimer: All views and any errors contained in this report are the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed should not be assumed to be those of Crisis or any of the key informants who assisted with this work.

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Acronyms

AHC	After Housing Costs
APA	Alternative Payment Arrangements
BHC	Before Housing Costs
H-CLIC	Case-level statutory homelessness data collection tool
CPI	Consumer Price Inflation
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
HAG	Homelessness Action Group
HARSAG	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group
HB	Housing Benefit
HRA	Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
HWA	Housing (Wales) Act 2014
LA	Local Authority
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
LWA	Local Welfare Assistance
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
PRG	Prevention Review Group
RSI	Rough Sleeping Initiative
SCP	Scottish Child Payment
TA	Temporary Accommodation
UC	Universal Credit
UKHLS	United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Survey
UKSPF	United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund

Foreword

The cost-of-living crisis has been a reality for households across Great Britain in 2022. We are publishing this research at a time when rising rents and bills, record levels of inflation and insufficient welfare support will push thousands more people into homelessness if nothing is done to address it. Whilst, after this report was written, the Westminster Government announced some welcome measures to support people with soaring living costs, housing continues to be unaffordable for many, creating unsustainable financial pressure on household budgets. The evidence tells us we could see over 300,000 households experiencing the worst forms of homelessness in 2023, an increase of about a third over three years.

This is nothing short of catastrophic – but we can do something about it.

Our Homelessness Monitor series usually covers individual nations. This edition, however, gives us the most in-depth account available on how England, Scotland, and Wales compare when it comes to tackling homelessness. This means we have clear examples of what good looks like and why policy choices matter.

The rates of individuals and families who experience the worst forms of homelessness in Scotland is far lower than it is in England or Wales. This is driven by Scotland's stronger homelessness legislation and proportionally larger social rented housing sector. The analysis in the report also shows it's important to focus not only on how much money is spent on tackling homelessness, but what it's spent on. Wales invests far more of its homelessness expenditure on support and preventing homelessness happening in the first place, compared to England which spends well over half on temporary accommodation. Whilst the Westminster government devotes a lot of attention to ending rough sleeping, both Scotland and Wales have made a commitment to end all forms of homelessness.

But we can't be complacent. Despite progress in Scotland and Wales, the Monitor points to challenges if action isn't taken. Far too many people across Great Britain are stuck in temporary accommodation. In Scotland, rates of overall temporary accommodation placements have not reduced over the last five years and make the case for greater focus on prevention. Despite lower rates of temporary accommodation use in Wales, compared to England and Scotland, there has been an increase over the pandemic and we must make sure the bold plan to deliver transformation becomes a reality.

The research goes on to tell us what policies are projected to be most effective at reducing homelessness in Britain. Increasing rapid access to social housing for people experiencing homelessness would have a huge impact. Investing in Housing First, as well as reforming the welfare system, so that housing benefit is no longer based on outdated rent levels would also reduce the worst forms of homelessness significantly.

These are just some of the insights in this report, which shows that the most effective solutions in each nation are different, but that as a whole Great Britain will be able to end homelessness only if the right decisions are made in Westminster and governments in Scotland and Wales continue to make progress in delivering on their plans to end homelessness. In these turbulent times, Crisis will continue fighting for the changes needed to end homelessness in all three nations.



Matthew Downie
Chief Executive, Crisis

Executive summary

The Homelessness Monitor series is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments across Great Britain.¹ With the Homelessness Monitor study now in its eleventh year, this comparative report takes stock of homelessness policies, trends and outcomes in England, Scotland and Wales in 2022 (or as close to 2022 as data availability will allow), and analyses key developments in the five year period running up to 2022.

Key points to emerge from this comparative analysis are as follows:

- Responses to rough sleeping were impressive across all three Great Britain administrations in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a fissure has since opened up between Scotland and Wales on one hand, where improved protection of people with No Recourse to Public Funds, and moves to permanently close communal night shelters, seem to be holding up, and England, where these public health-inspired gains now seem to be unravelling.
- Both Wales and Scotland have devised plans aimed at 'ending' homelessness in their respective jurisdictions, with a strong emphasis on Rapid Rehousing approaches and, within that, Housing First interventions for those with the most complex support needs. In England, in contrast, there is a narrower strategic focus on ending rough sleeping only.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, modelled on earlier Welsh legislation, ushered in important new homelessness prevention and relief duties for English local authorities. However, longitudinal research by Crisis indicates that the effectiveness of this progressive legislation is limited by housing supply and affordability pressures in many parts of England, and by the continued existence of the priority need test that limits rehousing entitlements.
- Wales, unlike England, now seems set to follow Scotland's more progressive path by abolishing the priority need test, with this move

¹ All of the UK Homelessness Monitor reports are available from <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html>

given significant momentum by the effective 'suspension' of the test during the pandemic.

- While Scotland has the strongest statutory homelessness safety net of the three jurisdictions, it has been slowest to pursue legislation to strengthen homelessness prevention measures. But a Scottish Government consultation has concluded on proposals to extend homelessness prevention duties across the public sector, alongside changes to homelessness legislation to incentivise prevention within a six month time window.
- Scotland has a social rented housing sector that is substantially larger, relative to population size, than either of the other two Great Britain jurisdictions, and the Scottish government has committed to building 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 of which at least 70% should be available at social rent. Moreover, Scottish social landlords allocate a much higher proportion of their available lettings to households accepted as homeless than their equivalents elsewhere in Great Britain, with the share jumping to almost half (45%) in 2019-20 following the adoption of the Rapid Rehousing policy.
- Scottish Government per capita expenditure on both Local Welfare Assistance and Discretionary Housing Payments is much higher than elsewhere in Great Britain. The disparity on Discretionary Housing Payments in particular is quite staggering, with the 2022-23 allocations equating to £4 per household in England and Wales, and £32 per household in Scotland. In large part this reflects the Scottish Government's decision to fully mitigate the 'Bedroom Tax' using these payments. In contrast, recent cuts in Discretionary Housing Payments allocations in England and Wales leave many more households

at risk of homelessness, while the very existence of Local Welfare Assistance schemes in much of England remains uncertain.

- Scotland has markedly higher rates of both statutory homelessness acceptances (c.11 per 1,000 households in 2020/21) than either England (c.2 per 1,000 households in 2020/21) or Wales (c.3 per 1,000 households in 2020/21). It also has a temporary accommodation placement rate some 25% above that of England and 40% above that for Wales. These statistical patterns largely reflect the stronger rights people have under the Scottish statutory homelessness system, but also lengthening stays in temporary accommodation and insufficient attention to homelessness prevention.
- Temporary accommodation placements involving families with children are notably higher in England than in either of the other two Great Britain countries, and the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels has grown four-fold over the past decade. Temporary accommodation placements are forecast to almost double in England over the next twenty years, while remaining relatively stable in Scotland and Wales.
- These trends have driven mounting temporary accommodation costs in England, while expenditure on support, administration and prevention has been progressively squeezed down. This spending profile flies in the face of the early intervention aims and philosophy of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Levels of 'core' (i.e. the most extreme forms of) homelessness are consistently higher in England (0.84% of households in 2020) than in either Wales (0.68% of households in 2020) or Scotland (0.57% of households in 2020). The number of core homeless

households are projected to grow further in England, particularly in London, unless policy steps are taken to correct this negative direction of travel.

- Statistical modelling indicates that the most effective policies for reducing core homelessness include: rehousing quotas for core homeless groups in the social rented sector; increasing the Local Housing Allowance rate; raising the level of Universal Credit payments; expanding Housing First interventions; and maximising the use of prevention tools by local authorities. Such policies in concert could reduce total core homelessness by 34% in England, 30% in Wales, and 42% in Scotland.
- The United Kingdom economy has now rebounded from the COVID-19-induced slump, but spiralling energy, food, and other prices, now seriously compounded by the Ukraine war, are driving a cost-of-living crisis greater than that seen for many decades. While the United Kingdom Government has recently announced a package of measures designed to ease this crisis, the poorest households will still be hardest hit over this coming winter.

The homelessness policy context across Great Britain

National homelessness policy in England in the 2010s was driven by a localist ideology, with central government largely absenting itself from direct involvement, leaving matters in the hands of local authorities.² By 2017, against a backdrop of growing homelessness and rough sleeping, a retreat from localist approaches began to emerge, with the Conservative Manifesto committing to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it entirely by 2027 (later brought forward to 2024 under the Johnson Government). To this end, Government funded pilots of Housing First³ were launched in 2018, and in the same year a national Rough Sleeping Strategy was published,⁴ with a linked Rough Sleeping Initiative funding a range of initiatives targeted on people at risk of sleeping rough.⁵

Also rejecting the localist focus of most of the decade, the coming into force of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in April 2018, saw the introduction of a range of local authority prevention and relief duties owed to all eligible households which are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The breadth of this legislative turn belies a much narrower strategic approach that has increasingly concentrated policy and funding activity on tackling rough sleeping. Moreover, a large-scale

2 Fitzpatrick, S, Watts, B. & Simms, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/>; Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Watts, B. (2020) 'The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England' *Policy & Politics*, 48:4, 541-561

3 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: Interim Process Evaluation Report Final: Report*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/946110/Housing_First_first_interim_process_report.pdf

4 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) *Rough Sleeping Strategy*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

5 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) *Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018: impact evaluation*. London: MHCLG

longitudinal study recently published by Crisis demonstrates that, though the 2017 legislation has opened up access to support for significantly more people facing homelessness, particularly single people, the continuing impact of the priority need criterion in limiting rehousing rights, and housing supply and affordability pressures, restricts the effectiveness of this progressive legislation.⁶

Homelessness policy and law in Wales, which lacked primary law-making powers until 2011, historically tracked that of England, but this relationship reversed with the passing of the prevention-orientated Housing (Wales) Act in 2014, which provided the model for the later 2017 legislation in England. The 2014 Act has been positively evaluated⁷ but it was widely accepted that people sleeping rough had benefited least from its introduction. In 2019, the Welsh Government established an independent 'Homelessness Action Group', with a remit to 'end homelessness in Wales', and a specific focus on early action to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping.⁸ Based on the Action Group's recommendations, the Welsh Programme for Government 2021-26

pledged to "fundamentally reform" homelessness services to focus on prevention and Rapid Rehousing.⁹ The Group also recommended the phasing out of the priority need and intentionality tests, as well as the local connection rules.¹⁰ The move to abolish the priority need test in particular now seems unstoppable, having gained significant momentum after the effective 'suspension' of the test during the pandemic, with the Minister Julie James stating that there was 'no going back' from the pre-pandemic approach.

In Scotland, the Programme for Government in 2017 set "a clear national objective to eradicate rough sleeping... and transform the use of temporary accommodation".¹¹ To this end, a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group was convened by Scottish Government,¹² with its final report, published in June 2018, offering recommendations on "how to bring about an end to homelessness in Scotland".¹³ The Action Group recommendations were captured in the Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan, published in November 2018,¹⁴ with the subsequent delivery of five year

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans by Scottish local authorities,¹⁵ and the development of the Housing First Scotland pathfinder programme,¹⁶ effectively establishing the cornerstones of the Scottish approach. Subsequently, the Action Group was reconvened during the pandemic to deliver recommendations to the Scottish Government, and this led to a revised and more ambitious plan to end homelessness.¹⁷

While Scotland has the strongest statutory safety net of any of the Great Britain countries, it has been slowest to consider strengthening homelessness prevention legislative measures. However, a Prevention Review Group charged with developing legal recommendations to enhance prevention was convened by Crisis on the invitation of the Scottish Government in 2019.¹⁸ A Scottish Government consultation has concluded on the Group's proposals for wider public sector homelessness prevention duties that go much further than the referral and cooperation duties that currently pertain in England and Wales, alongside changes to homelessness legislation to incentivise prevention within a six month time window.

Across Great Britain, responses to rough sleeping were radically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In England, the Everyone In initiative saw many areas lift restrictions on eligibility criteria to allow people sleeping rough, at risk of doing so, or in communal shelters, to be accommodated in hotel or similar accommodation. As at December 2021, over 40,000 of those accommodated have been "moved into settled accommodation or a supported housing pathway".¹⁹ Similar responses were adopted in Wales and Scotland, albeit that they were required on a much smaller scale in the latter in particular because the majority of those sleeping rough were already entitled to accommodation.²⁰ While COVID-19-related interventions were impressive in all three jurisdictions in the early phase of the pandemic, a fissure now seems to have opened up between Scotland and Wales on one hand, where improved protection of people with No Recourse to Public Funds, and moves to permanently close communal night shelters, seem to be holding up at least for the moment, and England, where these public health-inspired gains now seem to be unravelling with highly variable

6 <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/services-and-interventions/i-hoped-there-d-be-more-options-experiences-of-the-homelessness-reduction-act-2018-2021/>

7 Ahmed, A., Wilding, M., Gibbons, A., Jones, K., Rogers, M. & Madoc-Jones, I. (2018) *Post-implementation Evaluation of the Homelessness Legislation (Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014: Final Report*. GSR report number 46/2018 Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/evaluation-of-homelessness-legislation-part-2-of-the-housing-act-wales-2014-final-report-summary.pdf>

8 See <https://gov.wales/homelessness-action-group>

9 Welsh Government (2021) Programme for Government. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026.pdf>. p.7

10 The proposed removal of PN was also explored via a comprehensive review: Welsh Government (2020) *Review of Priority Need in Wales*. Social Research Number: 70/2020. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-10/review-of-priority-need-in-wales.pdf>

11 Scottish Government (2017) *A Nation with Ambition: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2017-2018*. Online: Scottish Government

12 See <https://www.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group>

13 Scottish Government (2018) *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group>

14 Ahmed, A., Wilding, M., Gibbons, A., Jones, K., Rogers, M. & Madoc-Jones, I. (2018) *Post-implementation Evaluation of the Homelessness Legislation (Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014: Final Report*. GSR report number 46/2018. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/evaluation-of-homelessness-legislation-part-2-of-the-housing-act-wales-2014-final-report-summary.pdf>; Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237787/the_homelessness_monitor_wales_2017.pdf

15 Evans, A., Littlewood, M., Social Bite & Glasgow Homelessness Network (2018) *Scotland's transition to rapid rehousing: Market area analysis, legislative and culture review*. Online: Glasgow Homelessness Network http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Rapid_Rehousing_Guidance1.1.pdf

16 Johnsen, S., Blenkinsopp, J. & Rayment, M. (2021) *Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation: First Interim Report* (full report). Online: Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/c5n3-0h95>

17 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (2020) *Tackling homelessness in Scotland following the coronavirus pandemic- Recommendations from Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2020/07/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group-final-report-tackling-coronavirus/documents/harsag-final-report-on-homelessness-after-coronavirus/harsag-final-report-on-homelessness-after-coronavirus/govscot%3Adocument/200819%2BHARSAG2%2BCOVID%2Breport.pdf>; Scottish Government (2020) *Ending homelessness together: updated action plan - October 2020*. Online: Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-updated-action-plan-october-2020/>

18 Crisis (2021) *Preventing Homelessness in Scotland: Recommendations for Legal Duties to Prevent Homelessness: A report from the Prevention Review Group*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244558/preventing-homelessness-in-scotland.pdf>

19 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 Crisis Response to Homelessness in Great Britain: Interim Report*. Online: CaCHE https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/12544_UoG_CaCHE_Covid_Homelessness_Report-Final.pdf; see also <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/annex-a-support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-2021-not-official-statistics>

20 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 Crisis Response to Homelessness in Great Britain: Interim Report*. Online: CaCHE https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/12544_UoG_CaCHE_Covid_Homelessness_Report-Final.pdf

practice emerging across local authority areas.²¹

The wider economic and policy context across Great Britain

The United Kingdom economy has rebounded from the COVID-19-induced slump of 2020,²² but spiralling energy, food and other prices, now seriously compounded by the war in Ukraine, are driving a cost-of-living crisis greater than that seen for many decades.²³ At the same time, poverty and destitution have been exacerbated by the removal of temporary measures to bolster household incomes during the pandemic, notably the £20 uplift to Universal Credit, as well as by the refreezing of the Local Housing Allowance at April 2020 rates.²⁴ The United Kingdom Government has recently announced a substantial package for addressing the cost-of-living crisis, including lump sum payments to those in receipt of means-tested benefits and support with fuel bills to all householders. Nonetheless, the poorest households will be hardest hit over this coming winter, exacerbated by rising rental costs. Given the strong links between poverty and homelessness,²⁵ this augurs badly for future homelessness trends.

Notwithstanding this concerning backdrop, the housing and social

policy context in Scotland is considerably more benign than that in England, and even than that in Wales, in a range of respects relevant to homelessness. Most importantly, it has a social rented housing sector that is substantially larger, relative to population size, than either of the other two Great Britain jurisdictions, and the Scottish Government has committed to building 111,000 affordable homes by 2032 of which at least 70% should be available at social rent. Moreover, Scottish social landlords allocate a much higher proportion of their available lettings to households accepted as homeless than their equivalents elsewhere in Great Britain. In 2018-19, the latest year data is available for all three countries, 39% of lettings to new social tenants in Scotland were used to resolve homelessness, compared to 25% of lettings in England and 22% of lettings in Wales.²⁶ The share of Scottish lettings to homeless households jumped to 45% in 2019-20, following the adoption of higher targets for the share of lettings allocated to homeless households as part of the Rapid Rehousing policy.

Furthermore, Scottish Government per capita expenditure on Local Welfare Assistance (delivered via the statutory Scottish Welfare Fund) and Discretionary Housing Payments – both crucial in preventing homelessness and destitution – is

much higher than elsewhere in Great Britain. The disparity on Discretionary Housing Payments in particular is quite staggering, with the 2022-23 allocations equating to £4 per household in England and Wales, but £32 per household in Scotland. In very large part this reflects the Scottish Government's decision to fully mitigate the 'Bedroom Tax' via these Discretionary Housing Payments.

In contrast, recent cuts in Discretionary Housing Payments allocations in England and Wales mean that many more households are at risk of homelessness, while the very existence of Local Welfare Assistance schemes in much of England remains uncertain, notwithstanding temporary boosts during the COVID-19 pandemic and now as part of the cost-of-living package. Wales has an important advantage over England in the retention of its national Discretionary Assistance Fund scheme, centrally funded and administered by the Welsh Government in collaboration with two lead organisations and a network of approved statutory and third sector partners.²⁷ Another area where Wales does much better than both Scotland and England is the stronger protection given to its housing-related support funding ('Supporting People'), which retains the 'ring-fenced' status long since abandoned elsewhere in Great Britain, in a move which presaged massive cuts, especially in England.

Comparing homelessness trends across Great Britain

Statutory homelessness

In terms of the 'full duty acceptances' metric, Scotland experiences a much higher rate of homelessness (c.11 per 1,000 households in 2020/21) than either England (c.2 per 1,000 households in 2020/21) or Wales (c.3

per 1,000 households in 2020/21). This disparity largely reflects the stronger rights people have under the Scottish statutory homelessness system, particularly after the abolition of the 'priority need' test, but also the inadequate attention given to homelessness prevention to date.

Across all three British jurisdictions, single adults comprise around two thirds of people entitled to some form of material homelessness assistance from local authorities, with lone parents comprising the great majority of the remainder. This is a major turnaround from the position in England in particular where, pre the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, single people accounted for only around a third of those accepted as owed the main homelessness duty, and is indicative of the greater inclusivity of the revised statutory framework.

Inter-jurisdictional differences in the frameworks used to monitor the main immediate reasons for homelessness prevent direct comparisons across countries on this topic. However, it is clear that, at least for England and Scotland,²⁸ 2020/21 saw major reductions in people becoming homeless due to loss of existing tenancies, as a direct result of the eviction moratoriums during the COVID-19 pandemic (though eviction rates have subsequently risen again). Thus, ending of a private tenancy as a reason for homelessness fell 37% in England, with social tenancies ending falling by 31%. In Scotland, the overarching category 'loss of tenancy/owned home' fell 47% in 2020/21, likely almost entirely attributable to trends in rental evictions. On the other hand, and possibly associated with pandemic-associated pressures, the numbers facing homelessness due to family/friend exclusion, relationship

21 The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping (2021) *A New Way of Working: Ending Rough Sleeping Together: Final Report*. Online: The Kerslake Commission <https://www.commissiononroughsleeping.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/KRSC-Final-Report-2021.pdf>; National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. HC 1075. Online: NAO <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Investigation-into-the-housing-of-rough-sleepers-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

22 Office for Budget Responsibility (2021) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2022*. London: OBR https://obr.uk/docs/dlm/uploads/CCS0222366764-001_OBR-EFO-March-2022_Web-Accessible-2.pdf

23 Karjalainen, H. & Levell, P. (2022) 'Inflation Hits 9% With Poorest Households Facing Even Higher Rates.' *Institute for Fiscal Studies*. 18 May. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/16058>

24 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) *600,000 will be pulled into poverty as a result of Chancellor's inaction*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/600000-will-be-pulled-poverty-result-chancellors-inaction>

25 Bramley, B. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?', *Housing Studies*, 33:1, 96-116

26 Note that the scale of the gap is overstated because of data problems, especially with the Welsh data, but the overall picture of Scotland's more generous policy towards rehousing those accepted as homeless is accurate.

27 Welsh Government (2015) *The Discretionary Assistance Fund - Guidance for Decision Makers*. Cardiff: Welsh Government <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/DAF--Guidance-for-Decision-Makers%20v2%20Feb2015.pdf>

28 Note that at time of writing, 2018/2019 was the latest year for which such data are published for Wales.

breakdown and (at least in England) domestic violence, rose in 2020/21.²⁹

According to official statistics, some 112,000 households across Great Britain were in temporary accommodation as at 31 March 2021.³⁰ Again reflecting its more inclusive statutory safety net, Scotland's overall temporary accommodation placement rate was some 25% above that of England and 40% above that for Wales. It should be noted, however, that the profile and quality of temporary accommodation used is markedly different across the countries of Great Britain. Thus, while nearly two thirds of 2021 Scottish temporary accommodation placements (62%) involved social housing stock occupied on a temporary basis, this compared with only 23% in England and 15% in Wales, where privately leased temporary accommodation is far more common. Scotland has also gone furthest in restricting local authorities' use of certain forms of temporary accommodation (such as Bed and Breakfast) following the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order - previously applied only to families with children - to all household types in Autumn 2021. That said, stubbornly high levels of temporary accommodation use, and lengthening periods of stay in such accommodation, are key concerns driving the Rapid Rehousing agenda in Scotland, and have also helped to prompt the recent increased attention to prevention.

With regard to temporary placements involving families with children, however, rates in England have been recently running at around 50% higher than the equivalent figure for Scotland. In another worrying longer-term trend, which predates the 2020-2021 pandemic spike, Bed and Breakfast

placements have increased four-fold in England over the past decade, while remaining largely below their 2010 levels in Wales and Scotland.

These trends have been reflected in the mounting costs of temporary accommodation in England, while in parallel expenditure on support, administration and prevention has been progressively squeezed down. This is a spending profile that flies in the face of the early intervention aims and philosophy of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Moreover, precipitated by contracting social housing availability, and a growing gap between Local Housing Allowance rates and actual market rents, temporary accommodation placements are forecast to almost double in England over the next twenty years. Unless arrested, these projected trends will continue to ratchet up the pressure on English local authority homelessness budgets, skewing expenditure yet further away from pro-active support for preventative interventions, towards the mere servicing of crisis accommodation costs.

Core homelessness

Our 'core' homelessness analysis, focussed on the most extreme and immediate forms of homelessness, and drawing on a wide range of data sources, provides a more robustly comparative and very different picture to that derived from official homelessness statistics. It indicates that levels of core homelessness are consistently higher in England (0.84% of households in 2020) than in either of the other two countries, with Scotland having the lowest rate of core homelessness relative to household population (0.57% of households in 2020). In all three jurisdictions,

rough sleeping and unconventional accommodation represent a small proportion of core homelessness, while sofa surfing represents by far the largest overall segment of core homeless households at any one point in time, with hostels and unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation lying somewhere in between.

Inter-jurisdictional differences in the overall level of core homelessness have persisted over the last decade, and were still present in 2020 despite the relatively larger impact of COVID-19 response measures in England. The explanation is likely to lie in the different housing market pressures in the three countries (highest in England), the incidence of poverty and other deprivations (relatively high in Wales), and differences in social housing supply (larger in Scotland) and homelessness policies (more inclusive in Scotland). The numbers of core homeless households are projected to grow yet further in England (reaching 1.19% of households by 2040), with this growth particularly concentrated in London, unless policy steps are taken to correct this negative direction of travel.

Statistical modelling indicates that the most effective policy interventions for reducing core homelessness in all three countries include: rehousing quotas for core homeless groups in the social rented sector; increasing the Local Housing Allowance rate; raising the level of Universal Credit payments; expanding the availability of Housing First and associated support measures; and maximising the use of prevention tools by local authorities. Such policies in concert could reduce total core homelessness by 34% in England, 30% in Wales, and 42% in Scotland. These policies could also reduce rough sleeping and unsuitable temporary accommodation by half to two-thirds in the relatively short term, with the latter eliminated in Scotland. Policies with more modest beneficial effects on levels of core homelessness

include increased housing supply, and appropriate implementation of the UK Government's 'levelling up' agenda. That said, increased housing supply has a bigger impact on housing affordability, reduction in wider forms of housing need, improved prospects for households in need, as well as on reducing overall temporary accommodation of all kinds, and may be crucial to the feasibility of stronger action on rehousing quotas and the expansion of Housing First.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis lays bare the extent to which England lags behind Wales and, especially, Scotland with regard to both homelessness policies and outcomes. While the scale of the challenges are, inevitably, larger, and more complex in Great Britain's largest country, many of the weaknesses that England exhibits as compared with its smaller neighbours are the direct result of policy choices. The statistical projections analysis demonstrates that there is nothing inevitable about a deteriorating position on homelessness in England, or indeed elsewhere in Great Britain: different policy choices would beget different outcomes.

Looking ahead, the Homelessness Monitor series will continue to interrogate homelessness policies, trends, and outcomes across the three Great Britain countries at least until 2026. Inspired by the insights revealed in this comparative Great Britain analysis, we also plan to conduct periodic cross-jurisdiction analysis of the type in this report with the aim of providing pointers to valuable lessons that each country can gain from policy developments and best practice elsewhere.

29 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 crisis response to homelessness in Great Britain*. Online: CACHE <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/the-covid-19-crisis-response-to-homelessness-in-great-britain/>

30 Note that, at least in England, it is understood that this number does not fully encompass those provided with emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic under the national Everyone In program.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This longitudinal Homelessness Monitor study, which started in 2011, provides an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of economic and policy developments across Great Britain. It considers the consequences of economic and housing market trends for homelessness, with recent iterations capturing the homelessness-related effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. A central focus is the impacts on homelessness of relevant policy changes implemented under the Westminster, Scottish and Welsh Governments, particularly in the housing, social security, and labour market fields.

With the Homelessness Monitor study now in its eleventh year, this report takes stock of homelessness across Great Britain in 2022 (or as close to 2022 as data availability will allow) and analyses key trends in the five year period running up to 2022. While the main annual Homelessness Monitor outputs comprise parallel reports produced for each of the UK jurisdictions, this report takes the opportunity to draw out comparisons between the GB countries, including key differences in relevant policy and legislation, as well as divergent rates

of homelessness and varying future prospects for reducing or ending specific forms of homelessness.

Readers who would like a fuller account of the recent history of homelessness should consult with the previous Homelessness Monitors for England, Scotland and Wales which are available on Crisis's website.³¹

1.2 Scope of report

There remains considerable debate on the most appropriate definition of homelessness, with stakeholders often disagreeing on where the boundary should lie between 'homelessness' and other forms of housing need.³² In order for this report to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible, we adopt a range of definitions or 'perspectives' on homelessness, considering the impacts of relevant policy and economic changes on the following (partially overlapping) groups:

- People sleeping rough.
- 'Statutorily homeless households': that is, households who seek or receive housing assistance from local authorities (LAs) on grounds of being currently or imminently without accommodation.

- People experiencing 'core homelessness':³³ this refers to households who are currently experiencing the most acute forms of homelessness. It includes people in the following situations: rough sleeping; sleeping in cars, tents and public transport, unlicensed squatting, or occupation of non-residential buildings; staying in hostels, refuges, and shelters; living in 'unsuitable' temporary accommodation (TA) (e.g., Bed and Breakfast (B&B)); sofa-surfing (i.e., staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions).

1.3 Research methods

This report draws on the series of separate Homelessness Monitors reports which have been prepared for England, Scotland and Wales published over the period 2017 to 2022. We employ five main methods in the longitudinal study that underpins all of these reports:

- First, relevant literature, legal and policy documents are reviewed each year.
- Second, we undertake interviews with a sample of key informants from the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors across England, Scotland, and Wales. In addition to drawing on the key informant interviews conducted for the national Monitor reports published over the past five years, a supplementary sample of 11 key informants from all three GB nations were interviewed for this comparative report. These participants were interviewed in the winter/spring of 2022. See Appendix 1 for the basic topic guide used to

structure these interviews, though note that this guide was tailored for each interviewee.

- Third, we undertake detailed statistical analysis on a) relevant economic and social trends in England; and b) the scale, nature, and trends in homelessness amongst the sub-groups noted above.
- Fourth, we conduct bespoke online surveys of England, Scotland, and Wales LAs, with a view to gaining their perspective on local homelessness trends and also on the impacts of a range of relevant policy developments. No new LA surveys were conducted for this report, but we draw on recent surveys from each of the GB nations throughout.
- Fifth, we incorporate a statistical modelling exercise which both estimates 'core' forms of homelessness, and projects trends in these forms of homelessness into the future. See Appendix 2 for technical details.

1.4 Causation and homelessness

All of the Homelessness Monitor reports are underpinned by a conceptual framework on the causation of homelessness that has been used to inform our interpretation of the likely impacts of economic and policy change.³⁴

Theoretical, historical, and international perspectives indicate that the causation of homelessness is multi-dimensional, with no single 'trigger' that is either 'necessary' or 'sufficient' for it to occur. Individual, interpersonal, and structural factors all play a role – and interact with each

³¹ See: <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html>

³² Busch-Geertsema, V., Culhane, D. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2016) 'Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness', *Habitat International*, 55, 124-132 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197397515300023?via=ihub>

³³ Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf

³⁴ For a more detailed account of this conceptual framework please consult with Chapter 2 in the first Homelessness Monitor: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor: Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237049/the_homelessness_monitor_england_2011.pdf

other – and the balance of causes differs over time, across countries, and between demographic groups. With respect to the main structural factors, international comparative research, and the experience of previous UK recessions, suggests that housing market trends and policies have the most direct impact on levels of homelessness, with the influence of labour-market change more likely to be lagged and diffuse, and strongly mediated by social security arrangements and other contextual factors. The central role that poverty plays in shaping homelessness risks in the UK is also now well established.³⁵

The individual vulnerabilities, support needs, and ‘risk taking’ behaviours implicated in some people’s homelessness are themselves often, though not always, also rooted in the pressures associated with poverty and other forms of structural disadvantage. At the same time, the ‘anchor’ social relationships which can act as a primary ‘buffer’ to homelessness, can be put under considerable strain by stressful financial circumstances. Thus, deteriorating economic conditions in Great Britain associated with the current ‘cost of living crisis’ could also be expected to generate more ‘individual’ and ‘interpersonal’ vulnerabilities to homelessness over time, with any improvement in such conditions tending to have the reverse effect.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an additional and unprecedented dynamic highly relevant to homelessness causation and responses. The pandemic itself and associated responses have had wide ranging homelessness-related impacts, with key mechanisms here including the direct effect of the public health emergency on individual, household and organisational (e.g., LA and landlord) behaviour and choices,

consequences for the economy, and impacts on government policy in relation to social security, housing, and homelessness.

1.5 Structure of report

The structure of this *Homelessness Monitor: Great Britain* report is as follows.

Chapter 2 reviews the evolution and impact of targeted homelessness policies across the GB countries over the last five years. In so doing it considers the relative strengths and weaknesses of homelessness legal and policy arrangements in each jurisdiction, including policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and how they might shape the trajectory of homelessness policy across GB.

Chapter 3 widens the focus to look at broader social, economic, and housing developments relevant to homelessness, updating our analysis of the general economic and labour market context and patterns of poverty across Great Britain. It compares measures put in place to help prevent destitution and homelessness during the pandemic, and interrogates the affordability of housing, social housing supply, and measures to limit eviction.

Chapter 4 moves on to consider homelessness ‘outcomes’ as captured in official statistics, comparing the three nations of Great Britain in relation to the scale and nature of formally recorded rough sleeping and statutory homelessness, and investigates LAs’ use of TA for statutorily homeless households. It also provides a comparison of homelessness expenditure across the three countries.

Chapter 5 explores ‘core’ homelessness trends and projections across the constituent countries of Great Britain, and discusses reasons for divergent anticipated trends, and policy options that might help to reduce homelessness over the short, medium, and long term.

In Chapter 6 we summarise the main findings of this comparative GB report.

³⁵ Bramley, B. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) ‘Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?’, *Housing Studies*, 33:1, 96-116

Chapter 2

Homelessness law and policy

Key findings

In the two decades since devolution the policy and legal homelessness frameworks adopted across GB have evolved to look increasingly different. In recent years, England has increasingly focused on reducing rough sleeping, while Scotland and Wales have taken a broader focus, with legislative and policy approaches oriented toward prevention and rapid rehousing. Reflecting this, Scotland and Wales have strategic plans to end all forms of homelessness, where England has one to address rough sleeping only. Scotland's early focus on removing barriers to legal entitlements to housing through the abolition of priority need, has been further bolstered by recent changes to the use of intentionality. Wales look set to follow Scotland imminently, with the phasing out of priority need commanding widespread support, and other eligibility tests coming under increased scrutiny. Rapid rehousing has emerged as central to addressing the high levels of

temporary accommodation use that have persisted in Scotland following the abolition of priority need and emerged more prominently in Wales following its derogation during the pandemic. In England, growing levels of temporary accommodation use, particularly amongst families with children, alongside widespread use of unsuitable temporary accommodation in some local authority areas, continues to generate concern. In the passing of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Wales took the lead on bringing prevention within the statutory framework, with England's Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 following soon after. Scotland, though last to consider statutory prevention, have concluded a consultation in April 2022 on new prevention duties that go much further than cooperation duties in England and Wales, alongside changes to homelessness legislation to incentivise prevention within a six month period.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the evolution and impact of homelessness-specific policies across England, Scotland and Wales over the last five years.³⁶ After sketching out the key contextual themes in national policy development in homelessness in recent years (section 2.2), it focuses on the evolution of homelessness legislation that imposes rehousing duties on LAs (section 2.3), the development of enhanced homelessness prevention and relief policies and duties (section 2.4), and responses to rough sleeping, complex support needs and the rolling out of the Housing First model (section 2.5). In so doing, it considers the relative strengths and weaknesses of homelessness responses in each nation, including policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and how they might shape the trajectory of homelessness policy across GB. Underpinning our focus, is a recognition that *"targeted homelessness policies matter and can have real and dramatic effects on levels of homelessness"*,³⁷ albeit that the wider socio-economic and policy context (the focus of the next chapter) is also highly relevant.

2.2 Setting the scene

Since the 1970s, the statutory homelessness framework across GB has been based on a rights-based, rather than discretionary response to homelessness, which remains extremely unusual from an international perspective.³⁸ In the two decades since devolution the policy and legal homelessness frameworks adopted across GB have evolved to look increasingly different,³⁹ and this divergence has continued in the last five years.

National homelessness policy in England in the 2010s was driven by a localist ideology, with central government largely absenting itself from direct involvement, leaving matters in the hands of LAs.⁴⁰ By 2017, against a backdrop of growing homelessness and rough sleeping, a retreat from localist approaches began to emerge, with the Conservative Manifesto committing to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it entirely by 2027 (later brought forward to 2024 under the Johnson Government). To this end, Government funded pilots of Housing First⁴¹ were launched in 2018 and in the same year a national Rough

36 Readers seeking a longer-term analysis of the role of targeted homelessness policies and intervention on levels of homelessness across GB should see Fitzpatrick, S. & Bramley, G. (2021) *The Ruling Parties' Record on Homelessness and Complex Needs (May 2015 to pre-COVID 2020)*. SPDO research paper 7. Online: LSE https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/CASE/_NEW/PUBLICATIONS/abstract/?index=7810

37 Ibid. p. 38

38 Fitzpatrick, S., Busch-Geertsema, V., Watts, B., Wood, J., Haj Ahmad, M-T. & McIntyre, J. (2022) *Ending Street Homelessness in Vanguard Cities Across the Globe: An International Comparative Study*. Edinburgh/Bremen: I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University/GISS; Fitzpatrick, S. & Pawson, H. (2016). Fifty years since Cathy Come Home: critical reflections on the UK homelessness safety net, *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 16(4), 543-555; Fitzpatrick, S. & Stephens, M. (2007) *An International Review of Homelessness and Social Housing Policy*. London: CLG

39 Fitzpatrick, S. & Bramley, G. (2021) *The Ruling Parties' Record on Homelessness and Complex Needs (May 2015 to pre-COVID 2020)*. SPDO research paper 7. Online: LSE https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/CASE/_NEW/PUBLICATIONS/abstract/?index=7810

40 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. & Simms, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/homelessness-monitor-england-2020-covid-19-crisis-response-briefing/>; Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Watts, B. (2020) 'The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England,' *Policy & Politics*, 48(4), 541-561

41 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: Interim Process Evaluation Report Final: Report*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/946110/Housing_First_first_interim_process_report.pdf

Sleeping Strategy was published,⁴² with a linked Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI2) funding a range of initiatives targeted on people at risk of sleeping rough. Progress toward the 2024 target has since been supported by ongoing investment in RSI2 and radically accelerated by the centralist responses to the pandemic, but a lack of wider focus on prevention and move-on, and an unwillingness to address the clear tensions between the target and immigration policy have stymied progress.⁴³

The coming into force of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018, saw the introduction of a range of LA prevention and relief duties owed to *all* eligible households which are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The breadth of this legislative turn belies a much narrower strategic approach that has increasingly concentrated on individual vulnerabilities and acute forms of homelessness, with policy and funding activity to date strongly and consistently focused on rough sleeping. Meanwhile, growing levels of TA use, particularly amongst families with children, alongside widespread use of unsuitable TA in some LA areas, continues to generate concern.⁴⁴

42 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) *Rough Sleeping Strategy*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

43 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The Homelessness Monitor England 2022*. ISBN 978-1-78519-082-7. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022/>

44 UK Parliament (2022) *Levelling Up Committee launches inquiry into exempt accommodation*. 7 December. Online: UK Parliament <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/17/levelling-up-housing-and-communities-committee/news/159501/levelling-up-committee-launches-inquiry-into-exempt-accommodation/>

45 Shelter Scotland (2017) *Evidence of Gatekeeping in Glasgow City Council*. Online: Shelter Scotland https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/evidence_of_gatekeeping_in_glasgow_city_council; Scottish Housing Regulator (2018) *Housing People who are Homeless in Glasgow*. Online: Scottish Housing Regulator <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/thematic-work/housing-people-who-are-homeless-in-glasgow>; Taylor, M. (2018) *World-class housing laws risk being 'rendered useless' by repeated breaches*. Online: The Herald https://www.heraldscotland.com/business_hq/17361039/world-class-housing-laws-risk-being-rendered-useless-by-repeated-breaches

46 Scottish Government (2017) *A Nation with Ambition: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2017-2018*. Online: Scottish Government

47 See <https://www.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group>

48 Scottish Government (2018) *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group>

While England has increasingly focused on rough sleeping, national policy in Scotland and Wales has placed continued emphasis on all dimensions of homelessness, with legislative and policy changes largely oriented toward prevention and rapid rehousing, including transformation in the quality and use of TA. In Scotland, the passing of legislation in 2001 that extended the duty to provide TA to all household types and the abolition of priority need by 2012 were notable early junctures in homelessness policy. Nonetheless, by 2017, it was a matter of public record that some Scottish LAs were failing to meet the statutory duty around TA.⁴⁵ The Programme for Government, published in September 2017, set "a clear national objective to eradicate rough sleeping... and transform the use of temporary accommodation."⁴⁶ To this end, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was convened by Scottish Government,⁴⁷ publishing four reports over the course of nine months, containing 70 recommendations. The Group published a report in June 2018 that offered recommendations on "how to bring about an end to homelessness in Scotland,"⁴⁸ placing an emphasis on 'rapid rehousing' into settled mainstream accommodation as quickly as possible for all homeless people,

and the adoption of Housing First approaches for those with complex support needs.⁴⁹

All HARSAG recommendations were accepted in principle by the Scottish Government and captured in its *Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan*, published in November 2018,⁵⁰ with the subsequent delivery of 5 year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan's by Scottish LAs⁵¹ and the development of the Housing First Scotland pathfinder programme⁵² effectively establishing the cornerstones of the Scottish approach. A Scotland Prevention Review Group (PRG) was convened in 2019 to develop specific legal recommendations to enhance and strengthen targeted, crisis and recovery prevention.⁵³ The HARSAG was reconvened during the pandemic, and delivered further recommendations on addressing homelessness,⁵⁴ with Scottish Government building on these in a revised and more ambitious action plan.⁵⁵

49 Woodhall-Melnik, J. R. & Dunn, J. R. (2016). A systematic review of outcomes associated with participation in Housing First programs. *Housing Studies*, 31(3), 287-304

50 Ahmed, A., Wilding, M., Gibbons, A., Jones, K., Rogers, M. & Madoc-Jones, I. (2018) *Post-implementation Evaluation of the Homelessness Legislation (Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014: Final Report*. GSR report number 46/2018. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/evaluation-of-homelessness-legislation-part-2-of-the-housing-act-wales-2014-final-report-summary.pdf>; Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237787/the_homelessness_monitor_wales_2017.pdf

51 Evans, A., Littlewood, M., Social Bite & Glasgow Homelessness Network (2018) *Scotland's transition to rapid rehousing: Market area analysis, legislative and culture review*. Online: Glasgow Homelessness Network http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Rapid_Rehousing_Guidance1.1.pdf

52 Johnsen, S., Blenkinsopp, J. & Rayment, M. (2021). *Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation: First Interim Report (full report)*. Online: Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/c5n3-0h95>

53 <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/scotland-prevention-review-group/>

54 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (2020) *Tackling homelessness in Scotland following the coronavirus pandemic- Recommendations from Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2020/07/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group-final-report-tackling-coronavirus/documents/harsag-final-report-on-homelessness-after-coronavirus/harsag-final-report-on-homelessness-after-coronavirus/govscot%3Adocument/200819%2BHARSAG2%2BCOVID%2Breport.pdf>

55 Scottish Government (2020) *Ending homelessness together: updated action plan - October 2020*. Online: Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-updated-action-plan-october-2020/>

56 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237787/the_homelessness_monitor_wales_2017.pdf

57 See <https://gov.wales/homelessness-action-group>

Homelessness policy and law in Wales historically tracked that of England, but the devolution of primary law-making powers in the early 2010s paved a way for considerable divergence with the passing of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (HWA). The HWA encompassed a radical overhaul of Welsh homelessness legislation, effectively bolstering Wales' preventative focus and extending material assistance to single homeless people. Rough sleeping continued to rise in Wales, however, with people sleeping rough having benefited least from the new preventative legislation.⁵⁶ In 2019, the Welsh Government established an independent 'Homelessness Action Group' (HAG), with a remit to 'end homelessness in Wales' and a specific focus on early action to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping.⁵⁷ Modelled on the Scottish HARSAG, the HAG produced three reports in total, with the second and most comprehensive HAG report, issued in March 2020, containing an array of substantive recommendations, framed within the "clear expectation" that ending homelessness in Wales meant that this experience should be "rare,

brief and non-recurrent".^{58,59} The recommendations were accepted in principle by the then Welsh Government⁶⁰ and the Programme for Government 2021-26, in line with the HAG recommendations, pledged to "*fundamentally reform*" homelessness services to focus on prevention and Rapid Rehousing.⁶¹

One additional aspect of the homelessness policy context in Wales, particularly relevant to people at risk of sleeping rough, and single homeless people more generally, is that in contrast to the sharp contraction in 'Supporting People' funding seen elsewhere in GB, Wales has continued to maintain a ring-fence on funding to date.

These divergent policy paths were strongly reflected in key informant testimony. In England, a lack of clear strategic intent and the absence of a shared direction of travel, emerged as a common lament, particularly in relation to homelessness prevention and use of TA.

"Everything is about rough sleeping. Why? Because the headlines are on rough sleeping... what you've got is this express train of family homelessness coming along, and nobody has seen this express train. It's as if it doesn't exist. The only stuff coming out of government and ministers is about rough sleeping, and it's just negligent. It is pure negligence... the government will do what it appears to have done all the way along in its context of its homelessness strategy, which is to then throw money at the problem

58 Homelessness Action Group (2020) *The Framework of Policies, Approaches and Plans Needed to End Homelessness in Wales (What ending homelessness in Wales looks like): Report from the Homelessness Action Group for the Welsh Government*. Online: Welsh Government https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf

59 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P. & Wood, J. (2019) *Homelessness Prevention in the UK – Policy Briefing*. Online: CaCHE <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Homelessness-Prevention-in-the-UK-policy-Brief-July-2019-final.pdf>

60 Welsh Government (2020) *Written Statement: COVID-19 Response – Homelessness and Rough Sleepers*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/written-statement-covid-19-response-homelessness-and-rough-sleepers>

61 Welsh Government (2021) *Programme for Government*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026.pdf>. p.7

when it's a crisis. Other than throw less money at the problem to stop it becoming a crisis."

(Key informant, independent sector, England)

Key informants from Scotland and Wales in contrast reported sustained government buy-in and leadership with respect to addressing homelessness, with relationships between third sector and national government seen as driven by shared goals and ambitions, oriented around the twin pillars of prevention and transformation of TA.

"We have government, like politicians that are... speaking the same language as the centre [homelessness] organisations. I know that's not the same case in other parts [of GB]. That's key. Also, there's civil servants, senior civil servants who very much speak our language as well. You can almost work as an extended team on the same problem and that's heartening... It's sincere and genuine."

(Key informant, voluntary sector, Scotland)

"we do have a very supportive government. The minister is determined, she wants to end homelessness... they will be hopefully well supported to make some pretty big, positive changes over the coming years. Even though it's a very difficult time at the moment, it can only get better."

(Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

2.3 Rehousing duties

Under the 1977 GB-wide legislation, only households considered to be in priority need were entitled to the 'main rehousing duty' (i.e., to settled housing secured via their LA, and to TA in the interim).⁶² The priority need criterion covered mainly families including dependent children and other households judged to be vulnerable according to strict criteria. In addition to this main 'rationing' device, households were required to navigate tests of 'eligibility' (relating to immigration/residency status, and so a matter reserved to Westminster), 'intentionality' (that they had not brought about their own homelessness), and 'local connection' (to the LA to which they had applied).

Scotland always implemented the post-1977 legislation more inclusively than England and Wales, facilitated by a larger social rented sector, and since devolution has been at the vanguard of rolling back legal restrictions on entitlements to temporary and settled rehousing. Most key informants viewed the movement away from priority need as a key strength of the Scottish approach.⁶³

"that's been part of the Scottish Government approach just to roll back any restrictions on people seeking help, and that's a good thing... we moved away from priority need as a criterion in 2012, which... was a really bold move for Scotland... That... changes the whole statutory paradigm for homelessness... generally speaking, it's much easier to get homelessness assistance in Scotland than it is anywhere else in the UK..."

(Key informant, statutory sector, Scotland)

62 Fitzpatrick, S. & Pawson, H. (2016). 'Fifty years since Cathy Come Home: critical reflections on the UK homelessness safety net,' *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 16(4), 543-555

63 See also chapter 5 in Welsh Government (2020) *Review of Priority Need in Wales*. Social Research Number: 70/2020. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-10/review-of-priority-need-in-wales.pdf>

"The key strength [of statutory framework in Scotland] is the fact that we abolish[ed] that priority need... That puts everybody on... not quite an even footing - but it's closer than anywhere else in GB."

(Key informant, statutory sector, Scotland)

More recently, in 2019, following the recommendations of HARSAG, provisions that had been on the statute book since 2003 to convert the exercise of the 'intentionality test' from a duty to a power of LAs, and to allow Ministers to suspend LAs capacity to transfer the permanent rehousing duty of homelessness applicants to other areas based on 'local connection', were brought into force, albeit that the latter power has not yet been exercised by Ministers and other provisions dating from 2003 to 'soften' the impact of intentionality have not been brought into force. Scotland have also gone furthest in restricting LAs ability to use certain forms of TA (such as B&B), following the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order - previously applied only to families with children - to all household types in Autumn 2021.

While most key informants interviewed this year and for previous editions of the Homelessness Monitor Scotland are highly supportive of this focus on removing barriers to accessing legal entitlements to housing, some did acknowledge that it has led to resourcing challenges and implementation gaps in some areas:

"as result of great laws and great rights that people have, there are people that recognise the signs of homelessness. When there is crisis, their local authority responds in the correct way and these things are either prevented

or they're brought to the system very quickly... [but] there's lots of people that aren't benefiting from that. Particularly in the areas with the most pressured housing market. Which will mean those great rights really aren't being felt by them."

(Key informant, voluntary sector, Scotland)

The pressures on the resourcing and implementation of an inclusive legislative system are also a concern for LAs themselves, with many areas concerned about becoming a 'magnet' authority if local connection rules are suspended,⁶⁴ and higher pressure areas voicing concerns about their capacity to meet the terms of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.⁶⁵ Scottish Government's official statistics also acknowledge that applicants' TA entitlements are not always met, with 605 such instances recorded in 2020/21, albeit largely confined to Edinburgh.⁶⁶ Longstanding issues of TA duties not always being met in Glasgow appear to have been at least temporarily resolved during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁷

To drive forward a reduction in the overall numbers in TA, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans have been prepared by all 32 Scottish LAs in collaboration with RSLs, Health and Social Care Partnerships, and other key public and third sector stakeholders. These lay out how LAs will move away from reliance on TA, improve prevention, and extend settled housing and support options to homeless households (discussed further below).

Key informants in Scotland were positive about the potential of Rapid Rehousing as a mechanism for transforming homelessness responses and reducing the high levels of TA. The Scottish Government's annual report on progress against Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan's suggests that the combined impacts of Brexit and the pandemic have slowed the pace of change. This was echoed by key informants in Scotland who suggested that expected reductions in TA use and length of stay are not yet evident as a result.⁶⁸

- 64 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Young, G. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2021*. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/245880/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2021.pdf>; Scottish Government (2019) *A Consultation on Local Connection and Intentionality Provisions in Homelessness Legislation: Analysis of Responses*. Online: Scottish Government [https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/consultation-analysis/2019/07/consultation-local-connection-intentionality-provisions-homelessness-legislation-analysis-responses/documents/consultation-local-connection-intentionality-provisions-homelessness-legislation-analysis-responses/govscot%3Adocument/consultation-local-connection-intentionality-provisions-homelessness-legislation-analysis-responses.pdf](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/consultation-analysis/2019/07/consultation-local-connection-intentionality-provisions-homelessness-legislation-analysis-responses/documents/consultation-local-connection-intentionality-provisions-homelessness-legislation-analysis-responses/consultation-local-connection-intentionality-provisions-homelessness-legislation-analysis-responses/govscot%3Adocument/consultation-local-connection-intentionality-provisions-homelessness-legislation-analysis-responses.pdf)
- 65 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Young, G. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/245880/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2021.pdf>
- 66 Scottish Government (2021) *Homelessness in Scotland: 2020-21*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2021/06/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/documents/homelessness-scotland-2020-21/homelessness-scotland-2020-21/govscot%3Adocument/homelessness-scotland-2020-21.pdf>
- 67 Scottish Government (2018) *Homelessness in Scotland 2017-2018*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2017-18/>; Scottish Housing Regulator (2018) *Housing People who are Homeless in Glasgow*. Online: Scottish Housing Regulator <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/thematic-work/housing-people-who-are-homeless-in-glasgow/>; Shelter Scotland (2017) *Evidence of Gatekeeping in Glasgow City Council*. Online: Shelter Scotland https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/evidence_of_gatekeeping_in_glasgow_city_council/; Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Young, G. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/245880/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2021.pdf>
- 68 Scottish Government (2022) *Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans Annual Report: 2020-22*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rapid-rehousing-transition-plans-annual-report-2020-21/>

"What we're not seeing yet though... [are] those key reductions that we would want... the number of people becoming homeless, the time that people are spending homeless... the number of people in temporary accommodation and [time] they spend in temporary ... we would be hoping to see change, and none of them are yet."

(Key informant, voluntary sector, Scotland)

While the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted implementation, the Plans were nonetheless seen to have supported responses to the crisis, thus reinforcing support for the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan direction of travel.

Rapid rehousing and reducing reliance on TA requires timely access to settled accommodation. Consistent with Scottish policy ambitions and Rapid Rehousing Plans, the share of social lettings allocated to homeless households has been increasing since 2019,⁶⁹ albeit the HARSAG suggestion that the proportion should temporarily rise to 80-90% in response to the pandemic and its aftermath was not pursued. The Welsh Government also plans to review allocations with the aim of ensuring the process supports

- 69 Scottish Government (2021) *Ending Homelessness Together Annual report to the Scottish Parliament October 2021*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/progress-report/2021/10/ending-homelessness-together-annual-report-2021/documents/ending-homelessness-together-annual-report-scottish-parliament-october-2021/ending-homelessness-together-annual-report-scottish-parliament-october-2021/govscot%3Adocument/ending-homelessness-together-annual-report-scottish-parliament-october-2021.pdf?forceDownload=true>
- 70 Welsh Government (2021) *Ending homelessness: A high level action plan – 2021-2026: How we will end homelessness in Wales*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-10/ending-homelessness-high-level-action-plan-2021-to-2026.pdf>
- 71 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022/>
- 72 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237787/the_homelessness_monitor_wales_2017.pdf
- 73 Welsh Government (2019) *Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/homelessness-strategy.pdf>; Homelessness Action Group (2020) *Preventing, tackling and ending homelessness through rapid rehousing and local, regional and national partnerships: Report to Welsh Ministers from the Homelessness Action Group*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/homelessness-action-group-report-july-2020.pdf>
- 74 The proposed removal of PN was also explored via a comprehensive review: Welsh Government (2020) *Review of Priority Need in Wales*. Social Research Number: 70/2020. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-10/review-of-priority-need-in-wales.pdf>

the goal of ending homelessness.⁷⁰ In England, however, there remains concern that allocation policies continue to constrain access to social housing for homeless households, especially those with support needs.⁷¹

The main way in which legal rights have been extended in Wales is via the introduction of new priority need 'blind' homelessness prevention and relief duties. However, 'main duty' rehousing entitlements under the 1977 homelessness legislation were enhanced to include, for example, care leavers and 16/17-year-olds, with similar amendments made in England. The intentionality test was also significantly restricted in 2019, such that LAs must now provide accommodation for intentionally homeless families and young people, unless they have previously been found to be intentionally homeless in the past five years.⁷²

More recently, the Welsh Government's HAG, convened in 2019 to develop detailed proposals to progress the Government's national strategy for preventing and ending homelessness,⁷³ recommended the phasing out of the priority need and intentionality tests, as well as the local connection rules.⁷⁴ The move to

abolish the priority need test seems unstoppable and largely supported by key stakeholders, not least following a review of the proposed move and the pandemic offering an opportunity to test it in practice:

“The Green Paper is going to put an intention to end priority need. There’ll be a certain amount of pushback from the local authorities, although interestingly it might not have the same kind of fear attached to it as it would have before the pandemic, because they’ve had to operate in that way... We haven’t done it very well, but we can get a sense of what the demand is going to be and as long as it’s supported with the proper effort to unblock the supply of quality single person... accommodation, then we’ll be able to get that through.”
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

Some key informants raised concerns about the resourcing of such a bold change, and in particular its impacts on the numbers in TA already evident following the effective ‘suspension’ of the priority need test for those at risk of sleeping rough throughout the pandemic, following explicit Welsh government guidance.⁷⁵

“in an ideal world, you would have a system where everybody got the same help all the way through, and I’m sure that that’s the way we’re going. However, I don’t think we’ve got the infrastructure and the resources to deliver that properly... and so that’s my concern, that we get all our ducks in a row before we go there, otherwise it will fail.”
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

75 Welsh Government (2020) *Guidance for Local Authorities in Supporting People Sleeping Rough – Covid-19 Outbreak*. Online: Welsh Government. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-04/guidance-for-local-authorities-in-supporting-people-sleeping-rough-covid-19_0.pdf

76 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Young, G., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246433/the-homelessness-monitor-wales-2021-executive-summary.pdf>

While most stakeholders viewed these pressures as resourcing issues that need to be managed and addressed, one key informant from England saw the removal of priority need in Wales as irresponsible:

“it’s playing with somebody’s else’s chequebook... saying, ‘Well, look, you need to change things and change the statutory framework, and then resources will follow.’ Well, resources don’t follow. Who suffers are the councils. Who suffers are other people receiving council services, because... you can’t pay for the homelessness costs without slashing services elsewhere. It’s an irresponsible call in Wales... to go down the Scottish model, and the prevention and relief model in Wales has worked incredibly well... and there are low levels of rough sleeping in Wales, and high success rates in prevention and relief duties. Why would you change it?”
(Key informant, independent sector, England)

Interestingly, among the 22 Welsh LAs surveyed for the Homelessness Monitor Wales 2021,⁷⁶ proposals to remove the priority need test were the least controversial (with 15 of 22 supporting such a move). LAs were more or less evenly split regarding support for the removal of the intentionality test (backed by 10, opposed by 9).

Much more controversial than either of these moves were proposals to remove local connection restrictions, opposed by 19 or 22 LAs.

“there’s been a lot of people moving into Wales because they’ve been able to work remotely... So there’s particular housing pressures around... that at the moment... It’s an absolute minefield.”
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

Current pressures on TA were considered particularly acute in Wales, having emerged more prominently following the derogation of priority need during the pandemic, with some LAs reported to be unable to meet the TA entitlements of all applicants.

“We... have been concerned at the growing numbers of people... who are owed... a temporary accommodation duty, but the local authority is saying, ‘We haven’t got anywhere for you.’... [with] everybody in... the cracks began to show so quickly in some parts of Wales and... despite what seems to be a lot of effort and a lot of money from the Welsh Government, those gaps are still evident.”
(Key informant, statutory sector, Wales)

These pressures look unlikely to abate, given the planned phasing out of priority need. Most key informants considered Rapid Rehousing as key to addressing such pressures, with concerns being raised that it remains in ‘very early discursive stages’ in Wales (Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales).

Legislative changes in England have altered the scope of the priority need criterion to some extent. Most recently, 2021 saw domestic abuse survivors gain automatic priority need status regardless of household type, meaning that single survivors without children are entitled to accommodation for

77 See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-21-domestic-abuse?msclkid=b89c1debcec711ec8f711403e71bd4f2>

the first regardless of any additional ‘vulnerability’ status.⁷⁷ Overall though, England retains the broad contours of the rationing criterion put in place over forty years ago under the 1977 Act.

Inspired by developments in Scotland and Wales, and the temporary suspension of usual legal tests under the Everyone In initiative, potential shifts to the legislative framework in England were on the minds of key informants this year. Views were mixed with respect to removal of priority need. Most key informants were supportive of such a move in principle, but were concerned about the viability of adequate resourcing, particularly given the scale of potential demand relative to Wales and Scotland, while a small number foregrounded the risk of increased ‘perverse incentives’ to apply as homeless. Others reported that some LAs are already working beyond the boundaries of current legislation, adopting an approach that is in effect blind to priority need at all stages.

“we look across the border into Scotland and Wales and feel quite jealous of their... more progressive legislative position... especially with regard to priority need... I think the cause for caution would be the scale in England. The scale in both Scotland and Wales is about the size of one of our core cities, so the challenge is... you can face that at a different pace... but I do think that the direction of travel that Scotland and Wales have set is the right one.”
(Key informant, statutory sector, England)

2.4 Homelessness prevention and relief

While in the early 2000s, Scotland led on removing barriers to rehousing rights, England was at the forefront of non-statutory homelessness prevention. The Housing Options model - wherein LAs offer those in housing crisis a range of services designed to avoid the need for them to make a statutory homelessness application - emerged first in England,⁷⁸ with the Welsh Government funding a similar model soon after. The roll-out of Housing Options led directly to very significant and rapid declines in statutory homelessness and evaluative evidence indicates that some of this steep decline was a result of genuine prevention.⁷⁹ However, the flexible and 'informal' nature of the Housing Options approach, has tended to sit awkwardly alongside the formal statutory homelessness system, wherein LAs are required to undertake a statutory homelessness assessment as soon as they have 'reason to believe' that a household may be homeless. This has led to concerns about unlawful 'gatekeeping' practices (i.e., diverting potential homeless applicants away from claiming their legal entitlements) in England and to a lesser extent in Wales.⁸⁰

Wales moved first in seeking to integrate prevention activity within the main statutory homelessness framework. Based on the recommendations of a Welsh Government-funded review published in 2012,⁸¹ the HWA introduced

an emphasis on earlier 'preventative' intervention for households who are 'threatened with homelessness', as well as 'priority need blind' homelessness 'relief' duties. Only a handful of years later, England passed the HRA, which took as its main inspiration the 2014 legislation in Wales. Both the HWA and HRA provide that LAs take reasonable steps - set out in personalised housing plans - to help to prevent and relieve homelessness as well extending the definition of those considered 'threatened' with homelessness to encompass people likely to lose their home within 56 days, rather than 28 days under earlier provisions.

Key informants to this and earlier Homelessness Monitors, were in general positive about the HWA and HRA, with key outcomes including a much-improved offering of support and assistance to single homeless people and a reorientation of LAs toward person-centred and prevention-focused approaches.⁸² However, the limitations of both Acts are also clear. Principal amongst these is that where prevention and relief efforts fail, it remains the case in England and Wales that only households with priority need are entitled to have housing secured by the local housing authority.⁸³ This means that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants still reach the end of the various operational procedures without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them.

78 Pawson, H. (2007) 'Local authority homelessness prevention in England: Empowering consumers or denying rights?' *Housing Studies*, 22(6): 867-884

79 Ibid.

80 Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) *Housing Options in Scotland: A Thematic Inquiry*. Edinburgh: SHR.

81 Mackie, P., Fitzpatrick, S., Stirling, T., Johnsen, S. & Hoffman, S. (2012) *Options for an Improved Homelessness Legislative Framework in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

82 Ahmed, A., Wilding, M., Gibbons, A., Jones, K., Rogers, M. & Madoc-Jones, I. (2018) *Post-implementation Evaluation of the Homelessness Legislation (Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014): Final Report*. GSR report number 46/2018. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/evaluation-of-homelessness-legislation-part-2-of-the-housing-act-wales-2014-final-report-summary.pdf>; Boobis, S., Sutton-Hamilton, C. & Albanese, F. (2020) *A foot in the door' Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act*. London: Crisis

83 It is also the case that some priority need applicants do not progress to the final statutory duty. In Wales, those who 'unreasonably fail to cooperate' with the prevention or relief assistance may fall within this group, while in England a higher threshold of 'deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate' that reduces rather than eliminates local authorities' rehousing duty is applied.

"Although we say, 'We have a duty to help you, and we will help you. We'll do what we can,' that doesn't mean that we will house you and, often, we can't... [I]n an ideal world, you would have a system where everybody got the same help all the way through"
(Key informant, statutory sector, Wales)

"There is a still a relief cohort that is not getting their needs met and ... It's the cohort who stood to gain the most from the HRA, and I think that it has not worked for them; it does not work. I think there is potential, but I think the culture change needed for the HRA to really fly hasn't happened consistently"
(Key informant, voluntary sector, England)

Large-scale longitudinal research recently published by Crisis, and funded by Oak Foundation, provides a very substantial evidence base on experiences of the HRA, confirming the perspectives above. Speaking to around 1,500 people facing homelessness, as well as staff in six Housing Options services, Crisis found that the HRA has opened up support and assistance for significantly more people facing homelessness than had hitherto been the case, with single adults in particular being the main beneficiaries of this additional help. However, acute housing access pressures, coupled with insufficient staffing and funding for their service, meant that many LA staff felt it was challenging to deliver support under the HRA. Delivery of tools such as Personalised Housing Plans

and assessments was therefore very mixed. Tellingly, and very concerningly, among those research participants whose contact with Housing Options had ended, nearly half (46%) remained homeless after going to the LA for support.

Scotland is the last of the GB nations to consider integrating prevention work into the main statutory homelessness framework. While the Scottish Government did, almost a decade after England, start to promote Housing Options from 2010 onwards, 'available data indicates that a relatively 'light touch' version... had tended to be deployed... often limited to active information and signposting, and frequently culminating in a statutory homelessness application'.⁸⁴ A highly critical Scottish Housing Regulator report in 2014 raised the spectre of gatekeeping and LA confidence in pressing forward with the approach seems to have been somewhat stymied as a result,⁸⁵ albeit that (roughly regional) Housing Options Hubs continue to play a key role in prevention oriented work in Scotland.⁸⁶

Consistent with the HARSAG recommendations, an independent PRG was convened in 2019 to develop proposals for legal changes to enhance and strengthen homelessness prevention in Scotland. The group's final recommendations were published in February 2021.⁸⁷ Public consultation on these proposed legislative changes closed in April 2022, with the outcome pending at time of writing. The Group recommended the introduction of new prevention duties on a wide range of public bodies that go much

84 Fitzpatrick, S. & Bramley, G. (2021) *The Ruling Parties' Record on Homelessness and Complex Needs (May 2015 to pre-COVID 2020)*. SPDO research paper 7. Online: LSE. https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/CASE/_NEW/PUBLICATIONS/abstract/?index=7810 p.19

85 Ibid.

86 See: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/homelessness/homelessness-prevention/#:~:text=Housing%20Options%20Hubs%20bring%20together%20neighbouring%20councils%20in,landlords%29%20who%20work%20in%20partnership%20to%20deliver%20services.?msclkid=edea3a1dcf9b11eca079237956b25693>

87 Crisis (2021) *Preventing Homelessness in Scotland: Recommendations for Legal Duties to Prevent Homelessness: A report from the Prevention Review Group*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244558/preventing-homelessness-in-scotland.pdf>

further than duties on these bodies in England and Wales - including a new duty on Health and Social Care Partnerships to co-operate with LAs to plan for the needs of homelessness applicants with more complex support requirements - as well as changes to homelessness legislation to incentivise prevention within a six month (rather than 56 days) period prior to likely loss of accommodation. Key informants interviewed this year were overwhelmingly supportive of the PRG recommendations, a mood in keeping with the broad support voiced by respondents to the 2021 Scotland Monitor. Support was particularly strong with respect to the wider public sector duties, notwithstanding some caveats regarding the resourcing and implementing of such a move:

“the new duties... about extending these collective responsibilities to prevent homelessness across most stakeholders... [that is] an absolute no-brainer. There would be the obvious caveats... in terms of resourcing and practically how do we do this, how do we get our heads round it? Nobody is arguing the principle, which I think is wonderful in general.”
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Scotland)

Key informants noted that the PRG recommendations go with the grain of pandemic-related improvements in interagency working whilst ensuring that they are buoyed by more than goodwill alone, with the wider public sector duties viewed as a necessary mechanism to building the partnerships needed to realise Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans.

“Having the statutory duty... will help the collaborative efforts through rapid rehousing to reduce homelessness and... to make sure that if an episode of actual homelessness occurs, it’s minimised... [W]e’ve needed the statutory duty because you can

get really good relationships with partners and fine words, but the real kicker is when they have a duty to collaborate and cooperate with the local authority.”
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Scotland)

Although highly supportive of the direction of travel of the PRG, two key informants in Scotland raised concerns around recommendations that would enable discharge of the main duty into a wider set of ‘maximal housing options’, highlighting concerns over the potential weakening of the offer to include less secure accommodation, albeit that this was seen as something to be worked through in practice, rather than as undermining the recommendations entirely.

“to ensure that we don’t get unintended consequences and incentives for people to jump over prevention duties or rights and go homeless... you have to equalise... what the rights are between the two... what that means is that the... local authority can discharge its duty to somebody under homeless as well as prevention duties... into a housing option that’s less secure than they would currently be able to do... It could be argued that what that does is just create more better targeted housing options for people... there’s also... [an] argument that actually all we’re doing is undermining rights that people have. A local authority couldn’t currently put people into supported accommodation and say job done.”
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Scotland)

Across GB, key informants pointed to an emerging distinction between Wales and Scotland on one hand – where strategic intent is increasingly toward prevention as a public sector wide duty, and England where a similar trajectory is not yet evident.

“there’s a major recognition [in Wales] that we need to move further upstream,... what we call prevention at the moment, should be the safety net... That is entirely shared in Scotland... Look over the border to England and I don’t think those principles are shared at all. I don’t think it’s part of the discourse. So there’s a major fundamental difference now... if you were looking at it in Scotland and Wales, homeless prevention is everyone’s responsibility. It’s a public sector wide responsibility, and actually it sits largely outside of housing”
(Key informant, independent sector, Wales)

2.5 Rough sleeping, complex needs and Housing First

There has been - since 2017 - a concerted and successful effort in England to address rough sleeping. These efforts came on the heels of a ‘decade of disaster’⁸⁸ on homelessness policy, heralded in 2011 by the passing of the Localism Act, which was intended to give legal form to the core notion that central government should absent itself from direct involvement in issues such as homelessness. In the decade that followed, homelessness and rough sleeping in England climbed to levels far above those seen in 2010, with TA placements also increasing significantly, particularly LA use of B&B hotels (see chapter four).

A Rough Sleeping Strategy was published in August 2018 which set out how the UK Government planned to usher in a range of “prevention”, “intervention” and “recovery” measures. Linked to the Strategy, was a new Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI2) - which funded a range of practical interventions - alongside letting schemes targeted on people at risk of sleeping rough. An internal evaluation of the RSI2 claimed success, in that the (modest) drop in rough sleeping numbers at national level (2%) between 2017 and 2018 was disproportionately high (19%) in those areas which have received RSI2 funding.⁸⁹ Investment in the RSI has been sustained over recent years, increasing from £30m in 2018/19, to £112m in 2020/21, and then to £203m in 2021/2.⁹⁰ Local authority respondents to the Homelessness Monitor England 2022 were positive about the impact of RSI2 (and other rough sleeping targeted funding streams, including the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme)⁹¹ in enabling them to address rough sleeping, with 61% considering these to have been ‘very helpful.’ However, several informants interviewed for this Monitor were of the view that interest in driving forward RSI2 is beginning to wane within the Westminster:

“The RSI... spec was great... but... the ask from the advisors was, ‘Don’t put in more than you’ve had before, and we want you to taper it off every year.’ Which doesn’t speak to a genuine understanding of how we’re going to end rough sleeping in my view.

88 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Watts, B. (2020) ‘The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England,’ *Policy & Politics*, 48(4), 541-561

89 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) *Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018: impact evaluation*. London: MHCLG.

90 See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-initiative-2020-to-2021-funding-allocations> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-initiative-2021-to-2022-fundingallocation>

91 See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government & The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (2020) *Jenrick launches ‘Protect Programme’: the next step in winter rough sleeping plan*. Online: Gov.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-launches-protectprogramme-the-next-step-in-winter-rough-sleeping-plan>; Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department for Health and Social Care, Eddie Hughes MP, & Gillian Keegan MP (2021) *Government announces support for rough sleepers over winter*. Online: UK Government <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-support-for-rough-sleepers-over-winter>.

It speaks to, we're kind of satisfied with where we've got to, and if it stays at this point or fizzles a little bit then we've still got a good story to tell".

(Key informant, statutory sector, England)

Responses to rough sleeping were radically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In England, the Everyone In initiative saw many areas lift restrictions on eligibility criteria to allow people sleeping rough, at risk of doing so, or in communal shelters, to be accommodated in hotel or similar accommodation. As at December 2021, over 40,000 of those accommodated have been "moved into settled accommodation or a supported housing pathway".⁹² Similar responses were adopted across GB. The Welsh Government issued guidance that - for the duration of the pandemic - people sleeping rough should be considered 'vulnerable' and therefore 'in priority need' and consequently legally entitled to accommodation. The issuing of direct guidance allowed for greater consistency in the offer of accommodation in Wales than was seen in England where similar guidance was lacking.⁹³ Unlike the rest of the GB, the majority of those sleeping rough in Scotland already had legal entitlements to accommodation following the abolition of the Priority Need (see above), but initial responses also focused on accommodating rough sleepers, (albeit that their number were comparatively smaller) into hotel or other more self-contained options, as well as on rapidly moving

92 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 Crisis Response to Homelessness in Great Britain: Interim Report*. Online: CaCHE. https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/12544_UoG_CaCHE_Covid_Homelessness_Report-Final.pdf; see also <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/annex-a-support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-2021-not-official-statistics>

93 Welsh Government (2020) *Guidance for Local Authorities in Supporting People Sleeping Rough – Covid-19 Outbreak*. Online: Welsh Government https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-04/guidance-for-local-authorities-in-supporting-people-sleeping-rough-covid-19_0.pdf

94 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 Crisis Response to Homelessness in Great Britain: Interim Report*. Online: CaCHE. https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/12544_UoG_CaCHE_Covid_Homelessness_Report-Final.pdf

people out of 'shared air' night shelter accommodation.⁹⁴

The key strengths of the various GB initiatives were their inclusive and non-conditional nature, with concerted efforts across statutory and voluntary sectors to accommodate everyone, irrespective of their eligibility under current legislation. The initiative was a central driver of reductions in enumerated levels of rough sleeping (see chapter four); reduced use of dormitory-style night shelter accommodation; and improved partnership working between the homelessness and health sectors. Key limitations include variations in the nature, extent, and quality of responses across LA areas, with reliance upon poor quality accommodation used with insufficient support provision an issue in some.

While pandemic-related homelessness responses shared much in common across the GB administrations, key informants to this Monitor reported an emerging disjuncture between Scotland and Wales on one hand, where core elements of the pandemic related response are being sustained, and their gradual roll-back in England. For example, while non-UK nationals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) or other restricted eligibility for statutory support and sleeping rough were initially explicitly included in pandemic-related responses to homelessness across GB, in England this group have subsequently been especially vulnerable to inconsistent

treatment.⁹⁵ Of the 155 LAs surveyed for the England Monitor 2022, fewer than a fifth were accommodating all those rough sleeping or at risk of doing so (at Summer 2021):

"the government has a target to end rough sleeping by 2024... but a good percentage on the streets have no recourse to public funds. What do we hear from the government on that? Absolutely nothing... [and] I can't see that being resolved..."

(Key informant, independent sector, England)

There have been more recent shifts in England to improving the offer for non-UK nationals with restricted eligibility including the latest round of RSI funding which stated local authorities could use the funding to support people with NRPF. Key informants in Scotland and Wales detailed plans to hold an improved position for people with NRPF, albeit one necessarily constrained by national legislation. These plans are most advanced in Scotland, where the Government's Ending Destitution Together Strategy, published in March

2021, sets out a national approach 'to prevent and mitigate destitution as far as possible'.⁹⁶ The Everyone Home Collective⁹⁷ have also worked with central and local government to develop Fair Way Scotland, an action plan to 'proactively design-out homelessness and destitution... [for] people with no recourse to public funds in Scotland'.⁹⁸

Likewise, the legacy of night shelter closures across GB - a core focus of early pandemic-related responses across all three administrations - shows similar divergence. In England, communal night shelter provision is re-emerging to some extent,⁹⁹ while Scotland's have now closed and look unlikely to reopen.¹⁰⁰ Key informants in Wales reported that 'categorically, absolutely, Welsh Government money will not fund night shelters' (Key informant, statutory sector, Wales) and that they have been proactive in moving to shut-down night-shelters and other forms of unsuitable TA as they emerge.

95 The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping (2021) *A New Way of Working: Ending Rough Sleeping Together: Final Report*. Online: The Kerslake Commission <https://www.commissiononroughsleeping.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/KRSC-Final-Report-2021.pdf>; National Audit Office (2021) *Investigation into the Housing of Rough Sleepers during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. HC 1075. Online: NAO <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Investigation-into-the-housing-of-rough-sleepers-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

96 Scottish Government and COSLA (2021) *Ending Destitution Together: A Strategy to Improve Support for People with No Recourse to Public Funds Living in Scotland 2021-2024*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2021/03/ending-destitution-together/documents/ending-destitution-together-strategy-improve-support-people-no-recourse-public-funds-living-scotland-2021-2024/ending-destitution-together-strategy-improve-support-people-no-recourse-public-funds-living-scotland-2021-2024/govscot%3Adocument/ending-destitution-together-strategy-improve-support-people-no-recourse-public-funds-living-scotland-2021-2024.pdf?forceDownload=true>

97 The Everyone Home Collective is a group of 35 third sector and academic organisations formed during the pandemic with an ambition to end homelessness and rough sleeping. See here <https://www.everyonehome.scot/?msclkid=4178618cceb11ec88b7f2db538b0329>

98 Homeless Network Scotland (2021) *Fair Way Scotland: Gateway to a safe destination, support, and advice for people with no recourse to public funds*. Online: Homeless Network Scotland <https://homelessnetwork.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fair-Way-Scotland-Delivery-Plan-FINAL-051021.pdf>

99 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2022) *COVID-19: provision of night shelters: Operating principles for commissioners and providers of night shelters for people experiencing rough sleeping*. Online: DLUHC & MHCLG <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters?msclkid=03026722cecf11ecaa62bf57e0f08add>

100 Everyone Home Collective (2021) *Route-Map 1: Ending the need for night shelter & hotel room provision*. Online: Everyone Home Collective <https://www.everyonehome.scot/pdf/route-map.pdf>

“the Welsh Government has been really clear about that, and tough luck to local authorities... they’re on board with the let’s not go back to night shelters... [and] the pods that kept springing up... very quickly Welsh Government stepped in to... [say] don’t do that... I think there’s a shared direction, we are just, we don’t have the accommodation at the moment, is the reality”.
(Key informant, independent sector, Wales)

Across all three GB countries a major development in recent years is Housing First. In Wales, £700m of Government funding was made available in December 2018 for Housing First projects in Conwy and Denbighshire, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Merthyr Tydfil.¹⁰¹ Under ‘phase 2’ of the emergency pandemic response, the Welsh Government also made £50m available to support movement away from unsuitable forms of TA to a rapid rehousing approach, including Housing First.¹⁰² In England, the regional Housing First pilots launched in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Liverpool, in 2018, with £28m of funding over a three year period to Autumn 2021.¹⁰³ Interim results from the ongoing evaluation¹⁰⁴ indicate that at the end

of February 2021, 904 individuals had been recruited across the three regions, with some 123 having subsequently exited the programme. Of those recruited, 534 had been housed in their own tenancies, “of whom 148 had been housed for 6 to 12 months, 149 for between 12 and 24 months and 26 for between 24 and 36 months.”¹⁰⁵ Scotland’s Housing First Pathfinder programme was formally launched in April 2019, with an ambition to scale up Housing First delivery in six LAs including: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Stirling. The Scottish Government committed up to £6.5million and Social Bite £2m over three years to support the programme.¹⁰⁶ An interim evaluation of the programme¹⁰⁷ reported that by the end June 2021, 531 individuals with multiple and complex needs had been allocated a Housing First tenancy, with zero evictions having been recorded during this time. The report concluded that:

“Pathfinders have been highly effective at supporting people to sustain their tenancies to date, achieving an overall 12-month tenancy sustainment rate of 84% and 24-month tenancy sustainment rate of 82%”.¹⁰⁸

Tenants of both the English Pilots and the Scottish Pathfinder, were on balance highly satisfied, with the greatest benefit identified as having secured their own housing, but additional gains extending beyond housing also noted, with the value of support provision emerging clearly.¹⁰⁹ Echoing these findings, key informants to this Monitor were overwhelmingly positive about the efficacy and impact of Housing First for those accommodated, and the value of the approach was seen to be increasingly accepted as “*established practice*” and integrated (at least to some degree) within most LAs (Key informant, statutory sector, Wales).

Fidelity assessments have found both the Pilots and the Pathfinder to have medium and high fidelity to the principles of Housing First.¹¹⁰ However, several key informants in England raised concerns that for Housing First services outside those of the Pilots, fidelity is sometimes questionable:

“a lot of councils are saying we’re doing Housing First, but are they really? Is it really fidelity compliant with... Housing First?... What you’re doing is basically a bit of floating support and calling it Housing First. You’re not, how can you say that somebody in temporary accommodation is getting Housing First support?”
(Key informant, statutory sector, England)

The England Monitor 2022 similarly found that locally delivered Housing First-like models can depart (sometimes quite radically) from high fidelity Housing First, with several cases of what LAs were describing as Housing First or Housing First-like appearing more akin to traditional temporary supported housing.

The scale of Housing First was lamented by most GB stakeholders as incommensurate to need, with key informants in Wales and England particularly frustrated by a constricted pace of growth. Access to housing emerged as a key concern in the English Pilots evaluation, where securing “a sufficient supply of suitable properties for service users... considered the main risk in each Pilot area.”¹¹¹ Of those recruited across the pilot areas, only 59% had been housed by June 2021.

“What... [the Pilots] should... be telling us is even with something as well invested in as Housing First, without affordable housing supply, they’re still completely hamstrung”.
(Key informant, statutory sector, England)

101 Barker, N. (2018) ‘Welsh government announces Housing First Funding’. *Inside Housing*. 22 December. Online: Inside Housing <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/welsh-government-announces-housing-first-funding-59600>

102 James, J. (2020) *Written Statement: Phase 2 Homelessness Update*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/written-statement-phase-2-homelessness-update>

103 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: Interim Process Evaluation Report Final Report*. Online: MHCLG. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/946110/Housing_First_first_interim_process_report.pdf

104 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots Second Process Evaluation Report*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005888/Housing_First_Second_Process_Report.pdf

105 Ibid. p. 1

106 Scottish Government (2021) *Housing to 2040*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2021/03/housing-2040-2/documents/housing-2040/housing-2040/govscot%3Adocument/housing-2040.pdf>; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: Interim Process Evaluation Report Final Report*. Online: MHCLG https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/50929673/Housing_First_Pathfinder_Interim_Report_executive_summary_.pdf

107 Johnsen, S., Blenkinsopp, J. & Rayment, M. (2021) *Scotland’s Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation First Interim Report: Executive Summary*. Online: Heriot-Watt University https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/50929673/Housing_First_Pathfinder_Interim_Report_executive_summary_.pdf

108 Ibid. p. 1.

109 Johnsen, S., Blenkinsopp, J. & Rayment, M. (2021) *Scotland’s Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation First Interim Report: Executive Summary*. Online: Heriot-Watt University https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/50929673/Housing_First_Pathfinder_Interim_Report_executive_summary_.pdf; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots Second Process Evaluation Report*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005888/Housing_First_Second_Process_Report.pdf

110 Ibid.

111 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots Second Process Evaluation Report*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005888/Housing_First_Second_Process_Report.pdf p. 49.

Similar concerns regarding supply of housing were echoed by Welsh informants interviewed for this Monitor, with one suggesting that access might be helpfully addressed through the housing allocations process. Other factors that were thought to slow progress on Housing First in Wales, were adherence to traditional models of accommodation and gatekeeping on the part of housing providers:

“we’re still struggling... [with housing associations] who still see them as a risk, or not tenancy ready, or do they want it enough... when it comes down to the actual who gets a home and who doesn’t decisions, there are still barriers”.
(Key informant, statutory sector, Wales)

Chapter 3

The wider context

Key findings

The UK economy has rebounded from the COVID-19 induced slump in gross domestic product of 9.4% in 2020. However, with energy and other prices accelerating far more quickly than wages and social security payments, the cost of living crisis that emerged in 2021 is deepening, hitting the poorest households hardest. Rates of poverty and destitution have been adversely affected by the removal of temporary measures to bolster household incomes during the pandemic and rising taxation, although recent one-off measures to help households navigate the cost-of-living crisis, including measures targeted at low income and vulnerable households announced at the end of May 2022, should ease matters in the short term.

Discretionary Housing Payments and Local Welfare Assistance, which replaced the Department for Work and Pensions’ Social Fund in 2013, can help to prevent homelessness amongst those facing financial insecurity. Scottish Government per capita expenditure on both mechanisms has attained much higher levels than elsewhere in Great Britain, in large part reflecting its decision to fully mitigate the ‘bedroom tax’. In contrast, the continued existence of local welfare schemes in much of England

remains uncertain and recent cuts in Discretionary Housing Payment allocations in England and Wales means that many more households are at risk of homelessness. That said, the Department for Work and Pensions’ Household Support Fund should somewhat ease access to discretionary funding amongst vulnerable households until March 2023.

Since the end of the first pandemic lockdown, rapid rises in house prices and rents since summer 2020 have reinforced deep-seated housing inequalities. Over 40% of households under the age of forty years, rising to 50% in Wales are unable to afford to rent a suitable property in their local area without placing themselves in financial stress. The decline in social lettings has also made it harder for younger and homeless households to access this sector, even in Scotland where the share of lettings allocated to homeless households remains appreciably higher than elsewhere. Eviction action by private landlords in England has increased rapidly since May 2021 when all ‘pandemic-related’ eviction measures ended. In contrast, the six month eviction notice period continued in Scotland and Wales until March 2022.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines recent social, economic, and housing developments relevant to homelessness in England, Scotland, and Wales. Section 3.2 updates the general economic and labour market context and patterns of poverty across Britain. Section 3.3 explores measures put in place across the three nations to help prevent destitution and homelessness principally during the pandemic, while section 3.4 looks at the affordability of housing, social housing supply and measures to limit eviction since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2 The wider economic context

The economy and labour market

The UK economy grew by 7.5% in 2021.¹¹² This followed the unprecedented 9.4% contraction in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 when pandemic lockdowns and restrictions suppressed economic activity.¹¹³ Across GB, the severity of the recession and the pace of recovery has been similar, in spite of the more stringent public health regulations imposed in Scotland and Wales,¹¹⁴ confirming that the economies of all three nations are deeply interwoven.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the labour market has been far more resilient than during the great recession of 2008-09,¹¹⁵ aided by UK and devolved Government policies to shore up businesses and

employment.¹¹⁶ In particular, many more people would have become unemployed without the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which supported a total of over 11m jobs in GB before it closed at the end of September 2021.

Figure 3.1 shows that the GB employment rate fell from 76.6% to 74.8% in the year to October-December 2020 before edging back up to 75.7% by the end of 2021. However, the workforce has shrunk. At the end of 2021, almost 33 million people aged 16+ years were economically active, 344,400 fewer than at the end of 2019. This has been driven by reduced migration and an increase in the numbers of people exiting the workforce, principally due to more young adults remaining in education and more adults aged 50+ retiring or becoming long-term ill.

While the employment rate in England remains higher than elsewhere in GB, the Welsh labour market has recovered most strongly since 2020. In the year to October-December 2021, the Welsh employment rate increased by 2.2 percentage points to 74.5% whereas the employment rate for England and Scotland both increased by 0.8 percentage points to 75.9% and 74.1% respectively. The slower pace of recovery has been affected by the downturn in the oil and gas industry in the case of Scotland and the sluggish recovery of London's service-based labour market in the case of England.

112 Office for Budget Responsibility (2021) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – October 2021*. London: OBR https://obr.uk/docs/dlm/uploads/CCS1021486854-001_OBR-EFO-October-2021_CS_Web-Accessible_v2.pdf

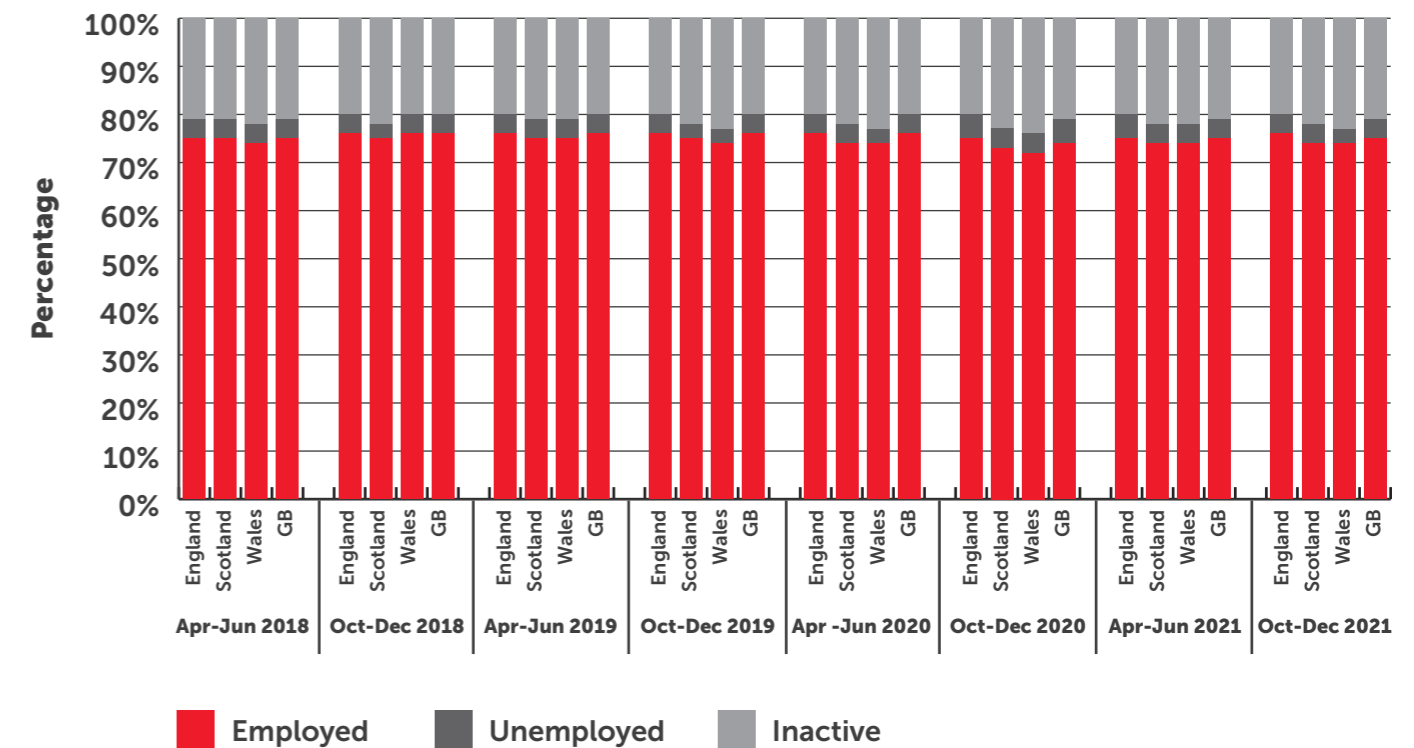
113 Office for National Statistics (2021) *Gross Domestic Product: Year on Year Growth – December 2021*. London: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/timeseries/ihyp/qna#othertimeseries>

114 Blavatnik School of Government (2021) *Variation in The Response To COVID-19 Across the Four Nations of The United Kingdom*, Working Paper Series BSG-WP-2020/035, Version 2.0. Online: University of Oxford <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2021-04/BSG-WP-2020-035-v2.0.pdf>

115 Office for Budget Responsibility (2021) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – October 2021*. London: OBR. https://obr.uk/docs/dlm/uploads/CCS1021486854-001_OBR-EFO-October-2021_CS_Web-Accessible_v2.pdf

116 For example, Barnett consequential funding was used in Scotland to establish grants for firms whose operations had to close during the crisis and a hardship fund for self-employed people ineligible for other support. In Wales, it helped fund the Economic Resilience Fund to support private and social enterprises.

Figure 3.1: Employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity rates (16-64 years) by country, 2018-21(Quarter 4)



Source: Office for National Statistics (2022) Labour Force Survey: national and regional headline indicators (seasonally adjusted)

All three nations saw unemployment fall during 2021, but the number of people aged 16-64 claiming unemployment related benefits remains well above pre-pandemic levels. In January 2022, the seasonally adjusted Claimant Count in England was 1.58m, 52% higher than in January 2020. In Scotland, the count remained 22% higher at 140,521 and in Wales it remained 30% higher at 78,441.

By March 2022, GDP for the UK had returned to pre-pandemic levels and public finances were in better shape than expected.¹¹⁷ However, the Ukraine

war has made economic prospects very uncertain, exacerbating supply blockages and inflation, which in Spring was expected to peak at 10% in late 2022,¹¹⁸ although the Institute for Fiscal Studies report annual inflation for the poorest households had already reached 11% in April.¹¹⁹ This is making the difficult task of addressing the damaging economic and social effects of the pandemic and Brexit while simultaneously addressing climate change, regional inequalities, chronic low productivity and job insecurity even more challenging.

117 Office for Budget Responsibility (2021) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2022*. London: OBR https://obr.uk/docs/dlm/uploads/CCS0222366764-001_OBR-EFO-March-2022_Web-Accessible-2.pdf

118 Bank of England (2022) 'How high will inflation go?' *Bank of England*. 17 June. Online: Bank of England <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/knowledgebank/will-inflation-in-the-uk-keep-rising>

119 Karjalainen, H. & Levell, P. (2022) 'Inflation Hits 9% With Poorest Households Facing Even Higher Rates.' *Institute for Fiscal Studies*. 18 May. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/16058>

The Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 outlined plans to increase taxation to help reduce the public sector deficit and public borrowing. These plans were modified in the Spring Statement 2022,¹²⁰ but taxes could still equal 36.3% of GDP by 2025-26, the highest level since the Attlee Government.¹²¹ The Autumn Review also outlined a real increase in public spending in the three years to 2024-25 but this has largely disappeared due to absence of additional funding in the Spring Statement to compensate for rising inflation. This threatens a return to austerity, particularly in Scotland and Wales where other fiscal pressures are evident.

The Scottish Fiscal Commission¹²² forecasts that Scottish income tax revenue for 2022-23 could be £190m less than the income tax Block Grant Adjustment, which is the amount subtracted from the Scottish Budget to account for the devolution of income tax.¹²³ By 2026-27 this funding gap could be £417m. As the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Public Administration Committee warn, this is one of the key factors putting Scotland's future fiscal sustainability at risk.¹²⁴

The Welsh Government claims it may lose up to £1 billion in former European Union (EU) aid in the three years to 2023-24, including £750m in Structural Funding.¹²⁵ The UK Government dispute this.¹²⁶ It argues that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) that is replacing EU Structure Funding (excluding fisheries and agricultural improvement funding) will increase from £0.4 billion in 2022-23 to £1.5 billion in 2024-25, at which point it will be in line with the average annual EU funding in 2014-20. In contrast, the Welsh Government argue that the lag in increasing UKSPF and the lack of a real terms increase amounts to underfunding of former EU aid.¹²⁷

The February 2022 Levelling Up White Paper¹²⁸ is the UK Government's flagship plan to tackle economic and social inequalities across the UK. It outlines a mission-led approach to improve productivity, public services, living standards and social cohesion, especially in areas that are lagging. How these ambitions will be realised is unclear, but it will involve regional devolution. This could see every part of England having a regional mayor (or other devolution deal) backed by a multi-year settlement by 2030. On the other hand, the decision to allocate

the UKSPF direct to LAs has fuelled concerns that 'levelling up' will weaken democratic accountability in Scotland and Wales.¹²⁹

Time will tell if the 'levelling up' agenda and the UKSPF and other funding streams reduce entrenched inequalities between and within places across GB. For now, rising taxation alongside below inflation wage and social security benefit increases are driving down living standards, with real disposable incomes likely to fall by at least 2.2% in 2022-23, the largest fall in a single financial year for over sixty years.¹³⁰ This is diminishing the ability of lower income households to pay for food, energy, and other essentials, producing widespread concern about rising poverty across GB, a key risk factor for homelessness.

Poverty and cost of living crisis

Between 2010-13 and 2017-20, the proportion of people in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC)¹³¹ remained broadly stable throughout GB. In 2017-20, the AHC poverty rate for Wales was 23%, marginally higher than the rate for England (22%) and Scotland (19%), consistent with Wales having the lowest median hourly wage and the lowest employment rate.

All three countries have seen child poverty and in-work poverty increase, driven by the growth in insecure

and low paid work, social security reforms, and the tendency for adults with childcare responsibilities to work fewer hours.¹³² Between 2010-13 and 2017-20, the share of poor children in GB that lived in a working household increased by 13 percentage points to 73%, with this proportion ranging from 68% in Scotland, to 71% in Wales and 74% in England.

One reason Scotland has lower rates of poverty is that social and private rents are, on average, lower than elsewhere.¹³³ Another is that a lower proportion of households in Scotland (15%) than in Britain as a whole (19%) live in the private rented sector,¹³⁴ the tenure with the highest average housing costs.¹³⁵ Figure 3.2 illustrates the gap BHC and AHC poverty rates for children and working age adults in 2017-20. The biggest gaps were seen in England (6 percentage points for adults and 9 percentage points for children), followed by Wales (4 percentage points for adults and 8 percentage points for children) and then Scotland (3 percentage points for both adults and children).

The relatively high cost of private renting, particularly in London, has drawn people that live in households higher up the income distribution into AHC poverty. In 2017-20, the non-equivalised net household income for those just below the AHC poverty line

120 The NIC threshold and the income tax personal allowance (£12,570) will be aligned from July 2022. The basic income tax rate in England and Wales will fall from 20% to 19% in April 2024 while the Scottish block grant will be adjusted accordingly. The personal allowance and higher tax rate threshold will be frozen until April 2027. The Health and Social Care levy (initially paid via a 1.25% addition to NIC) will proceed in Autumn, with monies added to the Scottish and Welsh block grant.

121 Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2022*. London: OBR https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/CCS0222366764-001_OBR-EFO-March-2022_Web-Accessible-2.pdf

122 Scottish Fiscal Commission (2021) *Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts: December 2021*. Edinburgh: SFC <https://www.fiscalcommission.scot/publication-categories/scotlands-economic-and-fiscal-forecasts/>

123 People earning over £27,850 paying more tax in Scotland than elsewhere in GB. In April 2024, this threshold will fall to £14,667 unless the Scottish Government decided to use its increased block grant to reduce income tax.

124 Finance and Public Administration Committee (2022) *Budget Scrutiny 2022-23 – SP Paper 82*. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/FPA/2022/1/21/b329180c-398e-4bd8-ba2d-5448286bd75c/FPAS622R1.pdf>

125 Welsh Government (2022) *Economy Minister Calls on UK Government to Replace Wales Lost £1 Billion In "Levelling Up" Drive: Press Announcement*. Cardiff: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/economy-minister-calls-uk-government-replace-wales-lost-1-billion-levelling-drive>

126 BBC (2021) 'Wales to get Nearly Quarter of EU Fund's Replacement Pilot'. *BBC News*. 3 November. Online: BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-59147579>

127 Brein, P. (2022) *The UK Shared Prosperity Fund – House of Commons Briefing*. London: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8527/CBP-8527.pdf>

128 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

129 Thomas, G (2022) *Next Level or Restart the Mission? The Levelling Up White Paper and Wales*. Cardiff: Senedd Research <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/next-level-or-restart-the-mission-the-levelling-up-white-paper-and-wales/>; Scottish Government (2022) *Call for Clarity on EU Replacement Funds*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/news/call-for-clarity-on-eu-replacement-funds/>

130 Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2022*. London: OBR https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/CCS0222366764-001_OBR-EFO-March-2022_Web-Accessible-2.pdf

131 Relative poverty refers to the proportion of individuals that live in a household with an income below 60% of the median income for the household population after adjusting for household composition and can be measured on a before (BHC) or after (AHC) housing cost basis. Poverty rates for the three nations are shown as three year rolling averages to reduce fluctuations due to sampling variation.

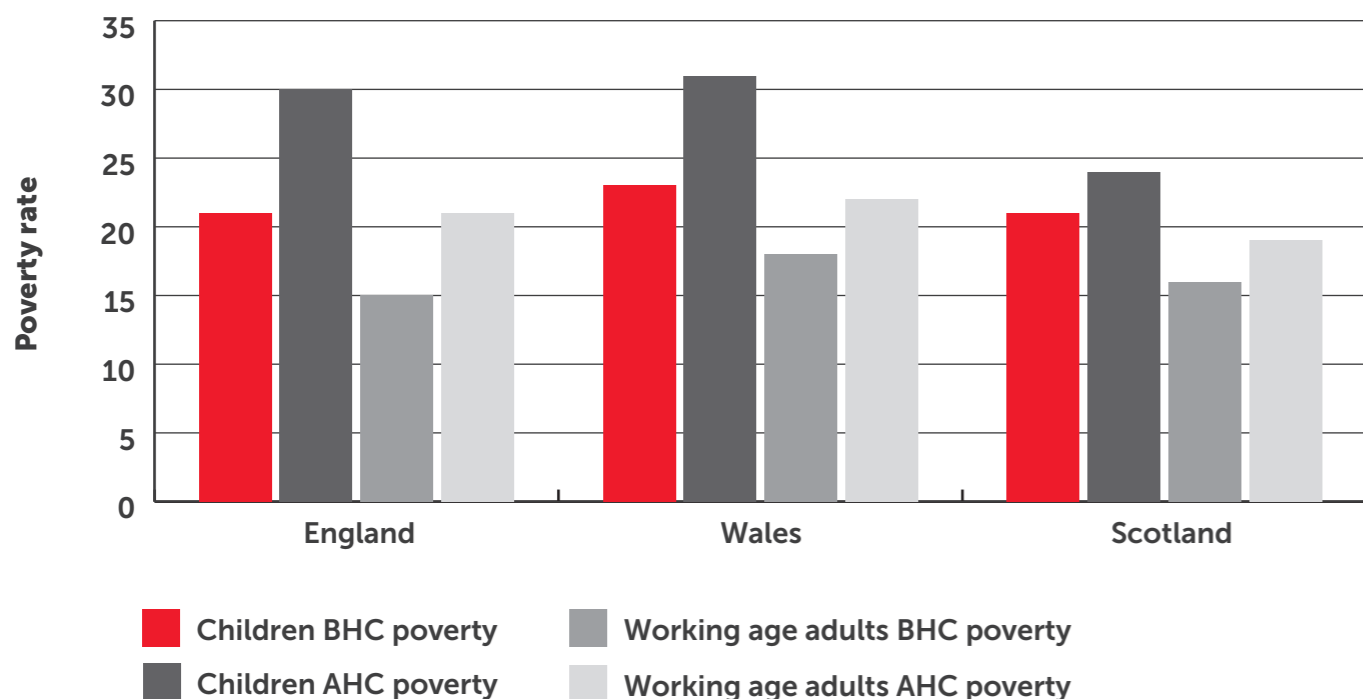
132 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) *UK Poverty 2022: The Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty in the UK*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/event/uk-poverty-2022-essential-guide-understanding-poverty-uk>

133 Bailey, N. (2020) 'Poverty and the Re-growth of Private Renting in the UK, 1994-2018', *PLoS ONE*, 15(2) <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0228273>

134 Department for Work and Pensions (2022) *Family Resources Survey 2020-21*. London: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2020-to-2021>

135 Department for Works and Pensions (2021) *Households Below Average Income (HBAI) Statistics for Financial Years Ending 1995 to 2020*. London: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>

Figure 3.2: Percentage of children and adults in poverty before and after housing costs in 2017-20 by country



Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Households Below Average Income, 2017-20

was £36,100 in London and £27,700 in Scotland, a difference of £8,400. The comparable income figures for England and Wales were £31,400 and £30,500 respectively.¹³⁶

The 2016 social security reforms have also contributed to the rise in AHC poverty amongst families, especially private renters throughout GB.¹³⁷ The four year benefit and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) freeze to March 2020 widened the gap between private rents and the financial support available to private renters towards their rent. Families in the private rented sector have also been disproportionately affected by the lowering of the Benefit Cap limits and the introduction of the two child limit for Universal Credit (UC) and Child Tax Credit claims.

¹³⁶ Ibid. – see table 10.7.

¹³⁷ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) *UK Poverty 2022: The Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty in the UK*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/event/uk-poverty-2022-essential-guide-understanding-poverty-uk>

Poverty statistics for 2020-21 have been affected by a decline in the reliability of the underlying data used to compile them during the pandemic. That said, they suggest that short-term labour market conditions and temporary pandemic measures to bolster incomes saw the proportion of adults and children at risk of relative BHC and AHC poverty fall compared to pre-pandemic levels. This reduction has very likely evaporated in recent months due to the closure of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the refreezing of the LHA at April 2020 rates, the removal of the £20 uplift to UC and tax credits, the below inflation uplift to social security payments and the 1.25% increase in national

insurance from April 2022.¹³⁸ In particular, these changes have heightened the risk of poverty and destitution for the 2.6m 'out-of-work' households in GB that did not benefit from changes to the UC work allowance and taper in December 2021.¹³⁹

Rising energy prices and rising rents, are aggravating the cost of living crisis. The 54% increase in the GB energy price cap in April 2022 saw the typical annual energy bill increase by £693 for direct debit customers and by £708 for prepayment customers.¹⁴⁰ In Spring it was anticipated that further changes to the cap in October 2022 could see energy bills rise by a further £800 for a typical household.¹⁴¹

In February 2022 the Chancellor announced a £9.1 billion package to ease the impact of the April price cap,¹⁴² centred on a one-off repayable energy bill discount of £200 in October 2022 and a non-repayable Council Tax discount of £150 for households living in properties in Council Tax Band A to D.¹⁴³ After adjusting for these measures, however, the April price cap rise was expected to increase the proportion of households in England in 'fuel stress' from 9% to 20%.¹⁴⁴ Comparable estimates for Scotland and Wales are not available but the higher concentration of people in the bottom income decile in both nations and the colder Scottish climate

suggest the impact may have been more pronounced.

Key informants across GB were united in their concern about the cost of living crisis and the rapid rise in the cost of essential goods.

“The increase in cost of living is] absolutely huge. It’s... everything together... it’s what’s happening with rents, energy bills, and petrol costs. Food is going up as well.”
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

Key informants typically felt the rising cost of energy and other essentials were disproportionately affecting people already in poverty and increasing the number of households faced with the “difficult choice” between paying for food, fuel or rent. Many were therefore apprehensive that this would increase in homelessness in the coming months.

“[Increased living costs] will materially affect people who were already struggling before and during the pandemic... people won’t be able to cope with this cost-of-living increase, and... when you don’t have enough money, you don’t have enough money to pay the rent...”
(Key informant, statutory sector, Scotland)

¹³⁸ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) *600,000 will be pulled into poverty as a result of Chancellor’s inaction*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/600000-will-be-pulled-poverty-result-chancellors-inaction>

¹³⁹ Brewer, M., Handscomb, K. & Try, R. (2021) *Taper cut: Analysis of the Autumn Budget changes to Universal Credit*. London: Resolution Foundation <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/taper-cut/>

¹⁴⁰ Ofgem (2022) *Price Cap to Increase By £693 From April*. Ofgem. 3 February. Online: Ofgem <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/price-cap-increase-ps693-april#:~:text=The%20energy%20price%20cap%20will%20increase%20from%201,an%20increase%20of%20%20A3708%20from%20%20A31%20to%20%20A32%20C017.>

¹⁴¹ Corlett A. & Try, L. (2022) *The Living Standards Outlook 2022*. London: Resolution Foundation <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2022/03/Living-Standards-Outlook-2022.pdf>

¹⁴² Sunak, R. (2022) *Chancellor’s Statement to The House - Energy Price Cap: Statement, As Delivered by Chancellor Rishi Sunak, On 3 February 2022*. Online: UK Government <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellors-statement-to-the-house-energy-price-cap>

¹⁴³ The Council Tax discount only applied to England but Barnett consequential of £565m saw similar measures introduced elsewhere, the main difference being that the Scottish and Welsh Governments extended the £150 rebate to all households in receipt of a Council Tax Reduction irrespective of the Council Tax Band of the property.

¹⁴⁴ Brewer, M., Corlett, A., Handscomb, K., Judge L. & Smith, J. (2022) *The Price is Right? The April 2022 Energy Price Rise and the Government’s Response*. London: The Resolution Foundation. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2022/02/The-price-is-right-spotlight.pdf>

“It’s bad for people that are already on the brink...If we understand homelessness, which of course we do, as being largely driven by poverty and inequality, then we know that it’s going to be influenced in some way”.
(Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

Following intense political pressure and lobbying that mirrored the concerns of key informants, the UK Government announced a further £15 billion package on 26 May 2022 to be part-funded by a windfall tax on energy companies. This package will double the energy bill discount to £400 and scrap its repayment, and will deliver one-off payments to those already claiming means-tested benefits (£650), those claiming disability benefits (£150) and pensioners in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment (£300).¹⁴⁵ It will also extend the life of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund that was set up in September 2021 to offer discretionary support to households struggling with rising living costs until March 2023. This will bring the total Household Support Fund budget administered by English LAs up to £1.263 billion, with a further £237 million allocated to the three UK devolved administrations.¹⁴⁶

This package should help to ease many of the concerns key informants raised when interviewed prior to May 2022 but concerns about the absence of a long term UK Government strategy to prevent rising living costs and rents pulling more households into poverty and destitution remain pertinent.

- 145 HM Treasury (2022) *Millions of Most Vulnerable Households will Receive £1,200 Of Help with Cost of Living – News Story*. Online: UK Government <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-most-vulnerable-households-will-receive-1200-of-help-with-cost-of-living>
- 146 Department For Works and Pensions (2022) *Household Support Fund: Guidance for Local Councils*. London: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils>
- 147 Department for Work and Pensions (2016) *Lower Benefit Cap comes into Effect – press release*. 7 November. Online: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lower-benefit-cap-comes-into-effect>

3.3 Financial support for low-income households

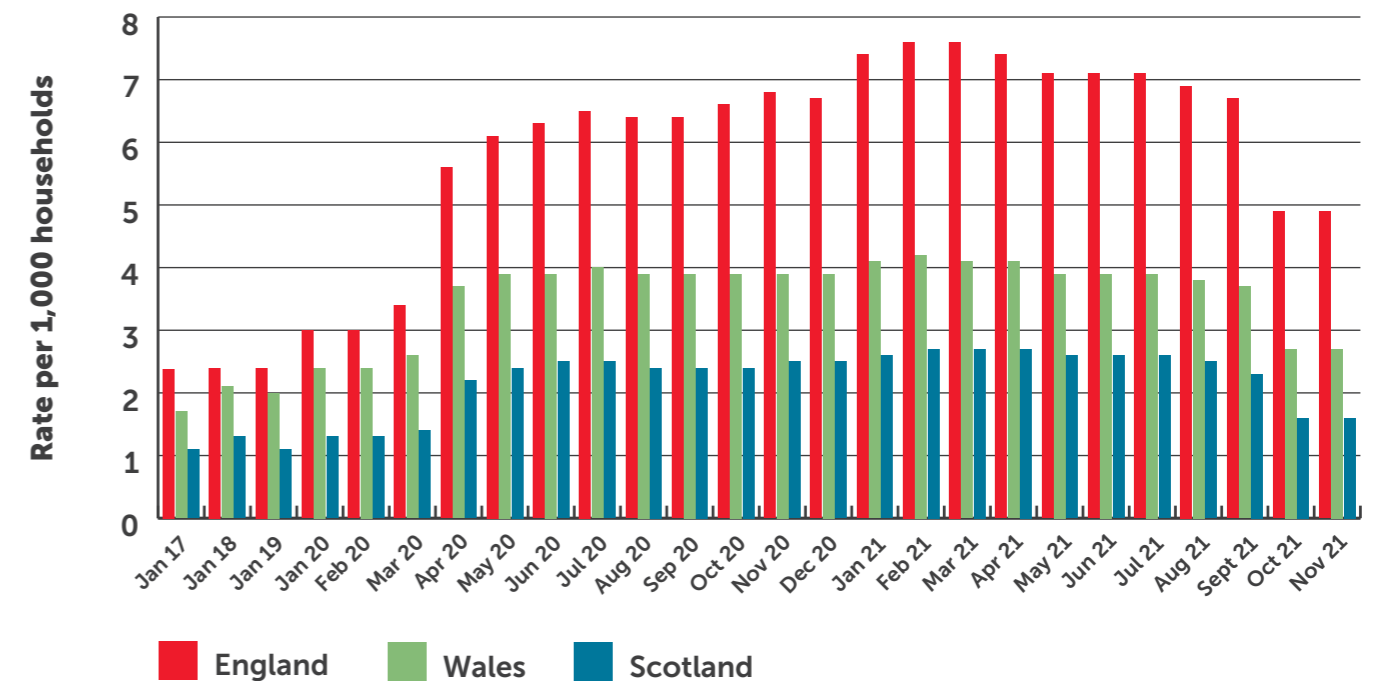
This section focuses on reserved social security benefits most strongly associated with homelessness. It then looks at DHPs and other devolved social security payments of relevance to the prevention of homelessness.

The Benefit Cap, Benefit Sanctions and the five-week wait for Universal Credit

The numbers of ‘out of work’ households subject to the Benefit Cap have increased since January 2017 when the reduction of the cap to £23,000 for London and to £20,000 elsewhere (£15,410 and £13,400 respectively for single people) became fully operational.¹⁴⁷ In the period to March 2020, the numbers of affected households had increased by 28,700 to 88,400. It then jumped to 143,000 in April 2020, principally because the temporary UC and LHA uplifts resulted in many more households that were claiming UC or Housing Benefit (HB) prior to the crisis became subject to the cap. Thereafter, numbers increased steadily until January 2021, when there was a further spike of 11%. This was when the nine month ‘grace period’ exemption for those who had been working prior to claiming UC at the start of the pandemic ended.

The numbers of households affected by the cap began to fall back from a peak of 193,900 in February 2021 to 168,632 in September 2021 as labour market conditions improved. This was followed by a sharp drop in numbers in October 2021 when the temporary £20 uplift was withdrawn. Nonetheless, 122,692 households were still affected in November 2021, with lone parents and families with

Figure 3.3: Numbers of households subject to the Benefit Cap per 1,000 households, by country



Source: DWP Stat-Xplore accessed April 2022. Benefit Cap UC and HB statistics and Office for National Statistics and NRS household estimates and projections plus authors own calculations.

dependent children most likely to have their benefit income restricted.

In November 2021, 4.4 households out of every 1,000 households in GB were subject to the cap (see Figure 3.3), with the rate being highest in England (4.9 per 1,000) followed by Wales (2.7 per 1,000) and Scotland (1.6 per 1,000). The higher rate in England reflects differences in household composition and, more especially, the high cost of renting in London that the higher cap

limit only partially allows for. In 2021, eight out of the 10 LA areas in GB with the highest share of households subject to the cap were in London.¹⁴⁸

Benefit sanctions remain an integral part of the GB social security system, despite evidence that they pull people into rent arrears and other debt,¹⁴⁹ adversely affect health and wellbeing,¹⁵⁰ trigger destitution, eviction, and homelessness,¹⁵¹ and generate additional cost pressures

148 The non-taxable £650 Cost of Living Payment paid announced in May 2022 will ease the financial stress of those in receipt of qualifying benefits. This includes those subject to the Benefit Cap, as the payment does not affect entitlement to benefits or tax credits.

149 Hardie, I. (2020) 'The Impact of Universal Credit Rollout on Housing Security: An Analysis of Landlord Repossession Rates in English Local Authorities', *Journal of Social Policy*, 1-22 <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/209375/1/209375.pdf>

150 Williams, E. (2021) 'Punitive Welfare Reform and Claimant Mental Health: The Impact of Benefit Sanctions on Anxiety and Depression', *Social Policy & Administration*, 55(1), January 2021, page 157 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/spol.12628>

151 Watts, B. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2018). *Welfare conditionality*. London: Routledge; Dwyer, P. (2018) 'Punitive and Ineffective: Benefit Sanctions Within Social Security', *Journal of Social Security Law*, 142-157. ISSN 1354-7747 https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/138989/1/PD_2018_punitive_and_ineffective.pdf

on public services to address their consequences.¹⁵²

Sanctions were temporarily suspended in GB during the first lockdown in 2020 and the numbers of people serving a sanction remained low during the rest of 2020-21. Between April and November 2021, however, the monthly count of UC claimants serving a sanction increased from 3,800 to almost 50,000, driven mainly by the imposition of sanctions on those who failed to attend a face-to-face jobcentre interview that resumed in April.¹⁵³

In November 2021, 8.9 out of every 1,000 households claiming UC in England were serving a sanction. Rates for Scotland (8.5 per 1,000) and Wales (9 per 1,000) were similar. However, rates for Jobcentre Plus regions in England were more variable, being highest in the Northeast (12.3 per 1,000) and Northwest (10 per 1,000) and lowest in Southern England (6.9 per 1,000). The 2017 Commons Public Accounts Committee finding that sanctions are administered very differently in various parts of the country that cannot be explained by variation in local labour markets would therefore still appear to be relevant.¹⁵⁴

The announcement in January 2022 that claimants are now expected to seek work outside their chosen sector

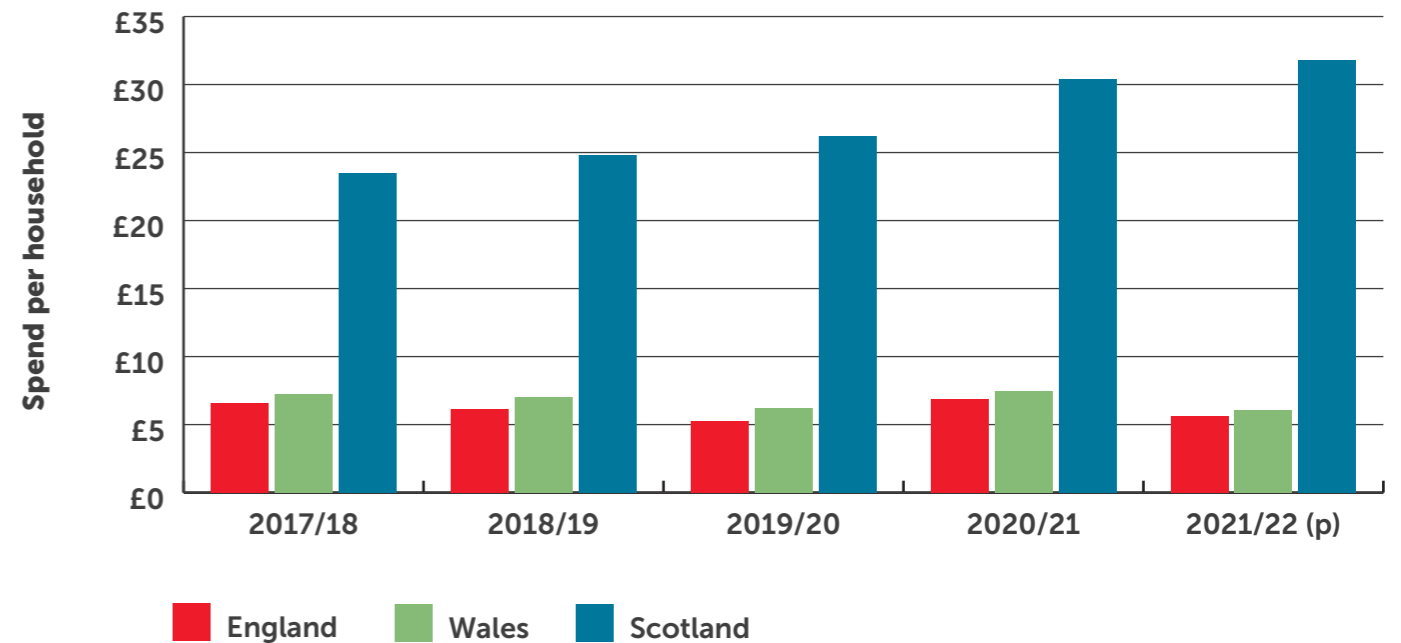
after four weeks instead of three months has raised concerns about the prospect of further increases in sanctions, and their negative impacts.¹⁵⁵ The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions decision not to publish the results of an evaluation on the effectiveness of sanctions has further fuelled such concerns.¹⁵⁶

Households making a new UC claim often lack the financial means to survive the minimum five-week wait for the first payment, especially those with a history of homelessness.¹⁵⁷ Not surprisingly therefore, the sharp rise in households claiming UC during the first lockdown was accompanied by a sharp rise in advance loans. DWP management statistics report that between the 1st March and 23rd June 2020, over 1,379,300 advance payments were issued, including 1,093,950 new claim and benefit transfer advances.

Both the wait period and benefit deductions to repay advances can push households into destitution, which has been linked to rising food bank use and homelessness.¹⁵⁸ In April 2021, the period for recovering advances increased from twelve to twenty-four months and the maximum deduction dropped from 30% to 25% of the standard UC allowance. Although this may have eased these detrimental impacts, calls for a shorter

- 152 National Audit Office (2016) *Benefit sanctions*. London: NAO. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Benefit-sanctions.pdf>
- 153 Webster, D. (2002) *Benefit Sanctions Statistics – Briefing February 2022*. Online: Child Poverty Action Group <https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/david-webster-university-glasgow-briefings-benefit-sanctions>
- 154 House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2017) *Benefit sanctions Forty-second Report of Session 2016–17*. London: HMSO <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpubacc/775/775.pdf>
- 155 Policy in Practice (2022) 'Universal Credit: Why work search at four weeks is a lose-lose policy'. *Policy in Practice blog*. 14th February. Online: Policy in Practice <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/universal-credit-why-work-search-at-four-weeks-is-a-lose-lose-policy/>
- 156 Butler, P. (2022) *Report on effectiveness of benefit sanctions blocked by DWP*. London: The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jan/27/report-on-effectiveness-of-benefit-sanctions-blocked-by-dwp>
- 157 StepChange and The Trussell Trust (2019) *Hardship Now or Hardship Later? Universal Credit, Debt and The Five Week Wait*. Online: StepChange <https://www.stepchange.org/policy-and-research/universal-credit-and-debt.aspx>
- 158 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S. Watts, B., Treanor, M. & McIntyre J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020>

Figure 3.4: Discretionary Housing Payment expenditure per household by country, 2017-2022



Sources: ONS household estimates and projections, DWP Benefit expenditure and caseload tables, Scottish Government DHP Expenditure and authors own calculations.

Note: Figures for 2021-22 are provisional and are based on budget allocations not expenditure.

and more flexible assessment period and a one-off grant at the start of a UC claim continue.¹⁵⁹

More generally, the lack of routinely published statistics on key social security matters, including the cash value of sanctions and other benefit deductions, especially at sub-GB level, hinders understanding of the links between social security, destitution, and homelessness and how this is affected by different poverty and homeless policy responses across GB. It also holds back the ability of funders and service providers to anticipate the likely level of demand for services and the resources required to respond effectively.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are administered by LAs across GB and are the main vehicle for softening the adverse impacts of reductions in social security support for housing costs. DWP allocate the funding and set the regulations that govern DHPs in England and Wales whereas this role was devolved to the Scottish Parliament in 2017.

Figure 3.4 summarises DHP expenditure, measured on a pound per household basis. It shows that DHP spend in Scotland has increased year-on-year since 2017-18 in contrast to the rest of GB. This is largely down to the fact that the Scottish Government fully mitigates the 'bedroom tax,' which has protected many social tenants from the threat of arrears and eviction.

159 House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee (2021) *The Benefits System in Wales: Fourth Report of Session 2021–22*. London: HMSO <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/9281/documents/160433/default/>

DHP spending throughout GB was increased following the onset of the pandemic. In 2020-21, DHP spending equated to £30.37 for every household in Scotland, £6.85 per household in England and £7.45 per household in Wales. Scottish expenditure on bedroom tax mitigation (£24.90 per household) was much higher than in England and Wales (£1.61 per household) but the spending gap for other activities between Scotland (£5.47) and England and Wales (£5.28) was far narrower. Concerns about the sufficiency of DHP funding in England and Wales¹⁶⁰ may therefore also apply to Scotland's discretionary funding pot, something that the Scottish Government has been asked to keep under review.¹⁶¹

Expenditure figures for 2021-22 were not available at the time of writing. Still, budget allocations for England and Wales paint a bleak picture in terms of the capacity of LAs to prevent homelessness' at a time when evictions are rising and the cost of living crisis is deepening. The DHP allocation for England and Wales was cut by £39.5m to £140m for 2021-22 and by a further £40m to £100m for 2022-23.¹⁶² In contrast, the initial DHP budget for Scotland for both years was set at around £80m,¹⁶³ some £3.5m more than was spent in 2020-21. The 2022-23 allocations equate to £4 per household in England and Wales

and £32 per household in Scotland. The Welsh Government responded to the 2021-22 cut by topping up its Westminster allocation of £8.3m to £12.4m but no similar commitment for 2022-23 has been announced.¹⁶⁴

Apart from funding constraints, aspects of the DHP scheme impede its role in providing a cushion against homelessness. Variations in how LAs across GB administer and prioritise discretionary DHPs¹⁶⁵ (other than bedroom tax mitigation in Scotland) and the fact that some top-up their allocations while others fail to spend their allocation,¹⁶⁶ has made it easier to access DHPs in some areas than in others. It has also meant that the potential of DHPs to prevent and relieve homeless is not being fully realised, leading one Welsh key informant to call for a more directive Government steer on how the fund should be utilised.

"From what we understand... a lot of it [DHP] isn't going to get allocated. So you've got hundreds of people in temporary accommodation, hundreds of people waiting to get in to temporary accommodation, and you've got this big pot of money that could be helping people get into permanent accommodation that isn't being fully utilised... DHPs... [have] got such a lot

160 Baxter, D., Casey, R. & Earwaker, R. (2020) *Struggling Renters Need a Lifeline this Winter*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/struggling-renters-need-lifeline-winter>

161 Social Security Committee (2019) *Social Security Support for Housing*. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/SSC/2019/6/12/Social-Security-Support-for-Housing/SSCS52019R07.pdf>

162 Department for Works and Pensions (2022) *S1/2022: Discretionary Housing Payment Government Contribution for English and Welsh Local Authorities for Financial Year Ending March 2023*. London: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-circulars-2022/s12022-discretionary-housing-payment-government-contribution-for-english-and-welsh-local-authorities-for-financial-year-ending-march-2023>

163 Scottish Government (2021) *Scottish Budget: 2022-23*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government

164 James, J. (2022) Written Statement: Discretionary Housing Payments - Cabinet Statement. Cardiff: Welsh Government https://gov.wales/written-statement-discretionary-housing-payments?utm_source=rss-announcements&utm_medium=rss-feed&utm_campaign=announcements-Written+Statement%3A+Discretionary+Housing+Payments

165 Wilson, W. (2020) *Discretionary Housing Payments: Briefing Paper*. London: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06899/SN06899.pdf>; Citizens Advice Scotland (2020) 'Housing lifeline needs to be extended beyond covid'. Citizens Advice Scotland. 20 January. Online: CAS. <https://www.cas.org.uk/news/housing-lifeline-needs-be-extended-beyond-covid>

166 Wilson, W. (2020) *Discretionary Housing Payments: Briefing Paper*. London: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06899/SN06899.pdf>

of potential as a route to help people... you could help people to under occupy two-bedroom accommodation... [or help] clearing former tenant arrears... we keep saying to [Welsh Government]... be a bit more firm with the local authorities about what the money should be used for because they all have their own DHP policies, they're set by the councillors, some of them are not massively sympathetic to homelessness as a priority, so they need to, kind of get on top of it from a strategic point of view" (Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

There are, however, barriers to using DHPs to cover rent arrears if a tenant's rent has been increased to cover arrears or if a tenant is subject to a DWP sanction.¹⁶⁷ DHPs are also not available to households ineligible for HB or UC, such as those with no access to public funds and full-time students. Additionally, many private renters that fell into arrears due to reduced earnings through the pandemic were ineligible because they were not in receipt of UC or HB.¹⁶⁸

Other discretionary funds

In April 2013, the UK Government's Social Fund was devolved to LAs in England and the Parliaments for Scotland and Wales. The resulting Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes can help people cope with a crisis or emergency and support independent living and the

resettlement of people moving on from TA and institutions.

The Local Government Finance Settlement included a notional and non-ring-fenced sum of £129.6m for LWA schemes for England for each of the four years to 2019-20. Actual expenditure over this period, however, fell to under £41m per annum.¹⁶⁹ This was equal to £1.73 per household, which was much lower than comparable spend of £7.75 in Wales and £14 in Scotland. By March 2020, most LWA schemes in England had experienced large funding cuts and some have ceased to operate.¹⁷⁰ Much of England therefore lacked an effective safety-net to help keep people afloat when the pandemic struck.

A succession of short-term pandemic related funds helped to reinvigorate LWA schemes and saw spending in England increase to £3.13 per household in 2020-21. Likewise, the DWP Household Support Fund should make it easier for vulnerable households, including those not in receipt of benefits, to access discretionary funding during 2021-22 and 2022-23. Nonetheless, LWA schemes remain highly variable in terms of what they offer, around a quarter of England's population still live in an area without a LWA scheme¹⁷¹ and the longer term financial sustainability of many LWA schemes remains doubtful.¹⁷²

167 Baxter, D., Casey, R. & Earwaker, R. (2020) *Struggling Renters Need a Lifeline this Winter*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/struggling-renters-need-lifeline-winter>

168 Judge, L. (2021) *Getting Ahead on Falling Behind - Tackling the UK's Building Arrears Crisis*. London: Resolution Foundation <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2021/02/Getting-ahead-on-falling-behind.pdf>

169 Children's Society (2021) *Leave No Family Behind: Strengthening Local Welfare Assistance during Covid-19*. Online: Children's Society <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/leave-no-family-behind.pdf>

170 Ibid.

171 Nichols, A. & Donovan, C. (2022) *The State of Crisis Support: Local Welfare Assistance through Covid and Beyond*. Liverpool: End Furniture Poverty <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/02/The-State-of-Crisis-Support-Final.pdf>

172 The Trussell Trust (2021) *Local lifelines – The Case for Reinvigorating Local Welfare Assistance Beyond COVID-19*. Online: Trussell Trust https://www.trusselltrust.org/wpcontent/uploads/sites/2/2021/02/Local_Lifelines_beyond_COVID19_Joint_briefing_final_240221.pdf

The sustained higher levels of expenditure in Scotland and Wales reflects the long-term commitment of both Governments to their respective schemes. The Welsh Discretionary Assistance Fund is centrally funded and administered by the Welsh Government in collaboration with two lead organisations and a network of approved statutory and third sector partners.¹⁷³ As well as increasing spend on Discretionary Assistance Fund during the pandemic, the Welsh Government permitted more frequent claims for emergency support, enabling people to access support while waiting for their first UC payment. The Scottish Government also increased the budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund during the pandemic. This became a statutory service in 2016 and is delivered by LAs in accordance with Scottish Government Guidance.¹⁷⁴

On the other hand, there are concerns that both the Scottish and Welsh funds are not being used to best effect.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, as with DHP funding, the discretionary nature of both funds and their general restriction to people eligible for means-tested benefits have imposed limits on their efficacy in preventing destitution and homelessness.

During 2020-21 the Welsh Tenancy Saver Loan Fund and the Scottish Tenants Hardship Loan Fund offered loans to tenants that were ineligible for DHPs and other assistance. From

the outset, there were reservations that both schemes would add to debt and cause further rent arrears. As it transpired, take up rates for both schemes were low and, in the case of Scotland, many applications were rejected due to low credit scores and the inability to afford repayments.¹⁷⁶

In response, the Welsh Government replaced its loan fund with a grant fund in July 2021. The Scottish Government also announced a £10m tenant grant fund in June 2021, albeit it was November before guidance confirmed it would only apply to rent arrears accrued from 23 March 2020 to 9 August 2021.¹⁷⁷ A £65m fund to help low-income earners in England in rent arrears has also been set up as a supplement to the 2020-21 Homelessness Prevention Grant.

Other devolved social security provisions

The Scotland Act 2016 devolved 11 social security benefits, including DHPs, equivalent to 15% of social security spending in Scotland. It also granted the Scottish Parliament powers to create, top up, or replace benefits and to regulate some aspects of UC. The Scottish Social Security System is legally framed as an investment in people, underpinned by the principles of dignity, fairness, and respect, with all 17 benefits anticipated to be rolled-out by the end of 2025-26. At that point expenditure (excluding administrative costs) could be £5.2

billion, up from £3.5 billion in 2020-21. This is another factor contributing to the fiscal sustainability pressures noted earlier.¹⁷⁸ Meantime, two elements of the system of relevance to poverty reduction and homeless prevention have been introduced.

The Scottish Government has used its regulatory powers to establish Scottish Choices to help reduce rent arrears and other debt. This gives individuals a legal right to have their UC paid twice a month and to have any UC housing element paid direct to their landlord. This contrasts with DWP policy, which makes monthly payments direct to a claimant unless it agrees to Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) for vulnerable people at risk of financial harm.

In November 2021, 21% of UC claimants in Scotland received more frequent payments, most of whom had exercised their right to choose. In contrast, just 2% of UC claimants in England and 4% of those in Wales received more frequent APA payments. Around 46% of UC claimants in Scotland that rented a home also had their UC housing element paid direct to their landlord. While higher than the comparable rates for England (19%) and Wales (28%), many more had an APA (30%) than had exercised their right to choose (16%). This is mainly because Scottish Choices are only offered from the second UC award assessment period in order to allow sufficient time to put in place APAs for vulnerable individuals, which unlike Scottish Choices, individuals cannot opt in and out of at any time.¹⁷⁹

Scottish Choices also grants people a right to split UC payments between household members to protect individuals from financial abuse by their partner but finding a workable solution has proved technically challenging.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the extremely low number of households in receipt of a split payments in Scotland, as in the rest of GB, all entail APAs.

The proportions of claimants that have exercised Scottish Choices changed little in the three years to November 2021. This is consistent with a recent evaluation that found that while claimants welcome payment flexibility, awareness of Scottish Choices remains low.¹⁸¹ The evaluation also found that data sharing problems around Scottish Choices can hinder landlord efforts to track rental income and intervene quickly if tenants fall into arrears.

The Scottish Government used its top-up powers to introduce the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) in February 2021. This is payable to families that are in receipt of UC, child tax credits or means-tested legacy benefits for each child of an eligible age and does not count as earned income for calculating entitlement to other GB or Scottish means-tested benefits. The SCP doubled from £10 to £20 per week in April 2022 and will rise to £25 at the end of 2022, when the child age limit will also rise from six to sixteen years. These adjustments could extend entitlement to over 400,000 children in 2023-24 at an annual cost of £445m.¹⁸² The Scottish Government report these and other measures will reduce child poverty to 18% in

173 Welsh Government (2015) *The Discretionary Assistance Fund - Guidance for Decision Makers*. Cardiff: Welsh Government <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/DAF--Guidance-for-Decision-Makers%20v2%20Feb2015.pdf>

174 Scottish Government (2015) *Scottish Welfare Fund: Statutory Guidance, March 2021*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-statutory-guidance-march-2021/>

175 Scottish Poverty and Inequality Commission (2020) *Scottish Welfare Fund Briefing*. Online: SPIC <https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Scottish-Welfare-Fund-briefing-.pdf>; Citizens Advice Cymru (2017) *Discretionary Assistance Fund Briefing*. Cardiff: CAB https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/Migrated_Documents/corporate/daf-briefing-final.pdf; Bevan Foundation (2020) *Transforming Wales: how Welsh public services and benefits can reduce poverty and inequality*. Online: Bevan Foundation <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Transforming-Wales-through-public-services-and-benefits-FINAL.pdf>

176 Scottish Government. (2021) *Information regarding the Tenant Hardship loan fund: FOI release*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202100231937/>

177 Scottish Government (2021) *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Tenant Grant Fund: guidance for local authorities*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tenant-grant-fund-guidance-for-local-authorities/>

178 Scottish Fiscal Commission (2021) *Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts: December 2021*. Edinburgh: SFC <https://www.fiscalcommission.scot/publication-categories/scotlands-economic-and-fiscal-forecasts/>

179 Scottish Affairs Committee (2021) *Welfare policy in Scotland: UK and Scottish Government Responses to the Committee's Second Report*. London: HMSO <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/7864/documents/81692/default/>

180 Ibid.

181 Scottish Government (2021) *Universal Credit Scottish Choices: Evaluation*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-universal-credit-scottish-choices/>

182 Scottish Government (2021) *Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/>

2023/24,¹⁸³ but others suggest the SCP would have to be £40 to deliver this target.¹⁸⁴

The SCP should help ease the risk of rent arrears, eviction and ultimately homelessness amongst families, especially those subject to the DWP two child limit policy or the Benefit Cap. However, some SCP features constrain its effectiveness. The use of reserved benefits as eligibility criteria means that households ineligible for DHPs are also ineligible for the SCP. This eligibility criteria also appears to be dampening take up rates. By December 2021, some 93,000 households had received at least one SCP payment. This was lower than the Scottish Government had estimated (116,000), assuming a take up rate of 83%.¹⁸⁵ Additionally, SCP guidance¹⁸⁶ has not clarified how SCP overpayments are managed or how SCP payments are affected by parents who move in and out of UC entitlement due to variable working hours.

As in Scotland, the Welsh Government is responsible for Council Tax Reduction. Welsh LAs also process HB and DHPs for the DWP. However, the crisis has renewed calls for more social security powers to be devolved to deliver a benefits system better suited to Welsh needs.¹⁸⁷ In particular, the Welsh Affairs Committee at Westminster has recommended that an Inter-Ministerial Advisory Board

should assess the potential merits of devolving the administration of the same benefits to Wales as have been devolved to Scotland.¹⁸⁸

Key informants typically felt that while Scottish Government policy (and to a lesser extent that of Wales) helped to mitigate against aspects of GB social security policy, it was ultimately constrained by the limitations of reserved policy.

“The Scottish Government can help to a degree through Scottish social security measures, but I don’t think they’ll be able to mitigate fully against the UK Government reductions in welfare benefits... after the pandemic”.
(Key informant, statutory sector, Scotland)

3.4 Access to housing that is affordable

Rental affordability

The extent to which households can pay the going market rent for a suitable home without experiencing financial stress or being forced into AHC poverty affects their risk of becoming homeless. It also affects the ability of households who are homeless to access a stable home and exit the homeless system.¹⁸⁹

Rental affordability is usually assessed using ratio or residual measures.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Fraser of Allander (2021) *A preliminary investigation into modelling the impact of measures to reduce child poverty in Scotland*. Glasgow: FOA <https://fraserofallander.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Child-Poverty-Final.pdf>; Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021) *Turning the tide on child poverty in Scotland*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/57716/download?token=Rpi7PQVy8&filetype=briefing>

¹⁸⁵ Scottish Government. (2019) *Scottish Child Payment: Position Paper June 2019*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-position-paper-scottish-child-payment/pages/2/>

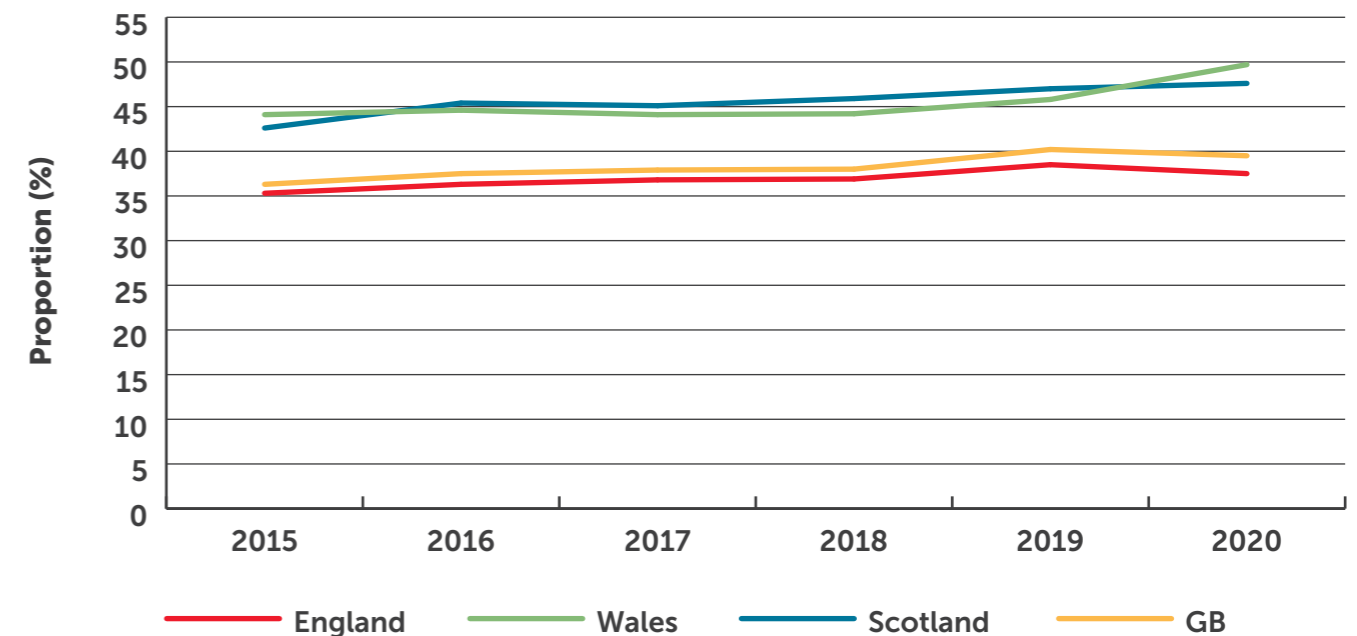
¹⁸⁶ Social Security Scotland (2021) *Scottish Child Payment On-line Guidance*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/guidance-resources/guidance>

¹⁸⁷ Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee (2019) *Benefits in Wales: Options for Better Delivery*. Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld12832/cr-ld12832%20-e.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee (2021) *The Benefits System in Wales: Fourth Report of Session 2021–22*. London: HMSO <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/9281/documents/160433/default/>

¹⁸⁹ Bramley, G., and Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) ‘Homelessness in the UK: Who is Most at Risk?’ *Housing Studies*, 33(1), 96–116 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957>

Figure 3.5: Proportion of households aged under 40 unable to afford market rent by country and year



Source: Modelled estimates using Bramley (2021) sub-regional model used for homelessness projections, drawing on data underpinning the Office for National Statistics private rental index and income distributions calibrated on UK HLS data.

The former assume housing is not affordable if rents exceed 25–30% of gross income while the latter assumes there is a problem if income after rent falls below a given threshold. A combination of both measures was used to estimate the proportion of all households represented by a person under the age of 40 that would be required to spend over 27% of their gross(unequalised) income on a market rent at the lower quartile point for a property of an appropriate size in their local area or would be in AHC poverty after paying their rent.¹⁹⁰

Figure 3.5 shows that in 2020 some 40% of all households in GB represented by someone under 40 years would have typically faced

financial stress if they had been required to rent a property of a suitable size at the lower quartile point in their local area. Allowing for annual fluctuations that can arise from sampling error, this proportion has remained relatively stable since 2015. The main reason for this has been that strong employment growth has seen the income of households under the age of 40 increase at a similar rate to market rents, with rents having increased in nominal rather than real terms for much of this the period.¹⁹¹

Figure 3.5 also shows that the proportion of households under the age of 40 that would have faced financial stress in England has remained somewhat lower than the

¹⁹⁰ Bramley, G. (2019) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for Low Income Households and Homeless People: Main Technical Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University <https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/24741931/HousingSupplyMay2019.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Office for National Statistics (2022) *Index of Private Housing Rental Prices*. London: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/indexofprivatehousingrentalprices/previousReleases>

comparable rate for Scotland and Wales, even though rents remain higher in England, especially in London and the South. A large part of the explanation is that a higher proportion of households under the age of 40 in Scotland, and more especially, Wales are situated in the lower end of the GB income distribution and have been more exposed to weak earnings growth and at the bottom of the labour market as well as benefit cuts.

Looking at households of all ages, private tenants in England, on average, spend more of their income, inclusive of HB, on housing (32%) than social tenants (27%) or households buying with a mortgage (18%),¹⁹² a pattern by and large repeated in the rest of GB. One of the reasons for this is that the private rental market across much of GB increasingly accommodates lower income households that include benefit recipients and families that tend to have limited access to other housing options.¹⁹³

For lower income private tenants, deteriorating affordability has been aggravated by social security reforms, such as the LHA freeze noted earlier, which has constrained their ability of to afford the rents set by landlords. Joseph Rowntree Foundation has estimated that of the 1.8 million low-income household living in the private rented sector in 2021, 965,000 households (55%) struggled to afford their rent, of which 624,000 were spending more than 30% of their net income on accommodation costs and 87,000 who were spending more than

40% of their net income on rent after housing benefit was factored in.¹⁹⁴

A key housing policy to reduce the burden of housing costs is the provision of social housing. Twenty years ago, of all the 'in-kind' benefits people receive from welfare services, including NHS health service, state education, and social care, the 'in-kind' benefit social tenants receive from the difference between social rents and market rents for a similar home was found to be the most redistributive and benefited low income households the most.¹⁹⁵ This remains the case, even if changes in the way social rents are set, including the introduction of the affordable rent in England, which can be set at up to 80% of market value, have had some impact on the value of the 'in-kind' benefit.

During 2012-2020, the average social rent in England was equal to around 50% of market rents, although the rate varied from year to year and from region to region. The gap between social and market rents in Scotland also remained close to 50%, albeit the gap narrowed by three percentage points due to the more modest growth in market rents. In contrast, the gap between social and market rents in Wales narrowed by 12 percentage points to 73%, driven by a mix of above inflation social rent increases and modest market rent increases. To put this in context, the comparable rate for affordable rents in England was 66%.

Social rent statistics are not wholly comparable,¹⁹⁶ but figure 3.6 illustrates

192 Department Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2021) *English Housing Survey: Private rented sector 2019–2020*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2019-to-2020-private-rented-sector>

193 National Audit Office (2021) *Regulation of Private Renting*. London: NAO <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/regulation-of-private-renting/#>

194 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021) *Renters on Low Incomes Face a Policy Black Hole: Homes for Social Rent Are the Answer*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/58800/download?token=52fzupQE&filetype=briefing>

195 Sefton, T. (2002) *Recent Changes in the Distribution of the Social Wage*. CASE paper 62 London: LSE <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/93891.pdf>

196 Scottish social rent figures include HB/UC eligible service charges and are for self-contained units including supported housing. English social rents figures are for general needs dwellings only and exclude service charges. English affordable rents include service charges. Welsh rents exclude service charges but include self and non-self-contained dwellings.

Figure 3.6: Average weekly social and affordable rent by social landlord and country for selected years



Sources: Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (CORE), Regulator of Social Housing (statistical data return (social housing stock and rents), Scottish Housing Regulator, Welsh Government.

that in the decade to 2020-21, the average social rent in Scotland remained lower than in England and Wales. The gap between Scottish and English social rents, however, narrowed after 2016, reflecting the different rent-setting policies operating across GB. In England, social landlords were required to reduce social and affordable rents by 1% in each of the four years to 2019-20 before reverting to annual consumer price inflation (CPI)+1% rent uplifts. In Wales, social rents were permitted to increase by CPI+1% throughout the five year period but in practice rents increased by more than this due to the use of the discretionary £2 per week cap permitted to support the policy of convergence of LA and housing association rents for comparable

properties. In Scotland, where rent setting has not been centralised, rent setting varied from one social landlord to another, but above inflation uplifts were the 'norm.'

Rising social rents have seen affordability deteriorate for households whose housing costs are not fully covered by state support. This includes working households, older households with an occupational or private pension, households that do not receive DHP funding to offset the bedroom tax or the Benefit Cap and households subject to benefit sanctions.

To ease the impact of rents on rising living costs, the Welsh Government¹⁹⁷ restricted the 2022-23 maximum

197 Welsh Government (2021) *Rent and Service Charge Standard 2022-2023*. Cardiff: Welsh Government <https://www.tpas.cymru/blog/rent-and-service-charge-standard-2022-2023>

uplift to 3.1%, which was the CPI rate in September 2021. Scottish social landlords generally adopted below inflation uplifts or froze rents. In England, however, the rent formula was unchanged and permitted rents to rise by up to 4.1% (CPI+1%). This was despite social landlords cautioning that the Benefit Cap was already adversely affecting tenants with two children at the social rent level and households with one child at the affordable rent level.¹⁹⁸

High private rents relative to income has seen rent regulation become a topic of political interest. Across GB.¹⁹⁹ The Scottish Government has outlined its intention to introduce a national system of private rent controls, adding to its existing package of policy measures aimed at improving the security of private renting and affordability of housing.²⁰⁰ Supporting legislation is planned for 2023, but this seems very ambitious given that lack of any detail about the system and the host of challenging and controversial issues that will have to be resolved. The Welsh Government also intends to produce a White Paper that will include proposals for a 'fair rent'.²⁰¹

Delivery of social and affordable rented housing

In the five years to March 2021, some 312,810 affordable homes were delivered in GB with financial support from one of the three government administrations,²⁰² of which 70,810 were for social rent.²⁰³ Figure 3.7 shows

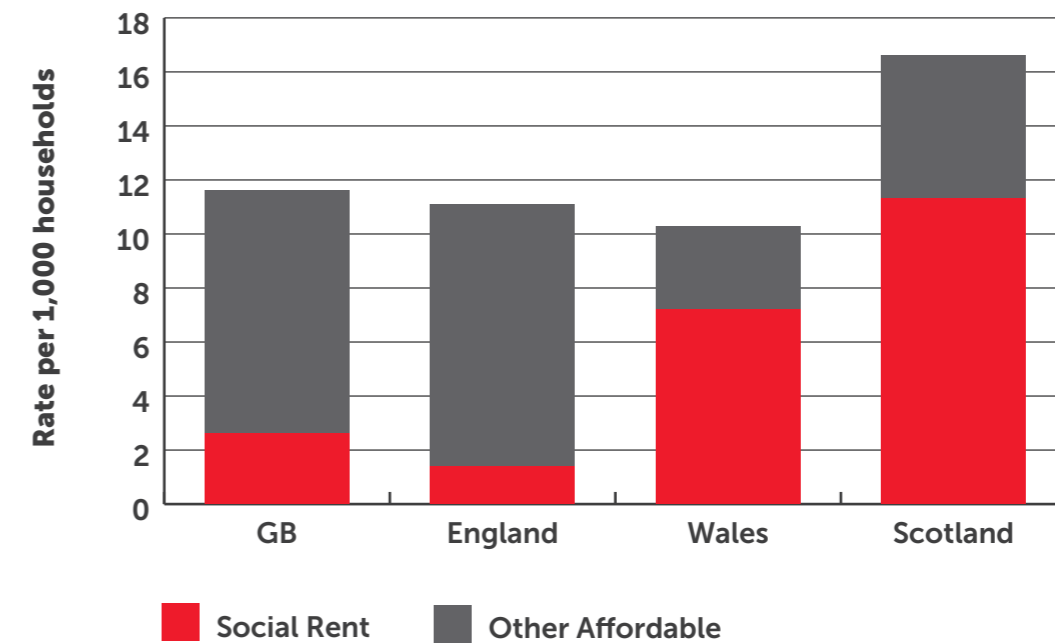
that there were marked differences in the scale and composition of the three affordable housing programmes. Over 11 out of the 16 homes delivered for every 1,000 households in Scotland were for social rent. In contrast, just 1.3 out of the 11 homes delivered for every 1,000 households in England were for social rent. Wales had the smallest proportionate programme but 8 out of the 10 homes delivered were for social rent

The Scottish Government is to invest £3.3 billion to support the delivery of 55,000 homes in 2021-26. This is in support of its commitment to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which 70% will be for social rent.²⁰⁴ The Welsh Government has also shown staunch support for social rent. It has allocated £1 billion for 2022-25²⁰⁵ and aims to deliver 20,000 social homes by 2026. In England, the £11.5 billion 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme aims to deliver 180,000 starts by 2026.

So far, £4 billion has been allocated to the Greater London Authority and £7.4 billion to Homes England. Greater London Authority expects to fund 35,000 starts, with over half intended for social rent. Homes England expects to deliver 130,000 starts outside the city, of which 50% will be for rent and a further 10% will be for supported housing. The Housing Minister has said the Affordable Homes Programme will deliver around 32,000 social homes over the five year period,²⁰⁶ but this

- 198 McCabe, J. (2021) '10 Years of Affordable Rent.' *Inside Housing*. 20 December. Online: Inside Housing. <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/10-years-of-affordable-rent-73711>
- 199 The Senedd discussed but voted down a proposal to place limits on rents in February 2022
- 200 Scottish Government (2021) *A New Deal for Tenants - Draft Strategy: Consultation*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-deal-tenants-draft-strategy-consultation-paper/>
- 201 Welsh Government (2021) *Programme for Government - Update*, Cardiff, Welsh Government, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/programme-for-government-update-december-2021.pdf>
- 202 Affordable housing is the sum of social rent, affordable rent, intermediate rent (including London Living Rent and London affordable rent) and affordable homeownership, including shared ownership.
- 203 These figures include some social rent and other units developed in England with nil grant.
- 204 Scottish Government (2021) *A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22/documents/>
- 205 Welsh Government (2022) *Final Budget 2022 to 2023*. Cardiff: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/final-budget-2022-2023>
- 206 See: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/147083>

Figure 3.7: Affordable housing in England, Wales, and Scotland per 1,000 households, 2016/17 to 2020/21



Source: UK Housing Review 2022 Table 20a-f, Office for National Statistics household estimates and projections and NRS household estimates.

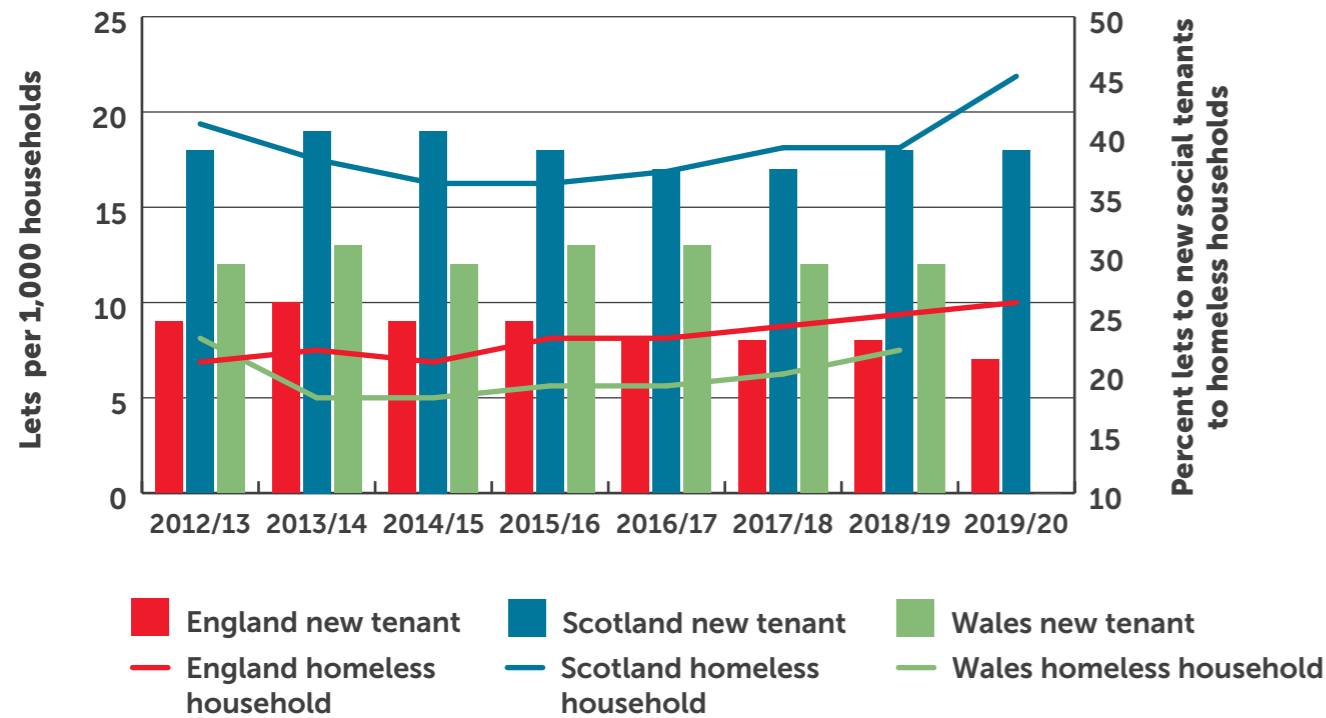
is well below the estimated 90,000 required each year.²⁰⁷ In Scotland and Wales, targets for social housing are reasonably similar to estimates of the required numbers of social rented homes.

The situation, especially in England, is more fluid than plans imply. On the one hand there is growing support for the expansion of social rented housing in England across the political spectrum and in civil society, including support from organisations as diverse as the Social Mobility Commission²⁰⁸

and the Centre for Social Justice.²⁰⁹ On the other hand, inflation and investment pressures around building safety and the decarbonisation of the existing stock, threaten the delivery of the new affordable supply targets across GB. The English target is also under threat by the switch of developer contributions away from rental housing to the new First Home initiative and the possibility that the Affordable Homes Programme could be raided to fund the removal of cladding should developers refuse to pay.²¹⁰

- 207 Bramley, G. (2018) *Housing Supply Requirements Across Great Britain for Low-Income Households and Homeless People*. London: Crisis and the National Housing Federation https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239700/crisis_housing_supply_requirements_across_great_britain_2018.pdf
- 208 Social Mobility Commission (2021) *State of the Nation 2021: Social Mobility and the Pandemic*. London: SMC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1003977/State_of_the_nation_2021_-_Social_mobility_and_the_pandemic.pdf
- 209 Centre for Social Justice (2021) *Exposing the Hidden Housing Crisis: Public Attitudes to Affordable Housing and Housing Policy*. London: CSJ <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/exposing-the-hidden-housing-crisis>
- 210 Tworney, J (2022) *Social Housing Chiefs Describe 'Devastating Impact' if DLUHC Budget used in Cladding Removal*. 3 February. London: Social Housing

Figure 3.8: Lettings to household new to social housing and homeless households across Great Britain, 2012-20



Sources: Derived from DLUHC, Welsh Government, Scottish Government data on lettings and lets to homeless plus Office for National Statistics and NRS data household estimates and projections.

Social lettings

For homeless and other households in urgent need of a suitable house, the annual flow of lettings has a bigger impact than new provision. In the last decade, the annual flow of lettings has tightened. This decline has been most pronounced in England, where the total numbers of all lettings fell by 23% from 396,000 in 2013-14 to 306,000 in 2019-20.

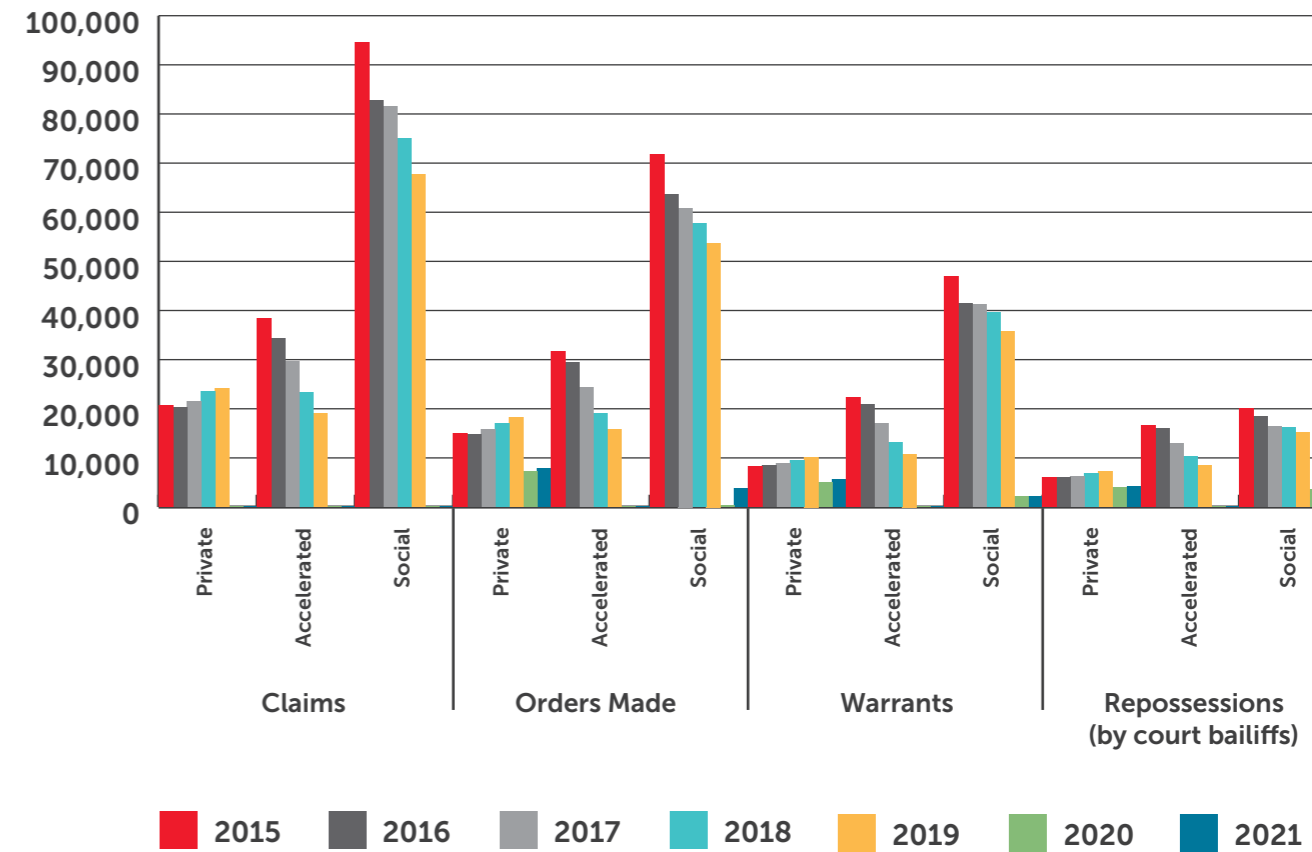
Figure 3.8 shows the rate of lettings to households that did not previously live in social rented housing for every 1,000 households. It also shows the proportion of such lets that were allocated to homeless households. Both sets of figures focus on general needs provision and are indicative only. This is due to variations in the way 'new tenants' and 'letting type' are recorded across GB and the under reporting of lettings made in relation to fulfilling prevention or relief duties

since homeless duties were revised in England, and more especially, Wales.

Throughout 2012-20, the Scottish rate of lettings to households new to the social housing remained appreciably higher than elsewhere, aided by comparatively high levels of social rented stock. Scotland and Wales also saw minimal change in the rate of such lettings, owing to a fall in the proportion of lettings to existing tenants and higher rates of newly constructed social homes. In contrast, the English lettings rate steadily declined, driven by a lack of new homes to replace Right to Buy sales and a fall in the share of lettings to new social renters.

In 2018-19, the latest year data is available for all three countries, 39% of lettings to new social tenants in Scotland were used to resolve

Figure 3.9: Private and social landlord possession action in England and Wales, 2015-2021



Source: Ministry of Justice, Mortgage and Landlord Possession statistics.

homelessness, compared to 25% of lettings in England and 22% of lettings in Wales. The scale of the gap is overstated, but it reflects Scotland's more progressive policy towards rehousing those assessed as homeless. The share of Scottish lettings to homeless households jumped to 45% in 2019-20, following the adoption of higher targets for the share of lettings allocated to homeless households as part of the rapid rehousing policy.

All three countries saw a sharp drop in the flow of social lettings in the months following the onset of the pandemic. Although rates began to recover as restrictions eased, lettings

were significantly below trend rates in 2020-21,²¹¹ which had an adverse impact on rehousing those in TA and other homeless households. Progress in resolving the backlog in vacant homes should have eased matters in 2021-22, consistent with policy commitments noted in Chapter 2 to boost letting to homeless households in Scotland and Wales.

Tenure security and evictions

Tenant evictions are a significant cause of homelessness, with most linked to rent arrears. Before the pandemic, the numbers of tenant evictions in England and Wales had been falling, with social landlords accounting for over 60% of

211 Scottish Housing Regulator (2021) *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Social Housing Sector in Scotland and Comparisons with the Whole of the UK*. Glasgow: SHR <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/publications/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-social-housing-sector-in-scotland-and-comparisons-with-the-whole-of-the-uk-august-2021f>

claims, orders and warrants and some 50% of bailiff enforced repossessions (see Figure 3.9). The main difference between England and Wales was related to accelerated claims, which chiefly involve S21 “no fault” eviction notices served by private landlords. The numbers of such claims declined in England but increased in Wales, possibility linked to the large mismatch between LHA and market rents²¹² and the response of landlords to the growth in demand for second homes and short-term rentals.²¹³

All three countries put in place measures to protect tenants from eviction during the pandemic. Specific details varied but the main measures were an evictions moratorium early in the pandemic, longer eviction notice periods and a ban on enforcing evictions. These measures saw legal eviction action of all kinds plummet. The ban on bailiff-enforced evictions ended on 31 May 2021 in England, on 30 June in Wales and on 9 August in Scotland. Since then, tenants in England have had no extra eviction protections, whereas the six month eviction notice period (except for anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse cases) continued until 24 March 2022 in Wales and 31 March in Scotland.

In the absence of an exit plan,²¹⁴ eviction action in England has increased sharply, with 14,123 claims issued in the final quarter of 2021. While 42% fewer than in the final quarter of 2019, this disguises the fact that private landlord and accelerated claims have returned to pre-pandemic levels. In contrast social landlord

(-86%), private landlord (-50%) and accelerated claims (-39%) in Wales all remain below pre-pandemic rates.

In Scotland, social tenancy evictions fell from 2,267 in 2017-18 to 1,866 in 2019-20, and 120 in 2020-21,²¹⁵ although the number is likely to exceed 250 in 2020-21. Following the transfer of private tenancy disputes from sheriff courts to the tribunal system, regular statistics are no longer available, but between 8 July 2020 and 23 December 2021, the tribunal issued 230 eviction orders to private tenancies for rent arrears.²¹⁶

How many and with what speed private sector claims culminate in warrants and bailiff enforced actions will in part depend on the capacity of the legal system to simultaneously manage the backlog of outstanding cases and new cases. This in turn will be shaped by the willingness of social landlords to continue exercising forbearance.

With the ending of temporary eviction protections, policy attention has returned to the regulation of private renting. In England, the Renters’ Reform Bill may address ‘no-fault’ evictions, lifetime deposits, landlord registration and measures to raise physical and management standards.

In Wales, implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 should see the extension of notice periods for ‘no-fault’ evictions from two to six months as well as the introduction of new tenancy contracts for social and private tenants, a

minimum twelve month tenancy contract period, higher quality standards and extra protection for tenants against retaliatory evictions. However, the delay in implementation of the Act from July until December 2022²¹⁷ to allow landlords to make the necessary preparations, has raised concerns that landlords could use the extra five months to use the ‘no fault’ provisions to evict more tenants before the new regulations come into force.

In Scotland, where regulation is more advanced, rent control proposals have been accompanied by proposals to limit winter evictions, to increase the penalties for illegal eviction and to enforce higher quality standards.²¹⁸ In addition, the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill, passed in June 2022, has made many temporary changes introduced during the pandemic permanent. As a result, pre-eviction protocols relating to rent arrears in the private rented sector have become permanent and all grounds for eviction are now discretionary, effectively ending no-fault evictions altogether.

212 Bevan Foundation (2021) *Wales Housing Crisis: The Role of LHA*. Online: Bevan Foundation <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/resources/wales-housing-crisis-making-the-lha-work-for-wales/wales-housing-crisis-making-the-lha-work-for-wales-report/>

213 Brooks, S. (2021) *Second Homes: Developing New Policies in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government https://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Second-homes_-_Developing-new-policies-in-Wales---FINAL.pdf

214 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee (2021) *Protecting the Homeless and the Private Rented Sector: MHCLG’s response to Covid-19- Sixth Report of Session 2019–21*. London: HMSO <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/5342/documents/53217/default/>

215 Scottish Housing Regulator (2021) *Charter data – all social landlords’ dataset*. Online: SHR. <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/statistical-information>

216 Scottish Government (2022) *Coronavirus Acts: Eleventh Report to Scottish Parliament*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-acts-eleventh-report-scottish-parliament/pages/10/>

217 Welsh Government (2022) *Written Statement: Implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016* Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/written-statement-implementation-renting-homes-wales-act-2016-deferral-implementation-date>

218 Scottish Government (2021) *A New Deal for Tenants -Draft Strategy Consultation Paper*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-deal-tenants-draft-strategy-consultation-paper/>

Chapter 4

Rough sleeping and statutory homelessness trends and projections

Key findings

Official rough sleeping estimates for England and Wales suggest largely parallel declining trends over the past four years particularly during the height of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 and 2021. Reflecting the pre-existing more robust safety net, falls in rough sleeping in Scotland associated with the pandemic, while significant, were of a smaller magnitude than in the other GB countries. It is, as yet, too early to say whether recently renewed rough sleeping increases seen in London (up by 18% in the year to Q1 2022/23) prefigure a similar trend across England as a whole. 'Full duty homelessness acceptances' proportionate to population have been similar in England and Wales, while the much higher rates recorded for Scotland reflect the wider legal responsibilities of Scottish local authorities. Similar across all three countries is the household type profile of 2020/21 homelessness applicants, with single adults accounting for around two thirds of the total.

Temporary accommodation placements have historically run at markedly higher levels in Scotland than in England and, especially, Wales. This substantially reflects the wider responsibilities of Scottish local authorities in relation to applicants who would be classed as 'non-priority homeless' in England and

Wales, and also features relatively large-scale Scottish use of social housing stock as temporary accommodation. On the other hand, temporary accommodation placements involving families with children are notably higher in England than in the other two countries. Although accounting for only a small proportion of all temporary accommodation placements, the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels has grown strongly in England over the past decade, while usage has remained comparatively low and stable in Wales and Scotland.

Temporary accommodation placements are expected to almost double in England over the next twenty years, while rates in Wales and Scotland will be stable or slightly falling.

These trends have driven mounting temporary accommodation expenditures in England, while outlays on support, administration and prevention have been progressively squeezed. This spending profile confounds the early intervention aims and philosophy of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

4.1 Introduction

Drawing on official statistics, this chapter attempts to compare the three nations of Great Britain in relation to the scale and nature of rough sleeping and statutory homelessness. As acknowledged, there are few if any wholly comparable statistics published by the three countries. To some extent this reflects detailed differences in the legal frameworks concerned. Nevertheless, even where not entirely consistent in terms of concepts and definitions, there is some scope for approximate comparison and/or instructive observation, in particular in relation to trends over time.

The remainder of the chapter is presented in four main sections. Firstly, Section 4.2 reviews rough sleeping statistics published by the UK Government (for England), by the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government. Next, Section 4.3 examines statutory homelessness in terms of its incidence and causes. Section 4.4 investigates the use of TA for homeless households, an especially useful lens via which to compare homelessness demand and trends across GB. Finally, Section 4.5 provides a comparison of homelessness expenditure across the three countries, focusing on overall levels of spend controlling for population level, and the balance of spend across TA, support, and administration and prevention.

4.2 Rough sleeping – official estimates

As the most obvious and extreme manifestation of homelessness, rough sleeping and its changing scale is periodically monitored by the UK Government and by the devolved administrations in Edinburgh and Cardiff, as well as being continuously tracked by the Greater London

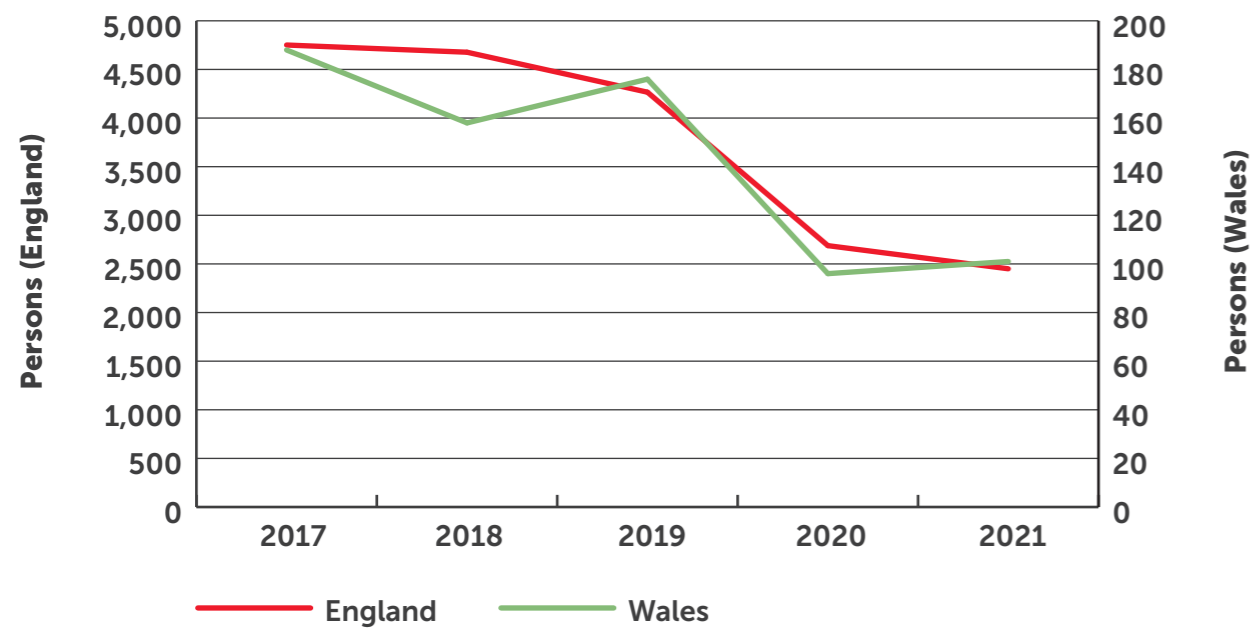
Authority. However, the enumeration methods used for this purpose are highly varied:

- The UK Government's established approach to rough sleeper enumeration in England involves an annual requirement for LAs to submit estimated rough sleeper numbers on a given night of the authority's choosing between 1 October and 30 November each year. This can be a count-based estimate of visible rough sleeping, an evidence-based estimate drawing on the expertise of local agencies or an evidence-based estimate including a 'spotlight' count in particular areas.²¹⁹
- The Greater London Authority's CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) monitoring framework draws on administrative records relating people sleeping rough and engaging with outreach teams during a given period (quarter or year).
- The Welsh Government has historically collected LA rough sleeping estimates on an annual basis using two different methods: (a) people engaging with service providers and having experienced rough sleeping during a two week period, and (b) simple point in time rough sleeper numbers – updated since 2020 on a monthly basis.
- The Scottish Government monitors the incidence of rough sleeping indirectly, asking those making homelessness applications to LAs whether they have previous experience of rough sleeping.

Given the lack of comparability of these key data sources, in particular those collected in England and Wales as compared to Scotland, we focus here on what these data series tell us about trends over time across the GB

²¹⁹ For more information on estimate methods, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020>

Figure 4.1: Comparative trends in rough sleeping (officially enumerated) in England and Wales, 2017-21



Sources: DLUHC,²²⁰ Welsh Government^{221,222}

jurisdictions. In Chapter 5, we present an analysis of 'core homelessness' trends and projections. This analysis includes rough sleeping as a core homelessness sub-category rough sleeping, with the aim of generating comparable estimates of rough sleeping rates across GB.

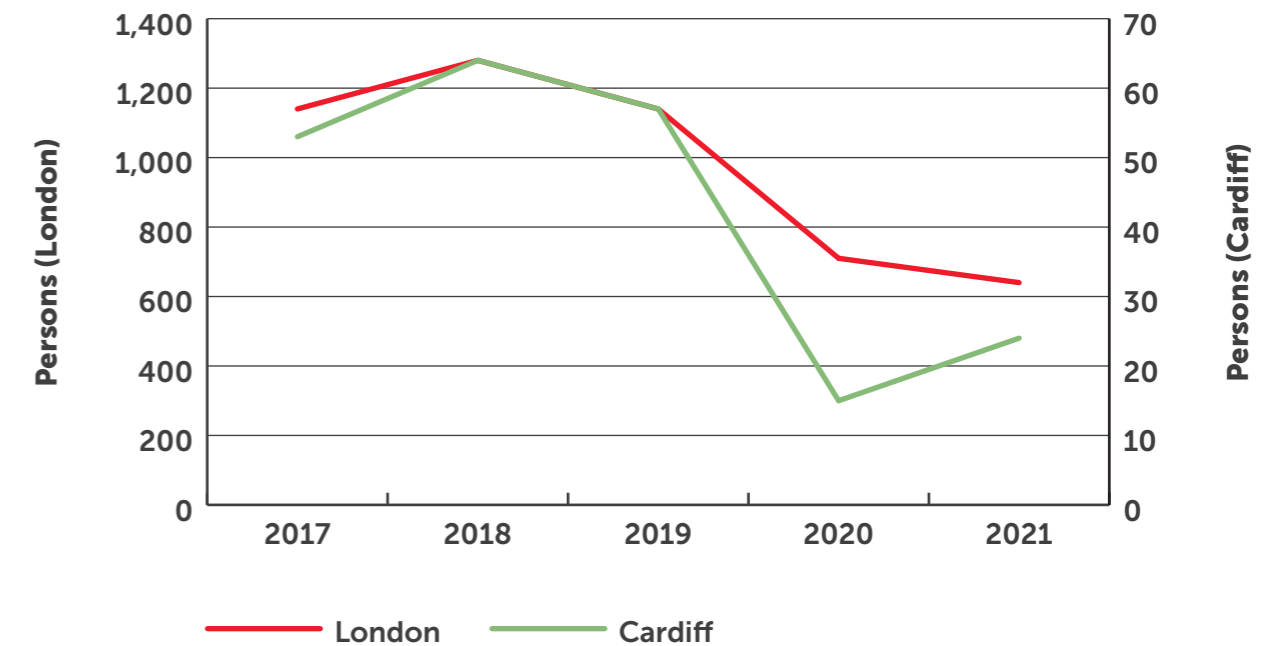
In England and Wales, published statistics shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 suggest that rough sleeping numbers have trended down in recent years, both nationally and in the capital cities, London, and Cardiff. These reductions took place largely during the pandemic, reflecting emergency accommodation programs. However, in both countries numbers were already apparently beginning to trend

down in the immediately preceding period, likely due to a strengthened policy focus and associated funding during this period (see Chapter 2).

In England, these recent downward trends follow very substantial growth in rough sleeping levels during the past decade as a whole. In the period 2010-2017 the annual national point in time total increased almost threefold from 1,768 to 4,751, a trend attributed to a combination of welfare reforms reducing people's entitlement to assistance via the social security system, austerity-driven cuts to LA budgets, and a localist ideology in central Government that saw decisions on responses to homelessness and rough sleeping left to individual

- 220 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021>
- 221 Welsh Government (2020) *National rough sleeper count: November 2019*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/national-rough-sleeper-count-november-2019>
- 222 Welsh Government (2022) *Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping; statistical release*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/homelessness-accommodation-provision-and-rough-sleeping-november-2021>

Figure 4.2: Comparative trends in rough sleeping (officially enumerated) in London and Cardiff, 2017-21

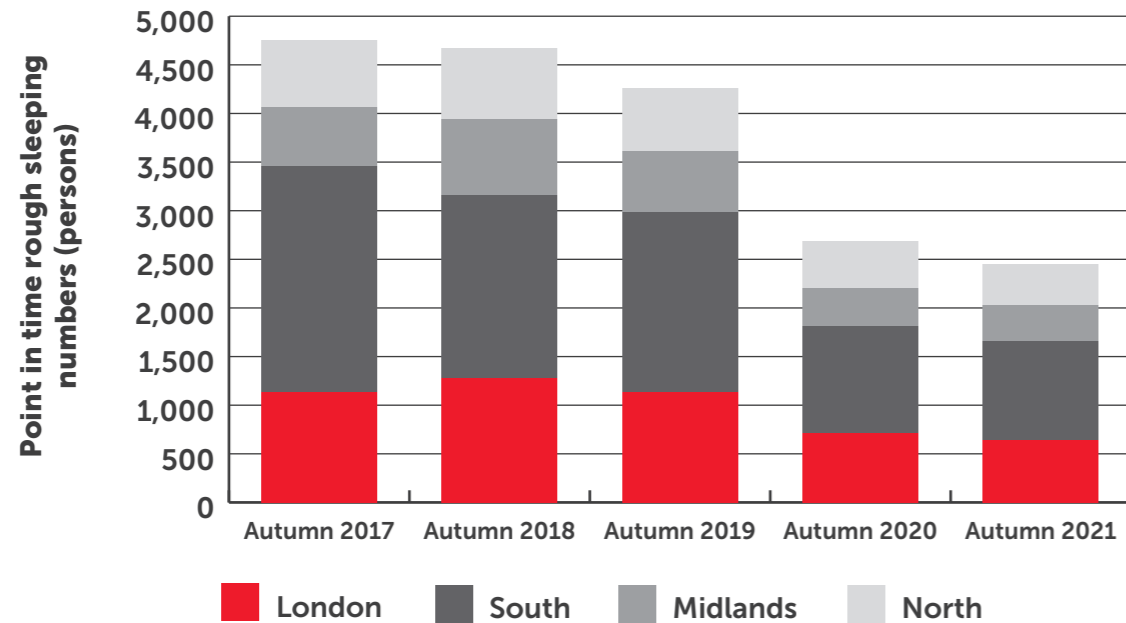


Sources: DLUHC,²²³ Welsh Government,^{224,225} Cardiff Council²²⁶

LAs.²²⁷ This localist agenda began to give way in the late 2010s, with the publication of the Rough Sleeping Strategy and associated RSI funding (see chapter 2), and was then displaced by the heavy centralist tenor of the pandemic response to rough sleeping.²²⁸ In Wales, rough sleeping continued to rise in the years following

the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, with it being widely recognised that people sleeping rough had benefited least from the new preventative legislation (see chapter 2).²²⁹ In 2019, the Welsh Government duly established an independent Homelessness Action Group, with a specific focus on early action to

- 223 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021>
- 224 Welsh Government (2020) *National rough sleeper count: November 2019*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/national-rough-sleeper-count-november-2019>
- 225 Welsh Government (2022) *Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping; statistical release*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/homelessness-accommodation-provision-and-rough-sleeping-november-2021>
- 226 Cardiff Council (2022) *Population Estimate Profiles for Cardiff and its Wards*. Online: UK Government <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Have-your-say/Area-Profiles/Population/Pages/default.aspx>
- 227 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Watts, B. (2020) 'The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England,' *Policy & Politics*, 48(4), 541-561
- 228 Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B., & Simms, R. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/242907/homelessness_monitor_england_2020_covid19_crisis_response_briefing.pdf
- 229 Ahmed, A., Wilding, M., Gibbons, A., Jones, K., Rogers, M., and Madoc-Jones, I., (2018). *Post-implementation Evaluation of the Homelessness Legislation (Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014: Final Report*. GSR report number 46/2018. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/evaluation-of-homelessness-legislation-part-2-of-the-housing-act-wales-2014-final-report-summary.pdf>; Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis

Figure 4.3: Rough sleeping estimates, England, 2017-21

Source: DLUHC^{230 231}

reduce and eliminate rough sleeping.²³² The Group's first report, published in October 2019, made a series of recommendations on both immediate and longer-term actions to address rough sleeping.²³³

Over the latest twelve month period (to Autumn 2021) the total estimated number of rough sleepers in England declined by 9% - with similar rates of reduction recorded in each broad region as identified in Figure 4.3. However, the CHAIN monitoring system operating in London, indicates that rough sleeper numbers in the Capital bottomed out in Q1 2021/22,

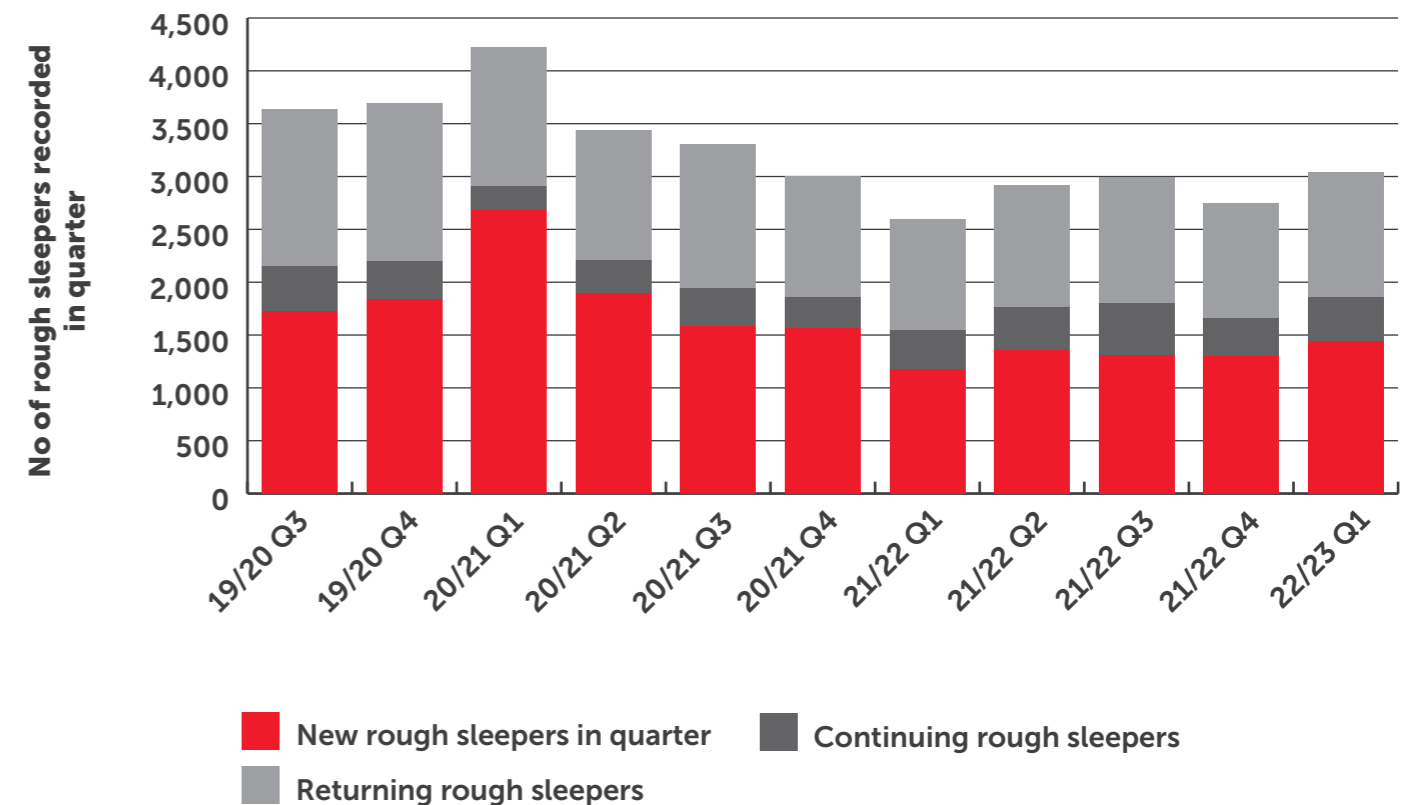
before resuming a generally rising trend over the past year (to Q1 22/23) – see Figure 4.4. Most notably, the flow of new rough sleepers recorded by participating agencies increased by 23% over this period. Total rough sleepers logged in latest CHAIN figures nevertheless remain 28% below their Q1 2020/21 peak. While these up-to-date figures may indicate a renewed rise in rough sleeping across England in 2022, it is important to appreciate that there are unique homelessness-related pressures faced in London, as regards the housing market context

²³⁰ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021>

²³¹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Support for people sleeping rough in England, 2021*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/annex-a-support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-2021-not-official-statistics>

²³² See: <https://gov.wales/homelessness-action-group>

²³³ Homelessness Action Group (2018) *Preventing rough sleeping in Wales and reducing it in the short-term: Report to Welsh Ministers from the Homelessness Action Group*. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/homelessness-action-group-report-october-2019.pdf>

Figure 4.4: Rough sleeping in London 2019/20-2022/23 – breakdown by rough sleeping duration (quarterly CHAIN statistics)

Source: Greater London Authority²³⁴

and immigration patterns.²³⁵

In contrast to these trends in England and Wales, Scottish Government statistics suggest that the incidence of rough sleeping in Scotland has remained fairly stable over recent years, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of all those making homelessness applications to LAs. As shown in Figure 4.5, some 7-8% of statutory homelessness applicants report having slept rough during the previous three months.²³⁶ This is likely

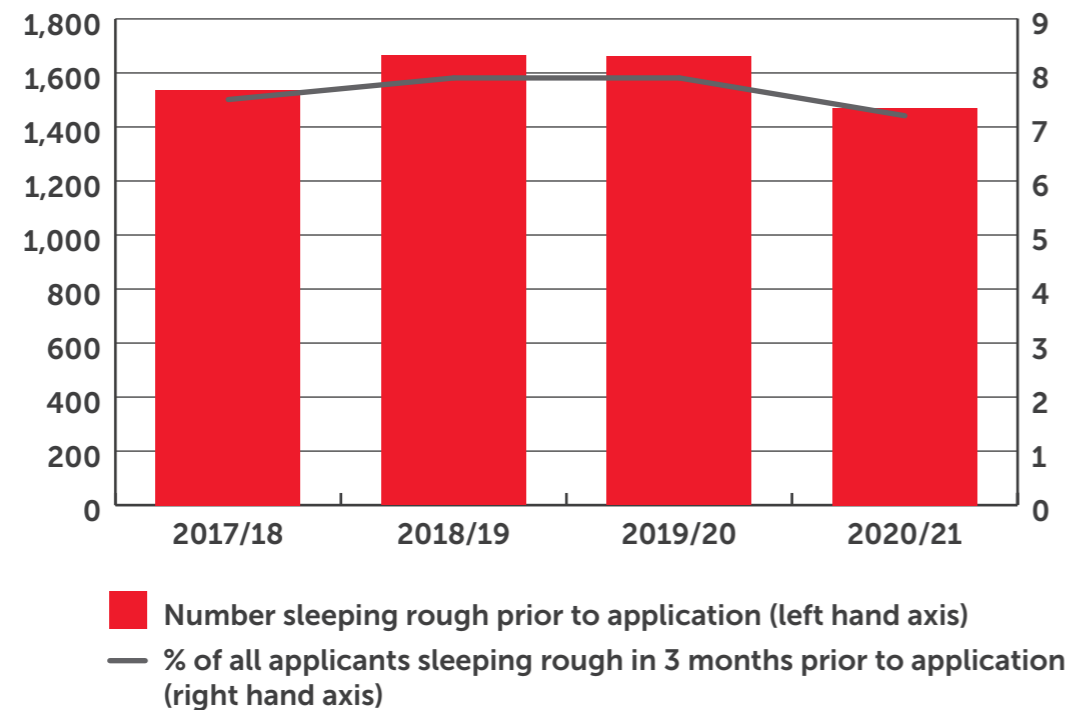
to reflect the more inclusive statutory safety net available to single homeless and rough sleeping individuals in the jurisdiction as compared to England and Wales, following the abolition of priority need and introduction of virtually universal entitlements to TA from 2012. Also likely reflecting this pre-existing more robust safety net, the falls in rough sleeping associated with the pandemic, while significant, were of a smaller magnitude in

²³⁴ Greater London Authority (2022) *Rough sleeping in London* (CHAIN reports). Online: GLA <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

²³⁵ Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G. Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022/>

²³⁶ Scottish Government statistics also show that 4-5% of statutory homelessness applicants had slept rough on the night preceding their application. Likewise, this has remained largely unchanged over the past four years.

Figure 4.5: Rough sleeping in Scotland involving persons making local authority homelessness applications



Source: Scottish Government²³⁷

Scotland than in the other GB countries.²³⁸

Key informants in England and Wales reported some return to rough sleeping, albeit at a greatly reduced level to that seen prior to the pandemic. Returns were typically associated with avoidance of unsuitable TA:

“Visibly there’s been a return to the streets... If we’re still only providing the sort of temporary accommodation... that it might not be night shelters, but it’s still not great is it. It’s still very, very temporary sort of stuff, then it’s

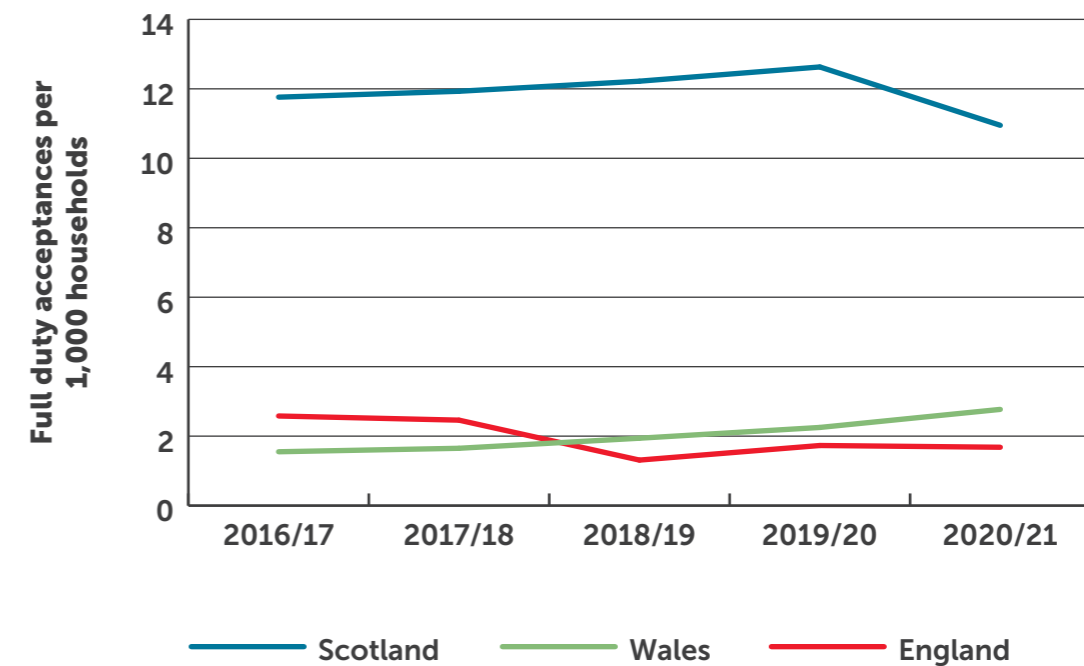
understandable, plus we’ve got folk on the streets again willing to give you money. We are getting this uptick again”.
(Key informant, independent, Wales)

“[we are] seeing [people] fall back out of hotels or... move-on accommodation... This is the population who Housing First is targeted at, and we don’t have enough Housing First units in the country to meet their needs”.
(Key informant, voluntary sector, England)

²³⁷ Scottish Government (2021) *Homelessness in Scotland 2020 to 2021*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/>

²³⁸ Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Young, G. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2021*. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/scotland/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2021/>

Figure 4.6: Statutory homelessness: full duty acceptances per 1,000 households



Sources: DLUHC;²³⁹ Welsh Government;²⁴⁰ Scottish Government;²⁴¹ Office for National Statistics²⁴²

4.3 Statutory homelessness – incidence, profile and causes

In this section we compare the incidence of statutory homelessness in terms of LA ‘full duty acceptances’ – i.e. applicant households assessed as being owed the full rehousing duty by the assessing authority. We then go on to discuss the (not directly comparable) profiles of statutory homelessness applicants in England and Scotland in terms of the main immediate reasons for loss of accommodation.

Homelessness rates

In terms of the ‘full duty acceptances’ metric, Scotland experiences a much higher rate of homelessness than either England or Wales (see Figure 4.6). This mainly reflects the fact that, unlike England and Wales, Scotland’s homelessness legislation no longer restricts LA rehousing obligations in relation to a household’s status regarding ‘priority need’. This means that, with respect to LA assistance duties, adult only households are treated no differently from households including dependent children (or a pregnant woman). Nevertheless, as observed in previously published

²³⁹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Statutory homelessness live tables* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

²⁴⁰ Welsh Government (2022) *Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping: statistical release* <https://gov.wales/homelessness-accommodation-provision-and-rough-sleeping-november-2021>

²⁴¹ Scottish Government (2021) *Homelessness in Scotland 2020 to 2021*. Online: Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/>

²⁴² Office for National Statistics (2021) *Table 401: Household estimates and projections, United Kingdom, mid-2001 to mid-2043*. Online: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/householdprojectionsforengland/2018based>

analysis²⁴³ the rate of (full duty acceptance) homelessness was in any case historically much higher in Scotland than in England and Wales, even prior to the abolition of priority need under the relevant Scottish Government reforms completed in 2012. This was attributed to case assessment decision-making influenced by the relatively large provision of social housing in (most parts of) Scotland relative to England and Wales.

A second important, albeit less dramatically apparent, point to highlight in Figure 4.6 is the dip in the full duty acceptance rate for England seen in 2018/19, largely sustained in 2019/20 and 2020/21. This reflects the introduction of a new legislative framework in England under the HRA. Additional homelessness prevention and relief duties assumed by LAs under this regime mean that a greater proportion of homelessness applicants are assisted in this way than previously. As a result, the number subject to a full duty assessment (and potentially owed full duty assistance) is reduced by comparison with the pre-2018 status quo.

A broader observation that can be drawn from Figure 4.6 is that, in terms of full duty homelessness acceptances, the past two years have seen somewhat contrasting trajectories across the three nations. On this basis, the first pandemic year, 2020-21, saw numbers rising in Wales, static in England and falling in Scotland.

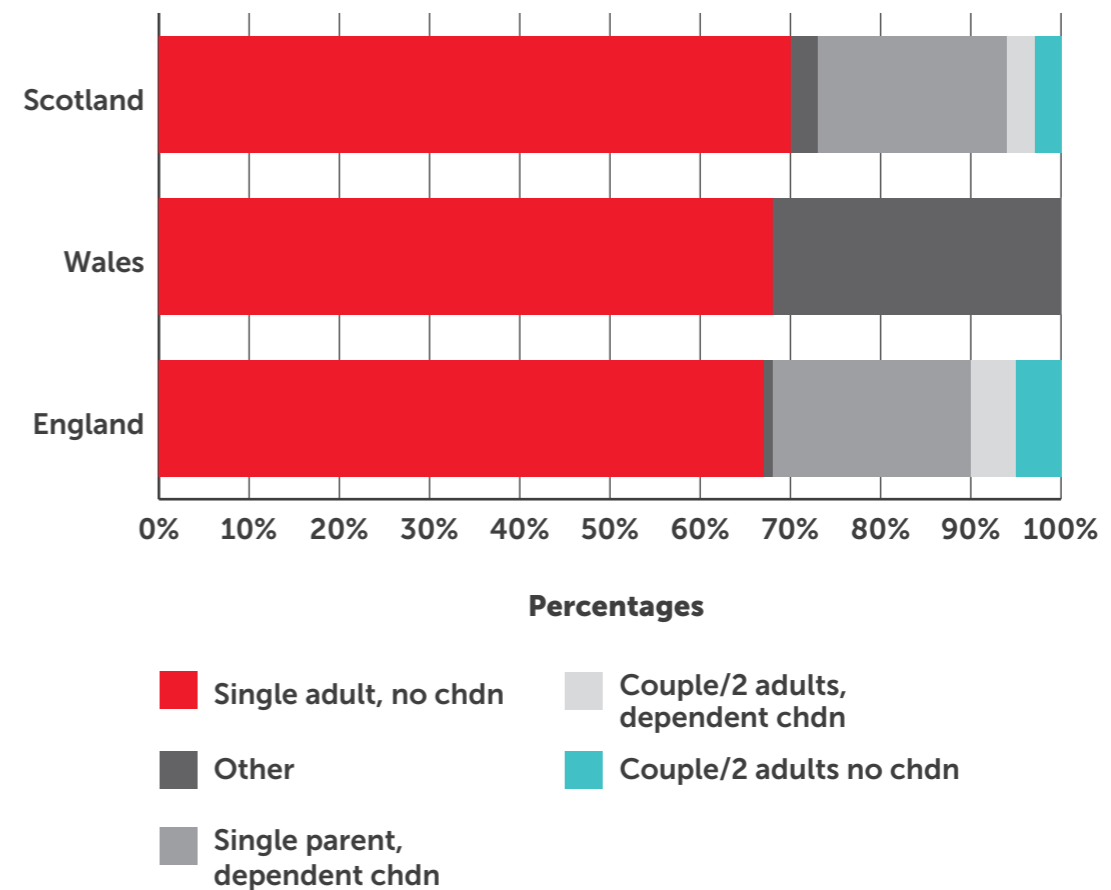
For Scotland the recent trend shown in Figure 4.6 seems fairly consistent with our own LA survey in which 15 of 29 responding councils reported that, by comparison with the previous year, homelessness service 'footfall' had reduced in 2020/21, while only seven said it had increased. Similarly, the balance of responses in our equivalent Welsh survey seem consistent with the 2020/21 upward trend shown in Figure 4.6, with 15 of 22 responding councils reporting increased footfall in that year.

However, results from our equivalent LA survey of England seem inconsistent with the recent pattern of statutory homelessness stability indicated by Figure 4.6. Two thirds of survey responding councils (66%) reported generally rising footfall in 2020/21, with only 12% having seen declining demand for homelessness services on this basis.

Homelessness profiles

As shown in Figure 4.7, across all three British nations, single adults comprise around two thirds of people seeking homelessness assistance from LAs. Most of the remainder are single parent households. Historically, prior to the statutory homelessness reforms enacted in England and Wales in the late 2010s, published homelessness applicant profiles in the two countries were dominated by families with children. This reflects consequential widening of the data collection and statistical monitoring framework to encompass all eligible homelessness applicants owed the prevention or relief duty.

Figure 4.7: Homelessness applicants broken down by household type, 2020-21



Sources: DLUHC,²⁴⁴ StatsWales,²⁴⁵ Scottish Government²⁴⁶

Notes: 1. For England and Wales the breakdown relates to applicants initially deemed as owed the prevention or relief duty; for Scotland it relates to 'all persons assessed as homeless'. 2. For Wales, the classification distinguishes only 'single adults' and 'others'

Homelessness causes

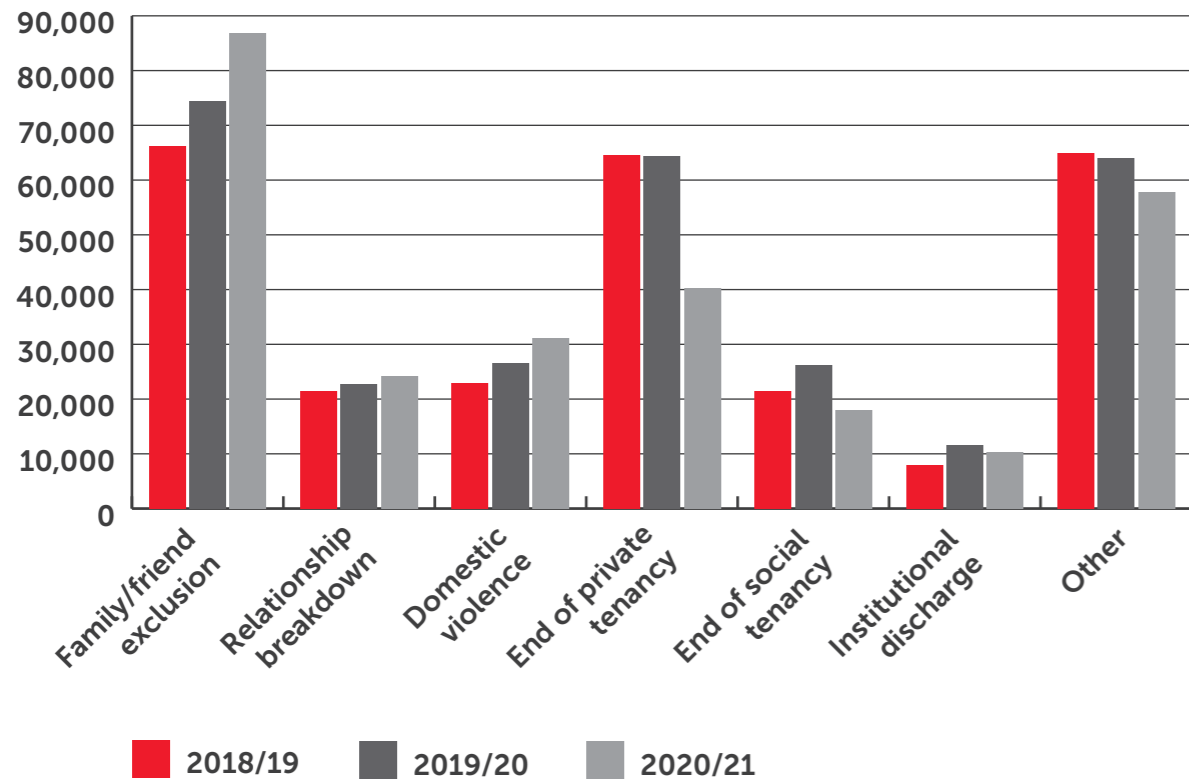
Inter-jurisdictional differences in the frameworks used to classify the main immediate reasons for homelessness prevent direct comparisons across countries on this topic. Nevertheless, there appear to be some broad similarities across the three countries in terms of the relative importance of different factors (Figures 4.8-4.10). Similarly, the multi-year data available for England and Scotland²⁴⁷

embody similar patterns in terms of recent change – in particular, largely associated with eviction moratoriums during the COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent year saw major reductions in people becoming homeless due to loss of existing tenancies.

243 Fitzpatrick, S. & Bramley, G. (2021) *The Ruling Parties' Record on Homelessness and Complex Needs (May 2015 to pre-COVID 2020)*. SPDO research paper 7. Online: LSE. https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/CASE/_NEW/PUBLICATIONS/abstract/?index=7810

244 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Statutory homelessness live tables*. Online: DLUHC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>
 245 StatsWales (2022) *Households in temporary accommodation*. Online: Welsh Government <https://statswales.gov.wales/catalogue/housing/homelessness>
 246 Scottish Government (2022) *Homelessness in Scotland: update to 30 September 2021*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-update-30-september-2021/>
 247 Note that at time of writing, 2018/19 was the latest year for which such data are published for Wales.

Figure 4.8: Households owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty in England, 2018/19-2020/21: main reason for homelessness (number of households)



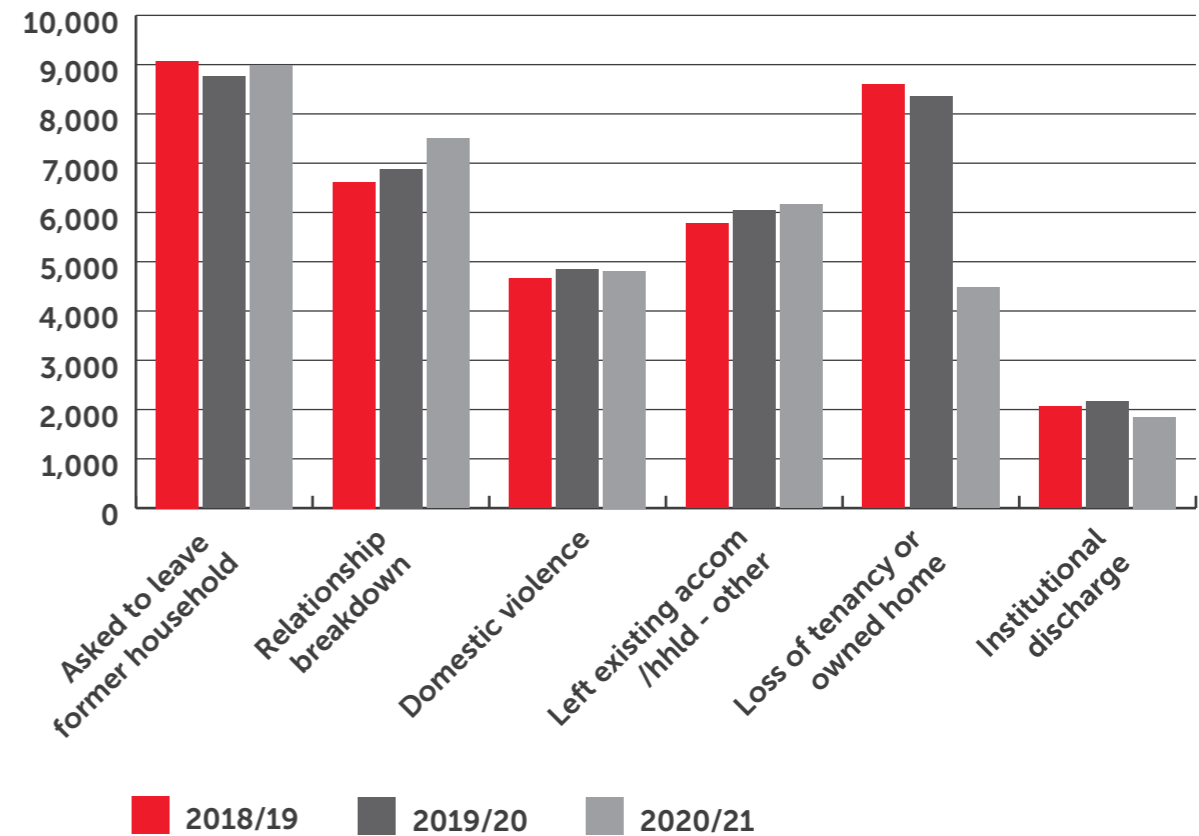
Source: DLUHC²⁴⁸

Ending of a private tenancy as a reason for homelessness fell 37% in England, with social tenancies ending falling by 31%. In Scotland, the overarching category 'loss of tenancy/owned home' fell 47% in 2020/21, likely almost entirely attributable to trends in rental evictions. At the same time, perhaps reflecting pandemic lockdown pressures, the numbers facing homelessness due to relationship breakdown and (at least in England) domestic violence, rose in 2020/21.²⁴⁹

248 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Statutory homelessness live tables*. Online: DLUHC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

249 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 crisis response to homelessness in Great Britain*. Online: CACHE. <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/the-covid-19-crisis-response-to-homelessness-in-great-britain/>

Figure 4.9: Main reason for making homelessness application, Scotland, 2018/19-2020/21 (number of households)



Source: Scottish Government²⁵⁰

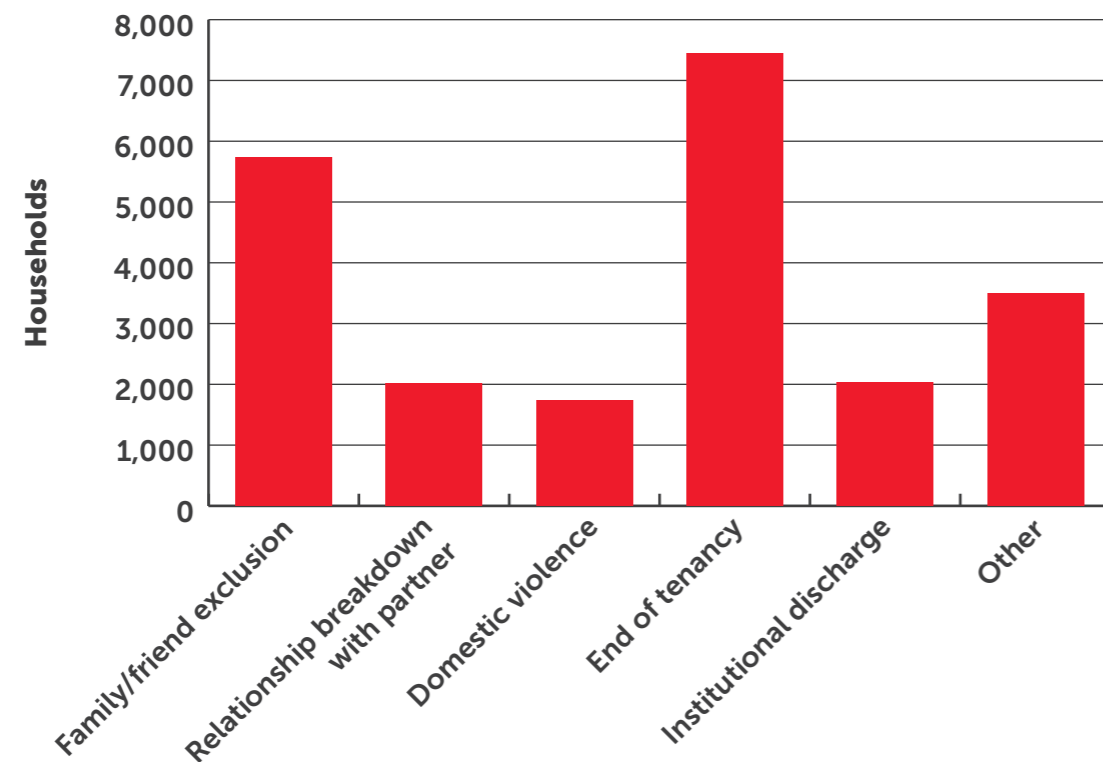
4.4 Temporary accommodation placements

TA placements, in this context, refer to homelessness applicants provided by LAs with some form of short term housing in the course of their application process. According to official statistics, some 112,000 households across Great Britain were in this situation as at 31 March 2021.²⁵¹ In the main, TA placements involve households already assessed as being owed the full rehousing duty, but awaiting an offer of long term housing.

As shown in Figure 4.11, Scotland's overall TA placement rate as at 31 March 2021 was some 25% above that of England and 40% above that for Wales. This reflects higher homelessness acceptance rates associated with the abolition of the priority need test in 2012. However, when it comes to TA placements involving families with children, perhaps the most concerning aspect of this practice, rates in England have been recently running at around 50% higher than the equivalent figure for Scotland (see Figure 4.12). This suggests that TA is disproportionately

250 Scottish Government (2021) *Homelessness in Scotland 2020 to 2021*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/>

251 Note that, at least in England, it is understood that this number does not fully encompass those provided with emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic under the national Everyone In program.

Figure 4.10: Main reason for homelessness application, Wales 2018/19

Source: StatsWales.²⁵²

Note: Figures relate to households assessed as owed a duty of prevention or relief (threatened with homelessness or actually homeless). Because some of the former are later designated in the latter category, the figures graphed here will include a degree of double counting.

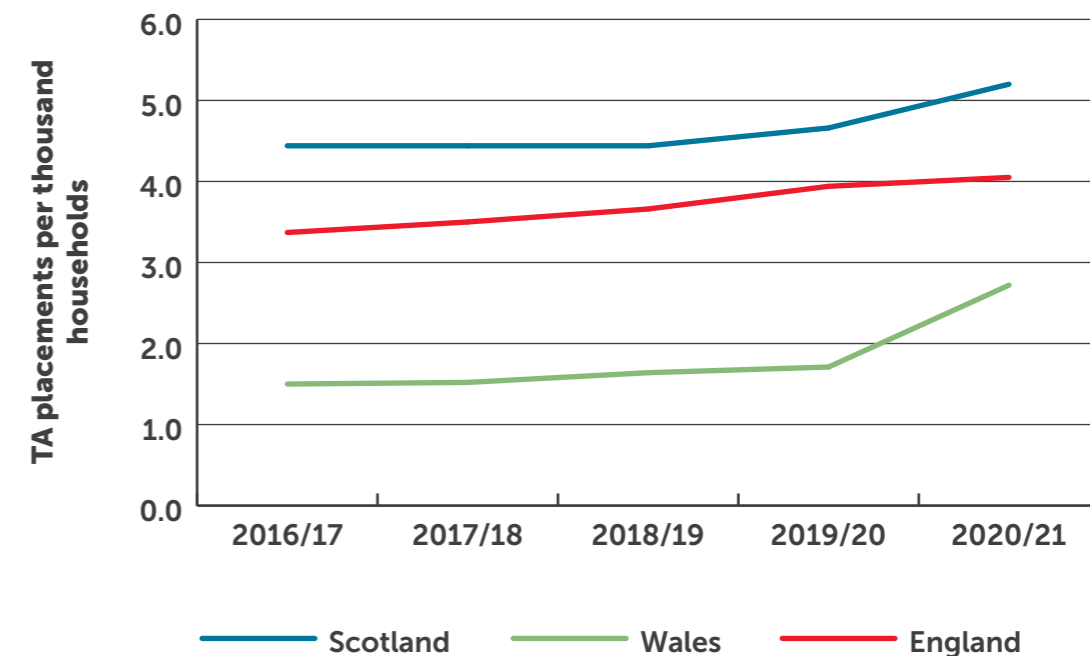
used by Scottish authorities to accommodate single adults or other non-family households, consistent with the broader statutory homelessness responsibilities where the priority need test is no longer applied.

There are also substantial sub-national variations in TA placement rates. Particularly important is the radically higher rate recorded for London, by comparison with other regions of England (17 per 1,000 households

²⁵² StatsWales (2022) *Households in temporary accommodation*. Online: Scottish Government. <https://statswales.gov.wales/catalogue/housing/homelessness>

²⁵³ During Q4 2020/21 the number of households assessed by London boroughs as threatened with homelessness equated to 1.68 per thousand households as compared with the national equivalent figure of 1.37. At the same time, the number assessed as actually homeless in London during this period equated to 1.89 per thousand households, compared with 1.61 for England as a whole.

compared to two or less in the other broad regions) – see Figure 4.13. This is very largely a measure of more pressurised supply of settled housing affecting the Capital, albeit also reflecting a slightly higher incidence of households subject to homelessness.²⁵³

Figure 4.11: Temporary accommodation placements – number of placements at financial year end per 1,000 households, England, Wales, and Scotland

Sources: DLUHC;²⁵⁴ Scottish Government;²⁵⁵ Welsh Government;²⁵⁶ Office for National Statistics.²⁵⁷

Note: TA placement rates based on point-in-time statistics for 31 March each year.

As a statistical measure, TA placements (pro rata to overall household populations) may be seen as a useful means of gauging the pressure of demand from people facing homelessness relative to the supply of suitable long-term housing, especially in terms of long-term trends over time. This reflects the fact that TA placement rates are less affected by recent legislative reforms affecting LA homelessness duties (see Chapter 2).

Arguably, the TA placement rate is also a valid metric for national comparisons

within Great Britain. Nevertheless, the very different TA cohort profiles shown in Figure 4.14 must be taken into account here. These highlight the much higher proportion of TA placements in England and Wales involving procurement of privately owned property.²⁵⁸ This has implications for TA expenditure levels recorded by the three countries (see Section 4.6). The quality of TA was typically lamented by key informants in England, with unregulated provision a matter of particular concern:

²⁵⁴ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Statutory homelessness live tables*. Online: DLUHC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

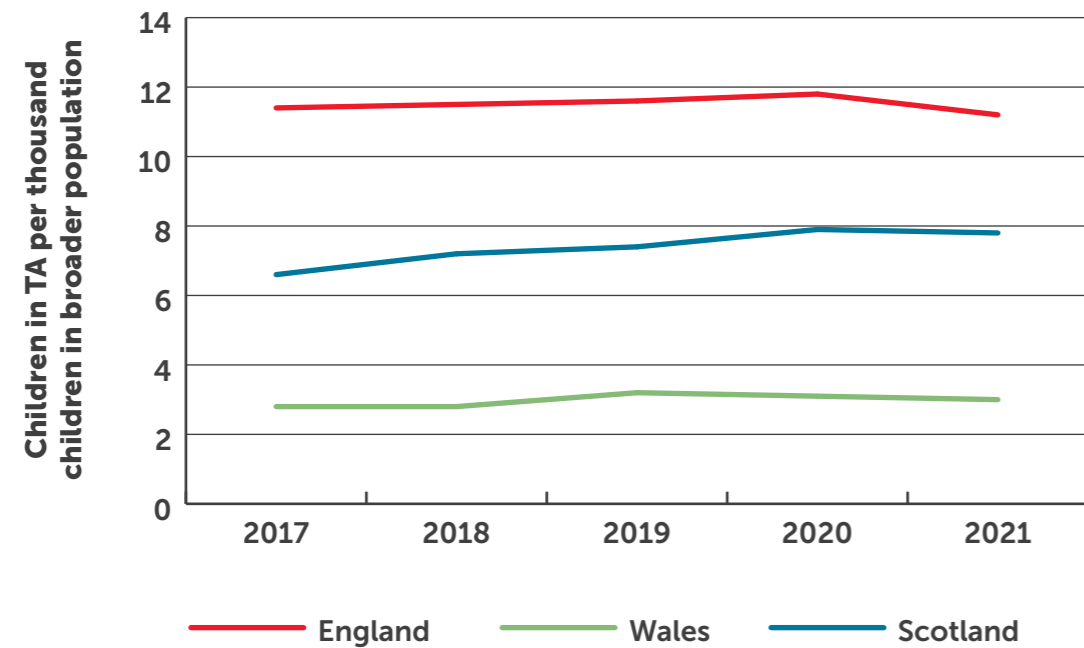
²⁵⁵ Scottish Government (2021) *Homelessness in Scotland 2020 to 2021*. Online: Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/>

²⁵⁶ Welsh Government (2022) *Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping; statistical release* <https://gov.wales/homelessness-accommodation-provision-and-rough-sleeping-november-2021>

²⁵⁷ Office for National Statistics (2021) Table 401: Household estimates and projections, United Kingdom, mid-2001 to mid-2043. Online: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/householdprojectionsforengland/2018based>

²⁵⁸ It is understood that privately owned accommodation used as TA on a 'short term leasing' basis is included in the 'Other' category in the officially published Scottish statistics.

Figure 4.12: Temporary accommodation placements – number of children in temporary accommodation at financial year end per 1,000 children in broader population, England, Wales, and Scotland



Sources: DLUHC;²⁵⁹ Scottish Government;²⁶⁰ Welsh Government; Children populations: based on official mid-year estimates.

Note: TA placement rates based on point-in-time statistics for 31 March each year.

“There is still people... who are trapped in really low-quality, unregulated accommodation that is really bad. It’s really bad. The challenge is.. that blockage in the system... because you’ve got people who are maybe in the better-quality supported accommodation side who are ready to move on but they can’t because there’s nowhere for them to go... you can’t move... you can’t avoid this poor-quality end”. (Key informant, voluntary sector, England)

By contrast, nearly two thirds of 2021 Scottish TA placements (62%) involved

social housing stock occupied on a temporary basis (compared with only 23% in England and 15% in Wales), with private self-contained accommodation not separately represented in these national statistics. To the extent that such accommodation is used in Scotland (e.g. as in Edinburgh’s private sector leasing scheme) it is understood that – reflecting its relatively small scale across the country – it is incorporated within the ‘Other’ category in the Scottish Government statistics represented in Figure 4.14.

One other important point regarding the cross-country comparison in Figure 4.14 is that the number

²⁵⁹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Statutory homelessness live tables*. Online: DLUHC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

²⁶⁰ Welsh Government (2022) *Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping; statistical release* <https://gov.wales/homelessness-accommodation-provision-and-rough-sleeping-november-2021>

Figure 4.13: Temporary accommodation placements per 1,000 households, broad regions of England



Source: DLUHC²⁶¹

and share of Welsh TA placements involving B&B hotels shown here is far in excess of the recent historical norm. In the year to 31 March 2021, B&B placements by Welsh authorities almost trebled from 495 to 1,464 – in large measure, reflecting emergency accommodation provision in response to COVID-19. Key informants in Wales identified this surge in demand for TA as the “biggest trend” (Key informant, statutory sector, Wales) in homelessness in recent years, with a few LAs reported to have been overwhelmed to the extent that they could not always meet their duty to provide TA:

“Some of them [on waiting lists for temporary accommodation] are rough sleeping. I understand that a lot of them are... with family and friends, sofa surfing... I know that a number of authorities have been giving out tents over this period,

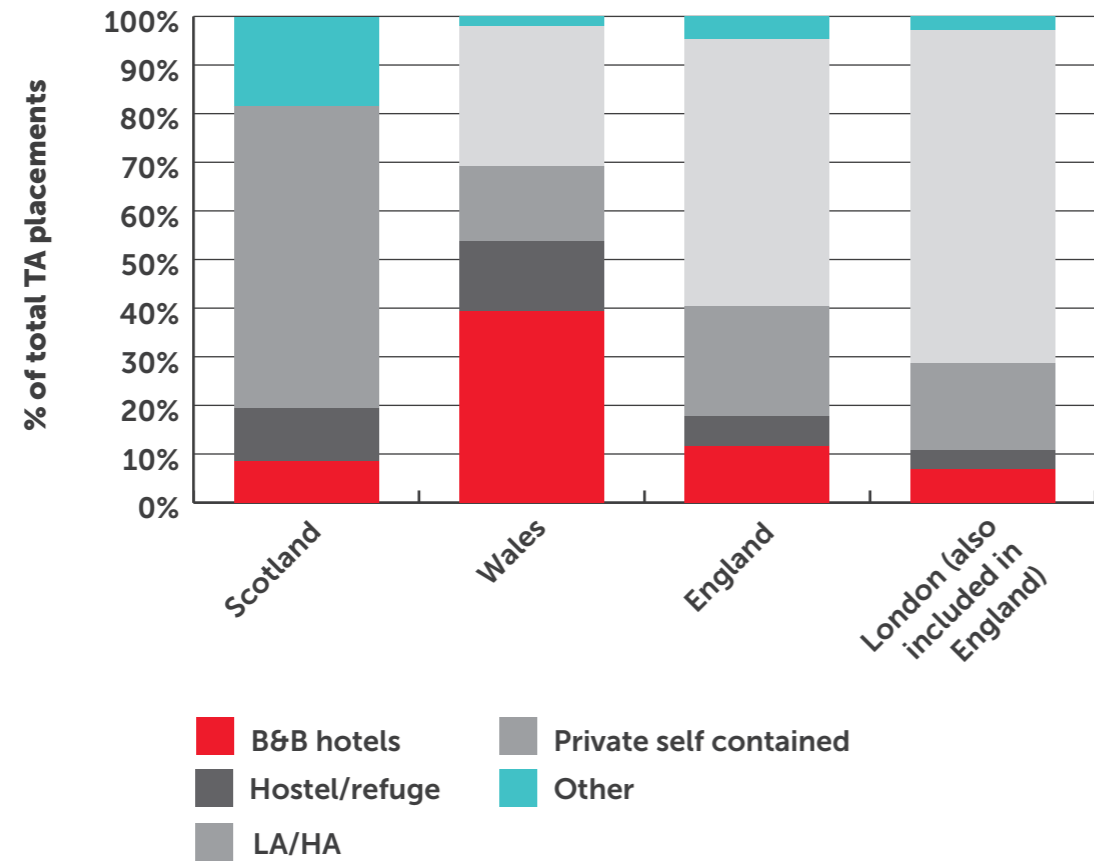
so some people are in tents, and vehicles, and so on as well”. (Key informant, voluntary sector, Wales)

Equivalent emergency accommodation provision by LAs in England is thought to be only partially reflected in the standard quarterly TA placement statistics because of the establishment of a separate system for recording English LA action under the Everyone In programme.²⁶² Notwithstanding possible statistical ambiguities relating to the COVID-19 period, a longer-term analysis of homelessness B&B placements across the three nations of Great Britain illustrates a sharp contrast between England, on the one hand, and Wales and Scotland on the other (see Figure 4.15). Key informants in England expressed acute concerns about increased use of B&B accommodation:

²⁶¹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Statutory homelessness live tables*. Online: DLUHC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

²⁶² Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Statutory homelessness live tables*. Online: DLUHC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

Figure 4.14: Temporary accommodation placements, 31 March 2021: breakdown by temporary accommodation type



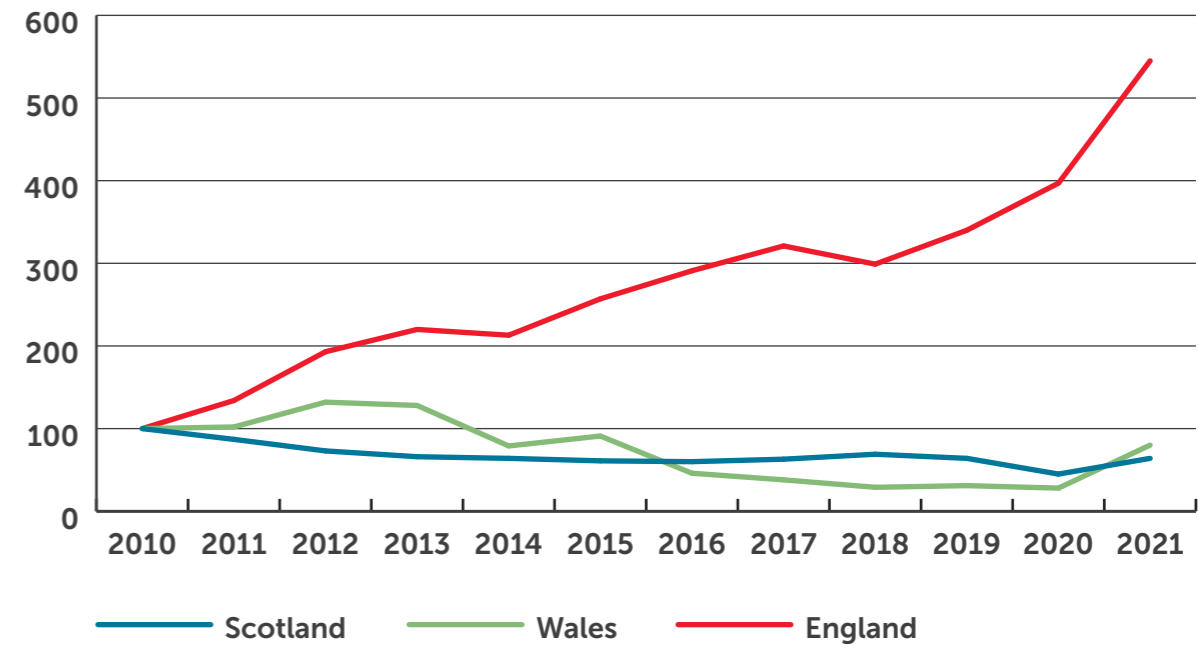
Sources: See Figure 4.11.

Note: Because private sector leasing (a.k.a. 'private self-contained' accommodation) is not widely used in Scotland, placements of this type are not separately recorded/published by the Scottish Government. Where councils (e.g. City of Edinburgh) do, in fact, make such placement they are included in the Scottish Government's 'Other' TA category.

“The issues around families, for me, are not the length of time necessarily in temporary accommodation, where that temporary accommodation is good quality, self-contained, and suitable. It’s the increase in families going into bed and breakfast accommodation because there aren’t the alternatives”.
(Key informant, independent sector, England)

As shown in Figure 4.15, even prior to the 2020-2021 pandemic spike, B&B placements had increased four-fold in England over the decade – from 2,050 (Q1 2010) to 8,130 (Q1 2020). Meanwhile, they had remained largely below their 2010 levels in Wales and Scotland.

Figure 4.15: Bed and Breakfast hotel placements, 2010-2021, indexed (31 Mar 2010 = 100)



Sources: DLUHC;²⁶³ Scottish Government;²⁶⁴ StatsWales;²⁶⁵ Fitzpatrick et al.²⁶⁶

Another 'homelessness pressure' metric associated with TA placements is their duration. Of most concern here is the time spent in non-self-contained accommodation like B&B hotels, hostels, and refuges. Even where self-contained, TA is liable to involve a dwelling that may be sub-optimal (or even unsuitable) for the household in terms of size or location. One example would be where the household is accommodated outside their home LA – as in the situation of 27% of TA placements in England on 30 September 2021. A second example, involving social housing stock used as TA, would be where the

property-household size matching rules for such placements may be looser than for a permanent letting (i.e. allowing occupation at a density that would be considered as 'overcrowding' in relation to a permanent tenancy).

Because published statistics on TA placement duration are both sparse and inconsistent, there is no scope for direct inter-national comparisons. Unavailability of such data are a particular problem in relation to England where no such statistics are routinely published. As far as Scotland is concerned it is nevertheless instructive to note

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Scottish Government (2021) *Homelessness in Scotland 2020 to 2021*. Online: Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/>

²⁶⁵ StatsWales (2022) *Total placements in bed and breakfasts during the quarter, by length of stay and provision*. Online: Welsh Government. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Temporary-Accommodation/total-placements-in-bed-and-breakfasts-during-the-quarter-by-length-of-stay-and-provision>

²⁶⁶ Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237787/the_homelessness_monitor_wales_2017.pdf

that total average length of stay in all forms of TA rose steadily over the three years to 2020/21, from 176 days to 199 days – albeit that the average stay in a B&B hotel was only 34 days in 2020/21. Moreover, Scottish Government statistics for 2020/21 reveal that homelessness cases closed in that year had remained open (‘under consideration’) for an average of 248 days, 23 days longer than in 2019/20, and 36 days longer than five years previously. Whether this latest increase was related to the particular challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis may become clearer when equivalent statistics for 2021/22 are published.

While it also collects TA length of stay data, the way this is published by the Welsh Government is very difficult to interpret in relation to trends over time.

Key informants across GB reported significant increases in the length of TA stays, with this noted as shifting resources away from prevention activity and toward crisis led responses.

“The councils we’re working with, with a few exceptions, are really struggling to find a way to end temporary accommodation quickly... people are sticking in the system. You have the double impact... the rise [in demand] and then you’re not moving people out of the system fast enough, so people stick, and temporary accommodation goes up, and costs go up, and everything eats itself, really”.

(Key informant, independent sector, England)

“if we could get rid some of the longstanding cases in temporary accommodation, and get that into a more balanced position, then local authorities would be able to... deal with the prevention of homelessness issues - because they’ll have freed up resource”.

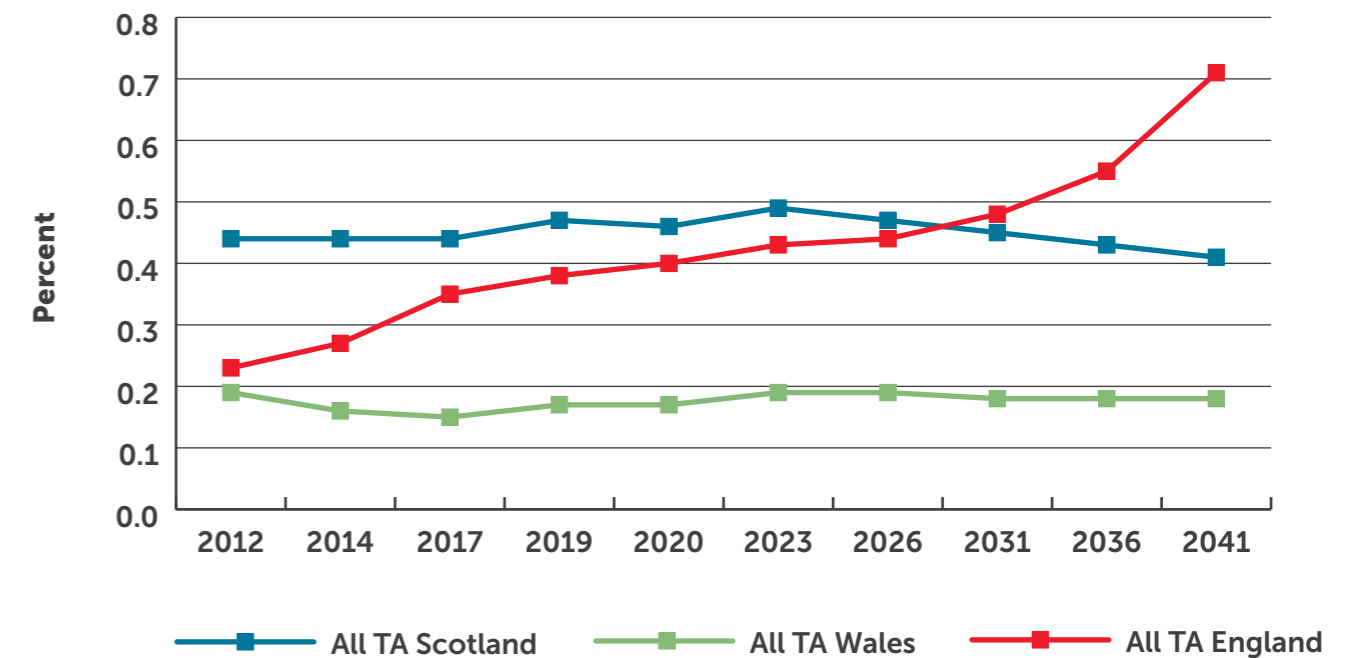
(Key informant, statutory sector, Scotland)

4.5 Temporary accommodation projections

We are also able to present forecasts of the number of households in temporary accommodation as part of the baseline projected scenarios for core homelessness (see Chapter 5). Figure 4.16 shows these, expressed as percentage rates based on household population, over the period to 2041, including estimates for the period 2012-20.

These numbers indicate the balance between the pressure of new homeless applications and the ability of local authorities to resolve these needs through effective prevention, or provision of permanent rehousing in social renting or affordable, sustainable tenancies in the private sector. The scale of TA has significant implications for costs: as shown in Section 4.6, TA is a key driving factor in the public costs of homelessness, especially in England. Two features stand out from the projected rates shown in Figure 4.16. Firstly, Scotland has a relatively high rate of households in TA throughout the projection period, higher than England before 2026 and much higher than Wales. Secondly, England shows a strong upward trend throughout the projection period, albeit growing most strongly further into the future.

Figure 4.16: Projected total temporary accommodation rate by country, 2012-2041 (% of all households)



Source: Authors' calculations – see Chapter 5.

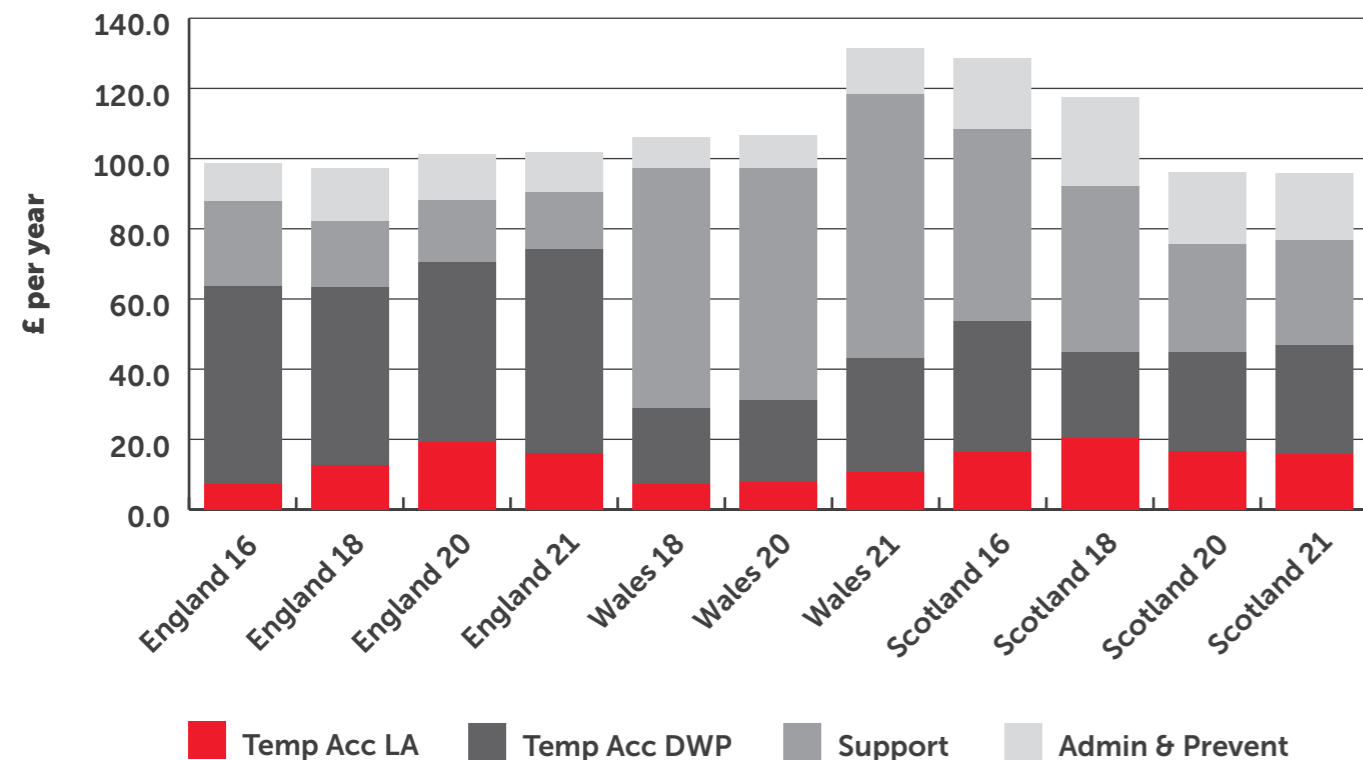
The key driver of TA placement levels is the interaction of three factors: application levels, the extent to which prevention activities can avert homelessness, and the availability of affordable (mainly social) housing to accommodate homeless households. For England, projected supply from relets and new provision falls short of demand and this gap is forecast to grow, whereas for both Scotland and Wales the balance is more favourable, or at least neutral. The pressure is compounded by the greater extent in England of gaps between LHA rates and actual market rents. Figure 4.16 suggests that there is a significant case for additional policy measures to curb or reverse this trend, purely based on prospective public spending costs as discussed below.

4.6 Homelessness expenditure

We now turn to a consideration of public spending on homelessness across the three GB nations. Spending is the fuel which enables effective policy responses to homelessness to be deployed and a measure of weight and significance of those policies, which may be compared over time and space, within the sector, as well as with other policy areas.

Figure 4.17 shows a comparable analysis for the three countries for the financial years 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2021 (from 2018 in the case of Wales). In this analysis we show four categories of homelessness-related expenditures: TA expenditure by LAs; TA expenditure from DWP via HB; support services including Supporting People, homelessness support and other housing welfare; and homelessness administration and prevention. It should be noted that

Figure 4.17: Real net current expenditure per household on main homelessness related activities by country and financial year (2016-21, financial years, at 2021 prices)



Sources: DLUHC Local Government Financial Statistics Revenue Outturn RO4 (Housing) and Revenue Estimates (RA4) 2021-2; Stats Wales Local Authority Expenditure Budgets; Scottish Government Local Government Finance Provisional Outturn and Budget Estimates; DWP Freedom of Information Requests on numbers of HB Cases by type of Temporary Accommodation and Short Term, Emergency and Transitional Accommodation and associated rent levels, 2016-21.

while a large part of Supporting People spending does support homeless people with additional support needs, some is attributable to other client groups who are not homeless. The figures are expressed as £ per household living in each country, to facilitate comparison.

This analysis shows a surprisingly static picture for the England total, although there was a slight fall in 2018 and then a rise in the first pandemic year, with only the most marginal rise in 2021.²⁶⁷ This seems inconsistent with both the general upward

pressure of homelessness numbers and the particular policy priority to tackle rough sleeping. Within the total, support has been progressively squeezed down, as has administration and prevention since 2018. Meanwhile the cost of TA has continued to mount. Thus the focus of expenditure appears to be shifting in a retrograde fashion, away from tenancy sustainment support towards crisis and short-term accommodation. This also seems out of kilter with the philosophy of the HRA legislation, where prevention and support might be expected to displace TA costs.

²⁶⁷ The 2021 figures are budget estimates, and we would anticipate that English LAs may well have spent over this budget during fiscal year 2021/22, owing to the longer drawn out COVID-19 restrictions and associated issues with emergency provision. DWP evidence suggests continuing growth in TA volume and cost in 2021.

For Wales, spending levels started only slightly above England, but with a completely different composition, dominated by continuing high levels of spend via Supporting People (now rolled into a larger grant called Housing Support Grant). During the pandemic, the Welsh Government has shown the most positive approach to local budgets for homelessness, with a marked increase being seen in 2021, and this has been reinforced by a big upward movement in DWP spend on TA.

Scotland shows a different picture again, with homeless spending starting at a noticeably higher level than in the other two countries overall in 2016, probably due to the generally more progressive policy framework following the abolition of the priority need distinction and earlier moves, which also created a substantial TA sector and a larger overall administrative input. However, over this period spending has reduced to a level somewhat below that in the other two GB nations. This may reflect a period of relative stability in homeless numbers in Scotland, and also ongoing budget stringency in Scotland particularly in local Government. A further important factor was changes in the DWP funding of TA as discussed in previous editions of the Homelessness Monitor Scotland,²⁶⁸ reducing this funding stream and putting pressure on local budgets for homelessness services which had to some extent been cross-subsidised by high rental charges in TA. The largest reductions appear to have been applied to support services, which may be somewhat at odds with emerging policy priorities, but there was also a noticeable decline in TA costs between 2016 and 2018.

²⁶⁸ Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S. & Watts, B. (2015) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2015*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236831/the_homelessness_monitor_scotland_2015.pdf

Chapter 5 Core homelessness and projections

Key findings

Levels of core homelessness are consistently higher in England than in either Wales or Scotland, with the latter having the lowest rates relative to household population. Numbers increased somewhat in the 2010s, and are projected to grow further in England, particularly London.

Policies which could have the largest impact on reducing core homelessness in all three countries include rehousing quotas, raising Local Housing Allowance, increased and improved welfare benefits, Housing First and associated support measures, and maximising the use of prevention

tools. Such policies in concert could reduce total core homelessness by 34% in England, 30% in Wales, and 42% in Scotland, while reducing rough sleeping and unsuitable temporary accommodation by half to two-thirds in the relatively short term, with the latter eliminated in Scotland. Policies with more modest beneficial effects on core homelessness include housing supply and 'levelling up', although the former has a bigger impact on temporary accommodation of all kinds and may be crucial to the feasibility of stronger rehousing quotas and Housing First.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explore core homelessness trends and projections across the constituent countries of Great Britain and policy options that might help to reduce it over the short, medium, and long term.

The chapter is structured as follows. Following this introduction, section 5.2 defines the elements of core homelessness and reviews the reasons behind the development of this concept, including limitations of existing official statistics and the ability to compare across countries. Then in section 5.3 we present estimates of the main elements of core homelessness over the period 2012 to 2020, with a particular focus on the last two years. Section 5.4 introduces the forward projection models and the policy options considered, highlighting some differences in both models and options between the countries. It goes on to present baseline projections assuming a continuation of current policy and practice responses for the three countries and discusses reasons for some differences in the trends anticipated. Section 5.5 discusses forward projections under a range of different policy scenarios in the three countries. Section 5.6 draws out key conclusions on potential policy impacts.

5.2 Core homelessness definition

The core homelessness concept was introduced in research undertaken with Crisis in 2017, updated in 2018,²⁶⁹

and then subject to a further major update in last year's Homelessness Monitor editions for England, Scotland, and Wales.²⁷⁰ Its components and their definitions as applied in this study are shown in Table 5.1 below.

'Core homelessness' seeks to define and enumerate the group of households who are experiencing the most extreme and immediate forms of homelessness at a point in time. The development of the concept seeks to enable a robust measurement framework that overcomes limitations in traditional approaches to homelessness calibration used in the UK, and in particular on statutory homelessness statistics (tracking those seeking LA housing assistance), and counts or estimates of rough sleeping. While both of these approaches are informative and important, they are also subject to shortcomings that limit their value for analytical purposes – including cross-country comparison (including between the countries within the UK), trend over time analysis, and serving as a basis for projections on the possible future scale of homelessness.²⁷¹

5.3 Core homelessness estimates and trends

The level and composition of core homelessness

There are significant differences in the overall level of core homelessness between the three countries of Great Britain, which have persisted over the last decade. Furthermore, these differences have painted a somewhat

269 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf and Bramley, G. (2019) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for Low Income Households and Homeless People: Main Technical Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University <https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/24741931/HousingSupplyMay2019.pdf>

270 All monitors and the associated reports can be found here: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/>

271 These limitations are reviewed more fully in chapter 5 of the 2021 edition of the Homelessness Monitor England: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021*. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2021/>

Table 5.1: Core homelessness categories and definitions

Category	Description
Rough Sleeping	Sleeping in the open e.g. in streets, parks, car parks, doorways
Unconventional Accommodation	Sleeping in places/spaces not intended as normal residential accommodation, e.g. cars, vans, lorries, caravans/motor homes, tents, boats, sheds, garages, industrial/commercial premises
Hostels etc.	Communal emergency and TA primarily targeted at homeless people including hostels, refuges and shelters, and also emergency hotel provision during COVID-19 ²⁷²
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	Homeless households placed in TA of certain types, viz Bed and Breakfast, Private Non-self-contained Licensed/Nightly Let, and Out of Area Placements (half in London, all elsewhere)
Sofa Surfing	Individuals or family groups staying temporarily (expecting or wanting to move) with another household, excluding nondependent children of host household and students, who are also overcrowded on the bedroom standard

different picture from that derived from official statistics from the operation of the homelessness legislation in the three countries, as reviewed in Chapter 4, although the effects of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the HRA have served to reduce these policy-determined differences to a considerable degree.

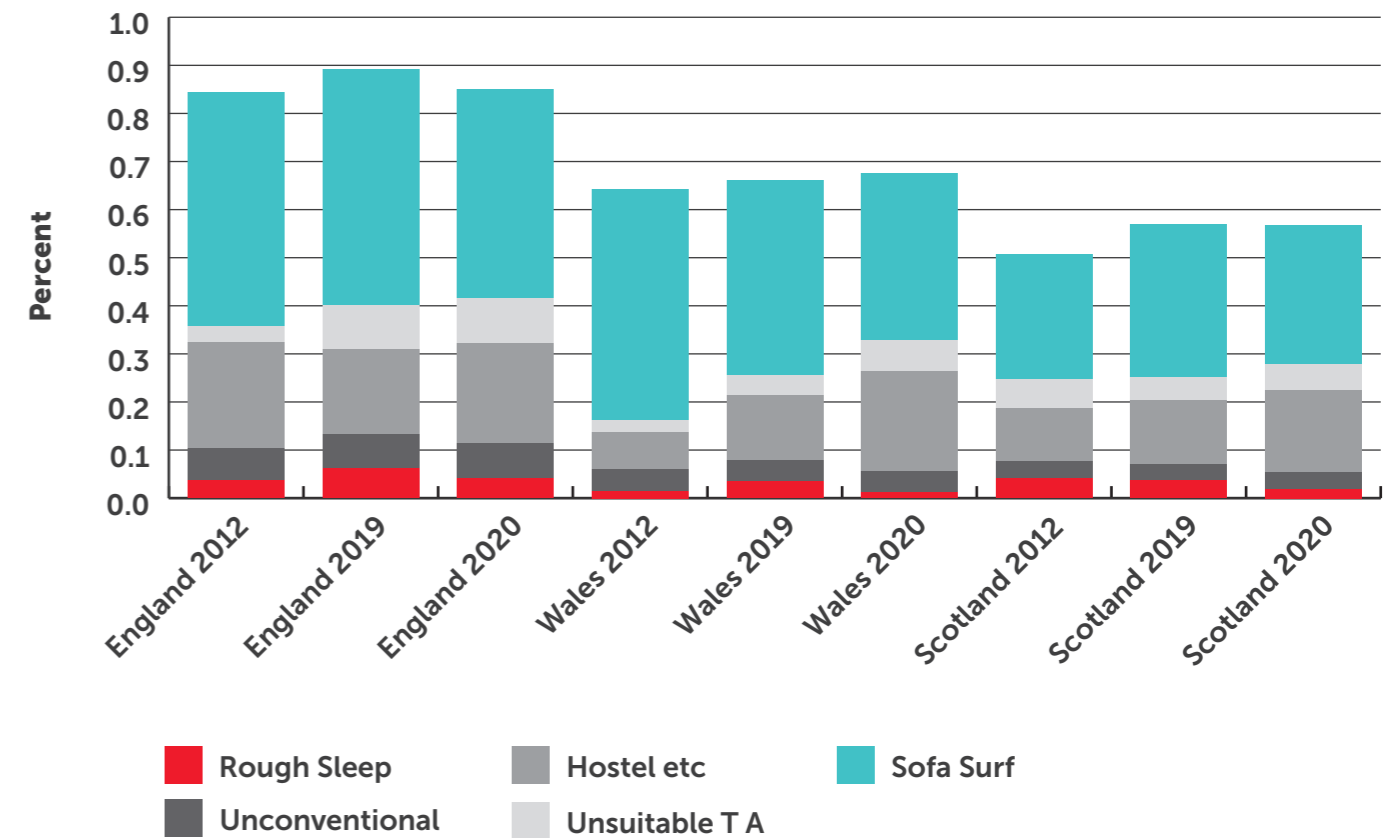
Figure 5.1 shows the scale of core homelessness in the three countries for three years, 2012, 2019 and 2020, broken down into its five main components, all expressed as a percentage of the households present in each country in each year. This shows clearly that England

has markedly higher levels of core homelessness than either Wales or Scotland, with Scotland the lowest of the three countries in each year. Based on background research²⁷³ as well as the modelling underlying the projections work,²⁷⁴ the principal causes of these differences appear to lie in:

- the different housing market pressures in the three countries (highest in England),
- the incidence of poverty and other deprivations (relatively high in Wales),

272 For the purposes of these core homeless estimates and projections, 'Everyone In' accommodation in hotels and its legacy is treated as being part of 'hostels, etc.' Data for 2020 have been adjusted to reflect the fact that some of it was recorded by LAs as 'B&B' (part of 'unsuitable TA').
 273 In particular Bramley, G. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) 'Homelessness in the UK: Who is Most at Risk?' *Housing Studies*, 33(1), 96-116 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957> and accumulated insights from the Crisis Homelessness Monitor series <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/>
 274 See Appendix 1 and Technical Reports on projections for England and Scotland-Wales: Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections. Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/fex5-jg80> and Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections for Scotland and Wales*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University [10.17861/5bs8-jd60 https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/51616567/CoreHomelessnessProjections2021_TechReport_ScWa2_002_.pdf](https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/51616567/CoreHomelessnessProjections2021_TechReport_ScWa2_002_.pdf)

Figure 5.1: The level and composition of core homelessness by country, 2012, 2019 and 2020 (% of households)



Source: Authors' estimates of core homelessness.

- and differences in social housing supply (larger in Scotland) and homelessness policies (more inclusive in Scotland).

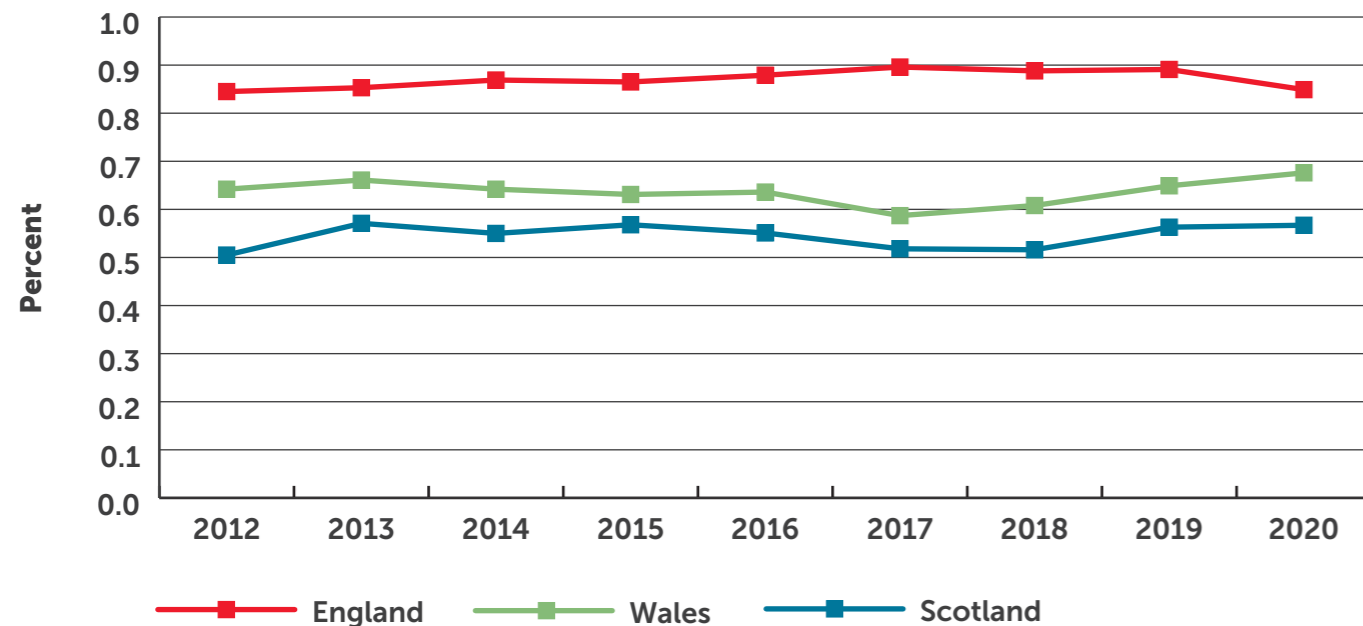
In all three countries, rough sleeping and unconventional accommodation represent a small proportion of core homelessness; hostels etc. a medium-to-large share, and sofa surfing the largest overall proportion of core homeless households at a point in time. Individuals/households may and often do experience several different forms of homelessness over a short or longer period of time. The form of core homelessness which tends to vary most over time and space is 'unsuitable temporary accommodation'; this is illustrated here by the sharp upward movement

in this category for England and Wales between 2012 and 2019 and on into 2020.

It should be noted that 2020 (fiscal year) was the year most strongly impacted by COVID-19, including response mechanisms involving special additional self-contained TA or hotel type accommodation (mainly classified here under hostels, etc.), and this largely accounts for the rises observed in this category, particularly in Wales from an initially low level.

Rates of rough sleeping were particularly low in Wales in 2012 and 2020, although the estimate for 2019 is rather higher. In England and Scotland rates were similar to each other in 2012 (marginally higher in Scotland),

Figure 5.2: The overall level of core homelessness by country, annually 2012-2020 (% of households)



Source: As Figure 5.1.

but while Scotland has seen significant falls since then, rates were higher in England in 2020 than in 2012 despite the initially beneficial impacts of the Everyone In initiative.

Sofa surfing remains the largest single category of core homelessness across all GB countries. Rates rose between 2012 and 2019 in England and Scotland, while falling somewhat in Wales. They then actually fell noticeably in all three countries between 2019 and 2020, essentially because some of the special provision in hotels etc was allocated to sofa surfers because they were deemed at risk of rough sleeping or because their existing precarious accommodation was no longer available under COVID-19 lockdown conditions.

Figure 5.2 summarises annual changes in overall core homelessness rates in the three countries. The general story was one of gradual rises in England

up to around 2017, plateauing to 2019, then dropping noticeably in 2020 thanks to the impacts of the Everyone In initiative and some drop in homelessness demand from private tenancy evictions. For both Wales and Scotland, the picture was more one of reducing core homelessness rates from 2013 to 2017, followed by some rise to 2019 and a continued slight rise in the COVID-19 year itself. The effects of special measures in reducing rough sleeping and sofa surfing were not enough to offset other factors (e.g. employment disruption and destitution) contributing to a net increase in both countries in 2020.

Across the whole period, core homelessness was markedly higher (relative to household population) in England than in either of the other two countries, and this difference was still present in 2020 despite the relatively larger impact of COVID-19 response measures in England.

5.4 Homelessness projections

In this section we present a forecasting model to examine future scenarios for the evolution of core homelessness.²⁷⁵

The primary aim of these projections is to highlight the likely efficacy of different policy scenarios aimed at homelessness reduction, but also to alert stakeholders to the challenges which may lie ahead in addressing homelessness. Details on the approach to modelling can be found in Appendix A as well as past country specific editions of the Monitor. This chapter presents and compares sets of future scenarios looking at the medium (2-5 years) and longer (10-20 years) term for the three countries. These scenarios mainly differ in respect of policies and provisions made by Westminster and devolved governments.

The homelessness impacts of the COVID-19 emergency, and initial responses to it, are baked into the base year (2020) of the model, and the forecasts for the immediately following years. The pandemic led to an unprecedented economic contraction and associated social impacts (including increased poverty and destitution for some groups), despite exceptional Westminster government mitigation measures. The modelling takes account of these effects in a number of ways, including for example by factoring in the massive spike in UC claims associated with the pandemic. In the application of the model presented here, we mainly follow a central set of assumptions about future economic prospects across GB (see appendix A for further details) except in relation to one scenario focused on regional 'levelling up'. Future national population trends are consistent with Office for National Statistics projections,²⁷⁶ with the sub-

regional distribution of that population predicted within the model.

Baseline projections: carrying on as we are

The homelessness projections model is primarily intended as a tool to assess how much impact different policy changes would be likely to have on core homelessness numbers. In order to do this, it is necessary to make a baseline forecast of what level of core homelessness would be without any policy changes, that is 'business as usual' or 'carrying on as we are'. Such a forecast may also be of value when planning future services and budgets.

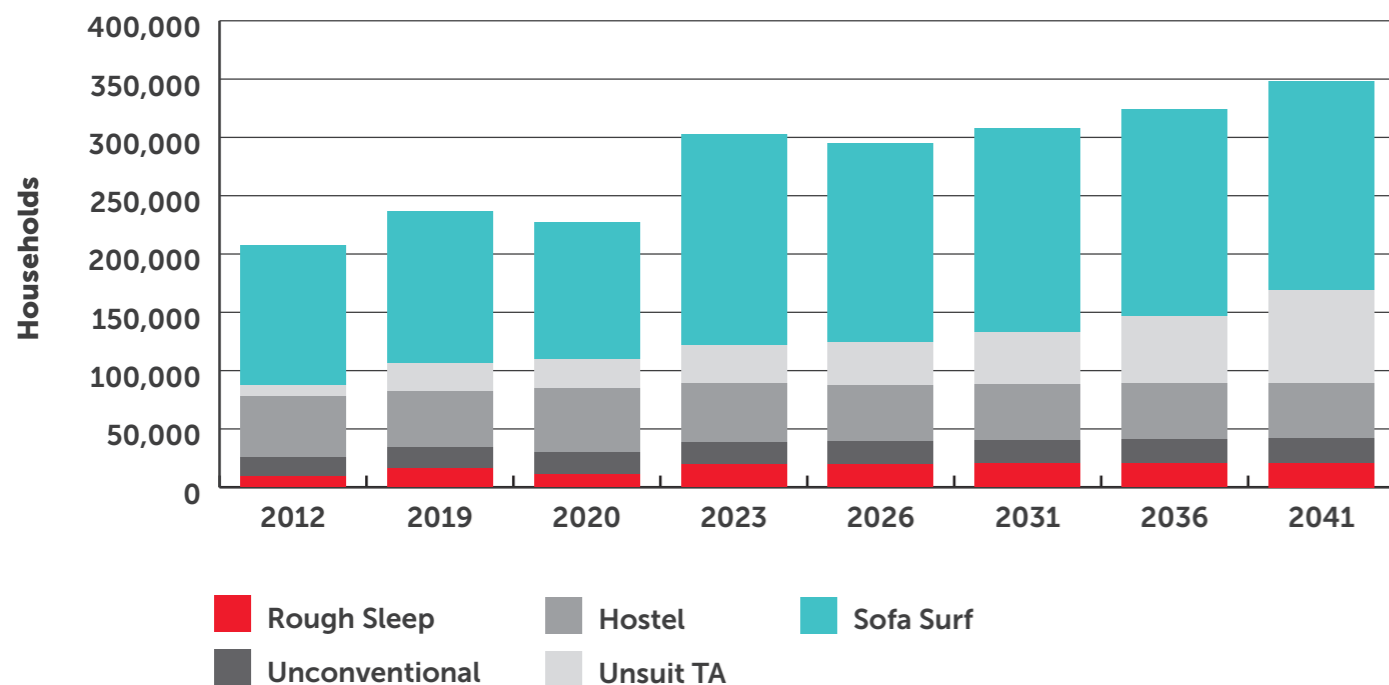
Figure 5.3 shows our resulting new 'with-COVID-19' baseline estimates and projections by category for key years, for Great Britain as a whole. It is obviously of particular interest to focus on 2020, the first year of the crisis and special measures. For the following period, we show 2023 as a representative year, then 2026 and five yearly intervals thereafter. Figure 5.4 shows the forecast numbers expressed as a percentage of households in each country.

As documented in Chapter 3, the UK Government's key economic measures in 2020 served to insulate many workers and households from the worst effects of the COVID-19 lockdown and the large reduction in GDP resulting. Taken in conjunction with Everyone In, and equivalent measures in Wales and Scotland, this meant that in 2020 core homelessness in general and rough sleeping specifically, as well as sofa surfing, were reduced somewhat compared with 2019. This is consistent with trends in statutory homelessness measures associated with the pandemic and crisis response, and discussed in Chapter 4.

²⁷⁵ Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf

²⁷⁶ This refers to demographic projections available at the time the homelessness projections were developed, during 2021, and predate any availability of data from the 2021 Census.

Figure 5.3: Projected core homelessness by category in Great Britain, 2012-2041 (number of households)



Source: Authors' baseline projection of core homelessness.

The adverse economic and social impacts of COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns and economic disruptions are expected to continue to affect many households over the immediately following years, particularly as most of the special support measures have been withdrawn. These economic problems have been exacerbated to some degree by Brexit and subsequently by an escalating cost of living crisis, partly associated with the war in Ukraine and partly by world-wide supply chain disruption.²⁷⁷ As a result, the model predicts quite a spike in some elements of core homelessness over these few years, assuming no further policy measures were put in place.

²⁷⁷ The adverse economic prospects for 2022-23 are documented in forecasts from OBR (Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2022*. London: OBR https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/CCS0222366764-001_OBR-EFO-March-2022_Web-Accessible-2.pdf) and NIESR (National Institute of Economic and Social Research (2022) 'Sailing in Treacherous Seas'. NIESR. 22 May. Online: NIESR. <https://www.niesr.ac.uk/publications/sailing-treacherous-seas?type=uk-economic-outlook>). While these prospects have deteriorated since these projections were made during late 2021 and early 2022, the extent of Government countermeasures remains unclear at the time of writing.

Most elements of core homelessness and the total are predicted to be still significantly above 2020 levels and pre-COVID-19 levels in 2023 (financial year). This applies to rough sleeping, unsuitable TA, and sofa surfing. Overall GB-wide core homelessness in 2023-4 is projected to be one-third higher than 2019 levels under this scenario. To the extent that the UK government or devolved administrations took additional measures, these adverse outcomes could be mitigated, as illustrated below.

As Figure 5.3 indicates, for GB as a whole, the dominant influence on growth after 2026 would be unsuitable TA, although there would

be modest rises in rough sleeping, unconventional accommodation and sofa surfing. Unsuitable TA includes Bed and Breakfast but also 'out of area placements', which tend to be a particular feature of London. This ties in with the broad regional projections, which show the growth after 2026 mainly concentrated in London.²⁷⁸

The largest increase in absolute numerical terms would be in sofa surfing, although in proportional terms the forecast rise in rough sleeping is particularly steep. Drivers of these increases include changes in employment(-)/unemployment(+), real incomes, poverty, house prices and rents, and expected reduced rates of social lettings as well as the ending of the evictions moratorium in the private rented sector. It should be noted that our projection follows official Office for Budget Responsibility and related economic forecasts in the short term. Direct evidence of some of these short term trends is already apparent in early 2022, including a spike in house prices,²⁷⁹ rises in rents,²⁸⁰ high inflation reducing real incomes,²⁸¹ continuing high levels of claiming of UC, and rising demand at food banks (as also reviewed in Chapter 3).

It should also be underlined that, in the case of LHA, we are not following the UK Government's apparent policy of cash freeze, because this would be demonstrably unsustainable in the medium to longer term in the sense that it would see core homelessness

rise exponentially over time.²⁸² We instead index LHA rates with CPI. The prospect of significant rises in core homelessness, as the UK Government appears to seek a return to 'business as usual' in most areas of mainstream policy (notable welfare), urges consideration of a range of policy measures to counter this, as considered below.

Figure 5.4 shows that this baseline scenario generates divergent trajectories in the three GB countries, when we look at rates relative to household populations. The sharp upward movement after 2020 is much more apparent for England than for either Wales or Scotland. Furthermore, both Wales and Scotland show a gentle downward trend after 2023, which is somewhat more pronounced for Wales, which converges down towards the lower Scottish level. This contrasts sharply with England, which shows core homelessness rising after 2026, reflecting recent and projected housing market pressures.

5.5 Projected policy impacts

We now move on to present the findings from the use of the projection model to estimate the scale of impact of different policies in terms of reductions in core homelessness in the short and longer term.

²⁷⁸ See Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022/S.5.4>, Figures 5.4 and 5.9

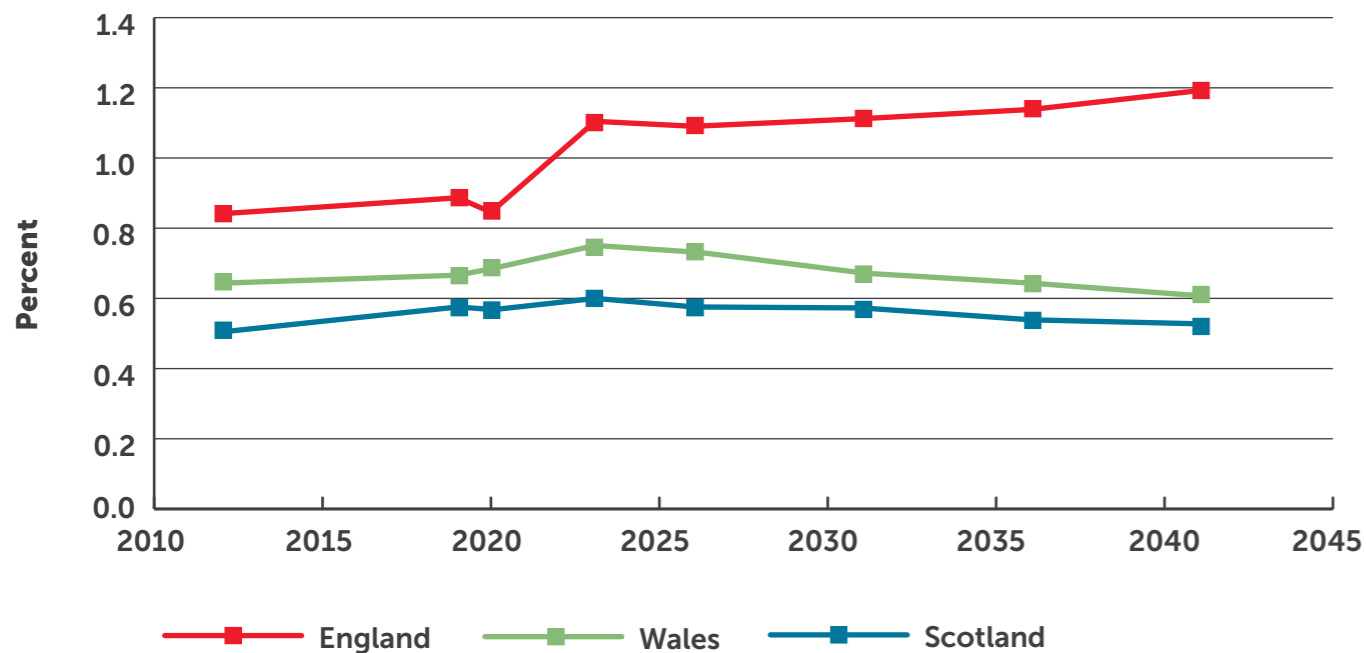
²⁷⁹ See Nationwide Building Society (2021) *Nationwide House Price Index* December 2021 www.nationwide.co.uk/hpi. Headline: '2021 was the strongest calendar year for house price growth since 2006'

²⁸⁰ In an item by Lucie Heath ('How rent inflation is making housing even less affordable', *Inside Housing*, April 2022, p.17) official rent data are quoted showing a rise of 2.3% in market rents across UK, and 3.2% outside London, the largest annual increase recorded since this dataset started in 2010.

²⁸¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) *Inflation leaves low income families grappling with impossible choices*. Online: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/inflation-leaves-low-income-families-grappling-impossible-choices>; Bell, T. (2022) 'Inflation will hit low and middle income families hardest.' Resolution Foundation. 23 February. Online: *Resolution Foundation*. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/comment/inflation-will-hit-low-and-middle-income-families-hardest/>

²⁸² Testing fixed LHA rates in money terms suggested core homelessness would rise by 39% in four years, 67% in six years and 114% in 11 years.

Figure 5.4: Projected core homelessness rates by country in Great Britain, 2012-2041 (% of households)



Source: Authors' baseline projection of core homelessness.

Policy packages

Looking forward, nine variant policy packages were tested by running the projection model forward over twenty years with each policy in place. These policy options are characterised as follows:

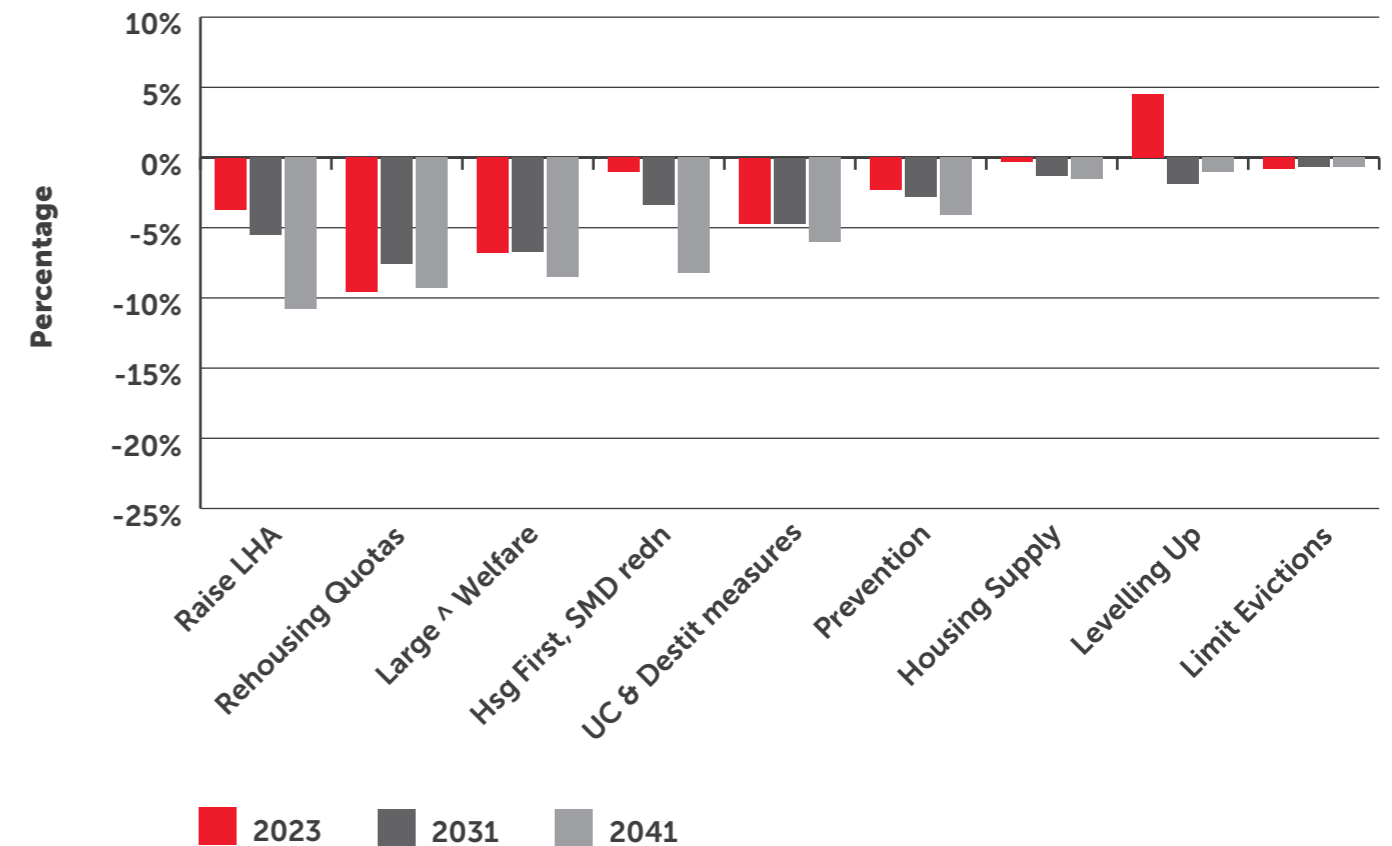
- Raise LHA to level of median rent, and index to rents
- Limit private rented sector evictions
- Maximised prevention
- Rehousing quotas for core homeless (in England, up to 20% of net social lettings)
- UC measures to reduce destitution (including reinstatement of £20 per week enhancement to personal allowance)
- Larger scale Housing First rollout

- Increased social housing supply (in the case of Wales and Scotland over and above current targets)
- 'Levelling up' of regional economic performance

These policy options are described in more detail in Appendix 1, Table A.1.3. The results are mainly reported in terms of net differences in core homelessness numbers from the baseline which, as described above, reflects 'business as usual' plus the impact and aftermath of COVID-19. In general, the scale of each policy change/intervention is pitched at a level which we judge to be towards the upper end of its feasible or justifiable scope.

While there is broad similarity in their projected implementation across the three countries, there are some detailed differences, for example in the implementation of Prevention,

Figure 5.5: Summary of impact in England of policies considered individually by selected year, ranked by size of impact by 2041 (% of with-COVID-19 baseline core homeless forecast)



Source: Authors' projections' of core homelessness.

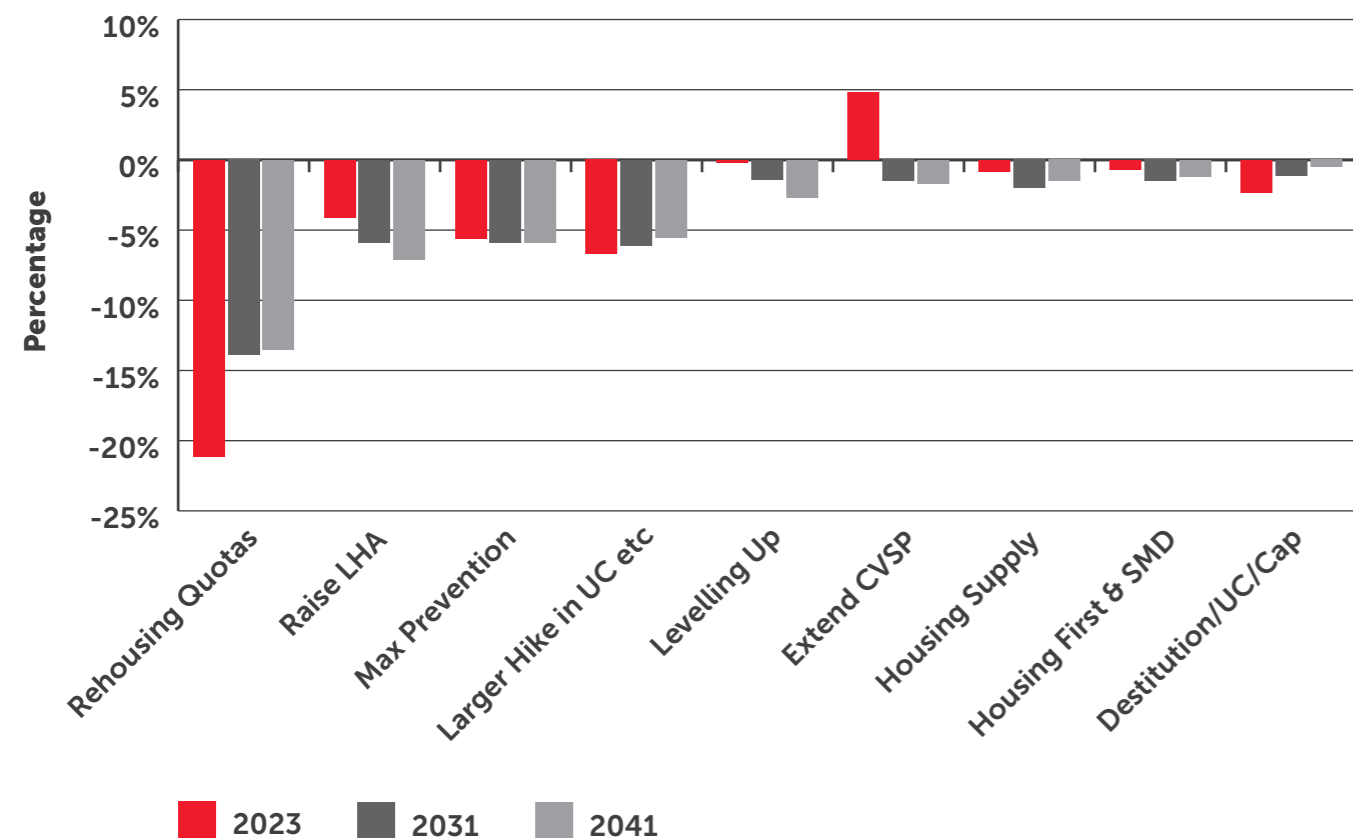
Note: vertical scale of this Figure set to same range as following figures

Housing First, Housing Supply, and 'levelling up' scenarios, reflecting relevant differences in the GB country contexts and differential pursuit of these policy options to date (see chapter 2). One policy, ending the use of Unsuitable TA, is only tested in Scotland, because this is not an immediate or active prospect in the other countries, and would almost certainly not be feasible in the short term. Policies to limit private rental evictions proved difficult to model, and are only exemplified for England. Some policies under discussion, for example relating to homelessness legislation around Priority Need and other legal categories, or relating for example to social sector evictions, have not been modelled pending clarification on their

precise nature and/or availability of suitable data.

We start with a comparison of the proportional impact of each policy on core homelessness in each country, drawing out commonalities between the countries and some differences arising from varying contexts. We then highlight the ways distinct forms of core homelessness are influenced, more or less, by different measures. We also show how the overall impacts stack up as additional policies (typically more costly, longer term measures) build up and add to the impact of policies which could represent relatively early wins.

Figure 5.6: Summary of impact in Wales of policies considered individually by selected year, ranked by size of impact by 2041 (% of with-COVID-19 baseline core homeless forecast)



Source: 'Authors' projections' of core homelessness.

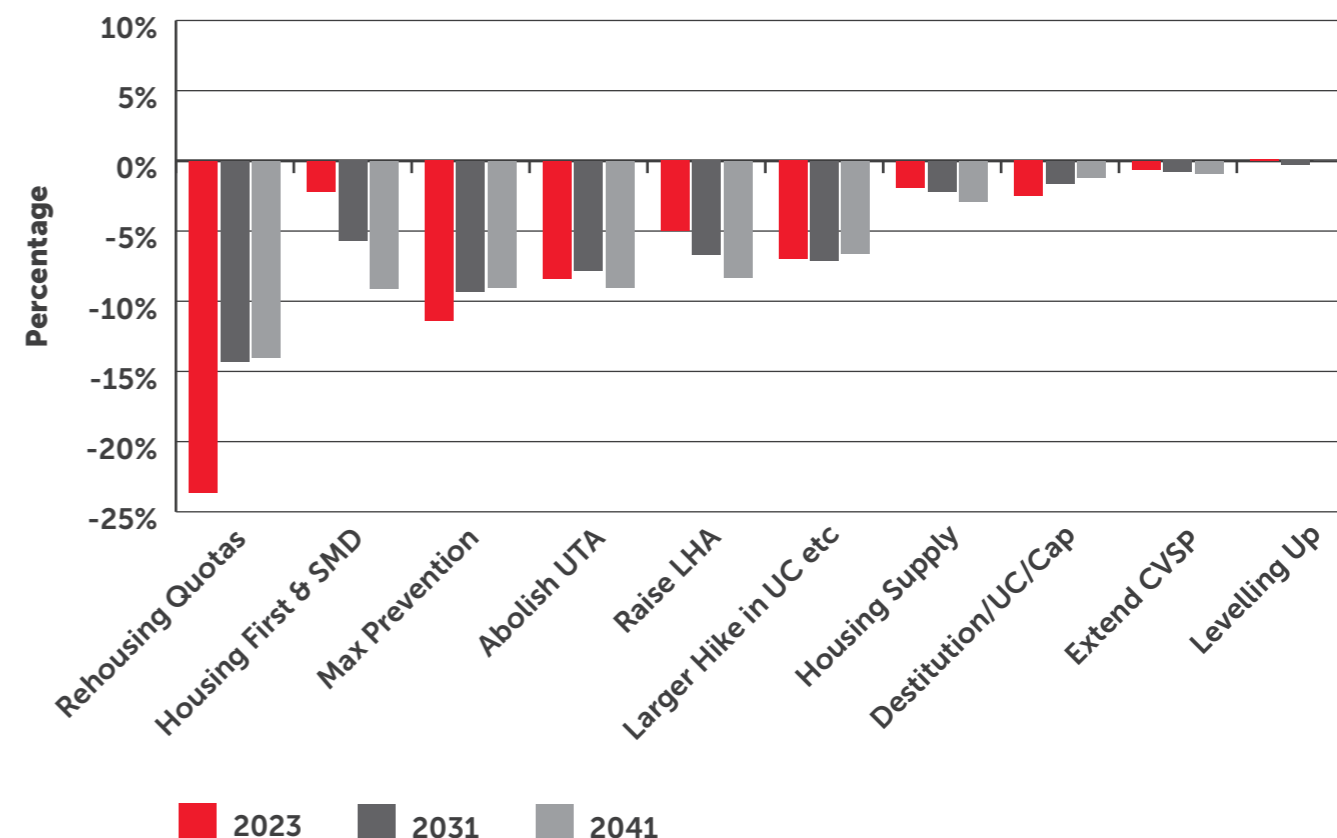
Figures 5.5 to 5.7 show the proportional (percentage) reductions in core homelessness associated with each of the nine policies (ten in Scotland) considered separately, for each of the three countries, for three points in time representing the shorter, medium and longer term.

The vertical scales on these charts are the same but the unit of measurement is percentage reduction in core homelessness relative to baseline. It should be remembered that the baseline level of core homelessness (relative to household population) is markedly higher in England, and lowest in Scotland, so a given absolute impact may show up as a smaller percentage for England, as for example in the case of rehousing quotas.

Although there is broad similarity across the countries in the relative scale of impact of different policies, there are some differences in the ranking. In England, taking the longer (20 year view) the largest policy impact would come from raising the LHA sufficiently to remove gaps between market and LHA-subsidised private rents. This policy is only ranked 5th in Scotland and 2nd in Wales. It is mainly in London and the South that the gaps between market rents and LHA levels are a particularly serious problem.

Direct rehousing quotas are by a wide margin the most impactful policies in Wales and Scotland, and they kick in very early in time as well, assuming prompt implementation and compliance. They are also quite

Figure 5.7: Summary of impact in Scotland of policies considered individually by selected year, ranked by size of impact by 2041 (% of with-COVID-19 baseline core homeless forecast)



Source: Authors' projections of core homelessness.

significant in England, ranked second, although the proportional benefit is less. The difference reflects the fact that the social lettings supply in Scotland is much greater and that in Wales the level of lettings to homeless hitherto has been relatively low.²⁸³

The next most important policy package in England is that involving a large hike in working age welfare benefit allowances and specific changes in UC and other benefits to avoid the worst destitution-inducing features, for example the 5-week wait for UC. This seems to have a bigger impact in England than in the other two countries, suggesting that poverty and destitution factors play a bigger

role in generating homelessness there currently. Indeed, the part of the package relating to the destitution-inducing features, has a relatively large impact in England, even when not accompanied by the very large hike in allowances.

A package involving maximal rollout of Housing First with associated support and rehab services is the fourth most impactful policy in England, while ranking second in Scotland (where complex needs feature particularly strongly in homelessness), but featuring rather lower down the impact order in Wales where the need/scope appears to be smaller.

²⁸³ That said, as noted in the last Homelessness Monitor Wales (2021), there is widespread criticism of the official social housing lettings data in Wales on the grounds that the basis on which they are compiled had failed to be updated to take account of changes in the homelessness legislation post the passage of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Maximising the scope and reach of prevention services is moderately important in all three countries, but in relative terms the scope and impact seems to be greatest in Scotland, and relatively a bit less in England. This reflects a lack of emphasis on prevention in Scotland over recent years, following the falling away of a more assertive implementation of a Housing Options approach in the 2010s²⁸⁴ and the absence of robust prevention duties on LAs and other public bodies as introduced in Wales and England,²⁸⁵ although there has been a recent government consultation on proposed legal changes in Scotland arising from the work of the Prevention Review Group, a panel convened by Crisis at the invitation of the Scottish Government (see Chapter 2).

Additional social rented housing supply is shown to have a moderately positive impact on core homelessness in the medium to longer term in each country, but the scale of this is not as great as might be expected. Moreover, the scale of impact is conditional on new supply being targeted on areas of greatest need or shortfall. The wider modelling shows that social housing supply does have substantial beneficial impacts on housing affordability, reduction in wider forms of housing need, improved prospects for households in need, as well as on reducing overall TA and unsuitable TA numbers substantially. However, secondary demographic effects on migration and household formation can affect the overall outcome in some regions, particularly London. Considering evidence from the Homelessness Monitors research in the round, we consider that a key part of the role of housing supply

may be to enable the implementation of other effective policies, notably rehousing quotas and Housing First, both in terms of local political decision making and in terms of diversifying the available supply in terms of size, type, and location.

Changing relative economic growth rates to narrow regional differences, i.e. pursuing 'levelling up' policies across GB, does appear to have some effects on core homelessness, although these may be complex and vary over time. The results reported here suggest that the impacts would be (i) initially perverse, becoming modestly positive later in England, (ii) modestly positive for Wales after 2030, (iv) negligible for Scotland. The apparent worsening in the early years may reflect initial impacts on housing prices and rents, for given levels of housing supply (not included as part of this scenario). Wales has experienced particularly lagging economic performance in recent years and could be expected to gain from inclusion in an effective 'levelling up' strategy, whereas Scotland's economic performance has been generally closer to the UK average.

We were only able to test limiting evictions for England, where the effect on core homelessness appeared to be relatively small. While this test may well not fully capture the potential of this policy, it also appears to be more relevant in the context of reducing statutory homeless applications particularly for families living in private renting.

Differential effects on different components of homelessness

The effects described above combine the impacts on the different elements

of core homelessness overall, but in practice different policies have markedly different impacts on different categories of core homelessness, and indeed on wider homeless measures. These differential effects are explored in some detail in the Homelessness Monitor reports for each country. Here we synthesise some key messages from these country specific analyses.

First, *rough sleeping* is susceptible to influence from a wide range of factors, even in the relatively short term, with the strongest impacts in England associated with welfare benefit measures to tackle destitution, and rehousing quotas, with Housing First building up over time. By pursuing a suite of measures, our analysis suggests that it is potentially feasible to reduce rough sleeping by around two-thirds within a few years in England. In Scotland, the strongest early measures would be rehousing quotas, extending COVID-19 special provision, maximised prevention, followed by benefit measures. In Wales, the strongest early measures would also be extending COVID-19 special provision, rehousing quotas, the welfare measures, followed by prevention. In both countries such measures could reduce rough sleeping by 55-75% within the next four years, relative to baseline projection.

Second, core homelessness associated with the use of *unconventional accommodation* appears to be less easy to reduce, but this may be because of the limited evidence we have on this form of acute homelessness and its specific drivers.

Third, the scale of *hostel, etc.* use is treated in our modelling as supply- and policy-determined, but we see the main scope for reducing such congregate emergency accommodation numbers as arising from longer term strategies involving Housing First and associated support and rehabilitation services. While conservatively estimated at a 16% reduction in England by

2041 (alongside reductions in other categories of core homelessness affected by this policy), a more bullish 22% by 2031 and 41% by 2041 look achievable in Scotland. For Wales the 2031 figure would be 15%, but this could reach 46% by 2041. Both Wales and Scotland have to first overcome the increase in such accommodation associated with extending COVID-19 special provision.

Fourth, *unsuitable TA* is another category which is susceptible to significant impacts from most of the policy measures considered, including raising the LHA, housing supply, Housing First, and prevention, as well as rehousing quotas and welfare measures. It is potentially feasible to reduce this form of core homelessness by half in England over four years. In Scotland it is intended and feasible to effectively 'abolish' this form of accommodation. In Wales, recommended policy measures would reduce unsuitable TA by 45-50% from 2026 onwards.

Finally, *sofa surfing* accounts for the largest numbers of core homeless households, and although many policies have some impact it is difficult to reduce its scale by very large percentages. Rehousing quotas could have the biggest impact, followed by welfare benefit measures and raising LHA. In Scotland and Wales additional benefits are shown from extending special provision associated with COVID-19, maximising prevention and (for Wales), 'levelling up'.

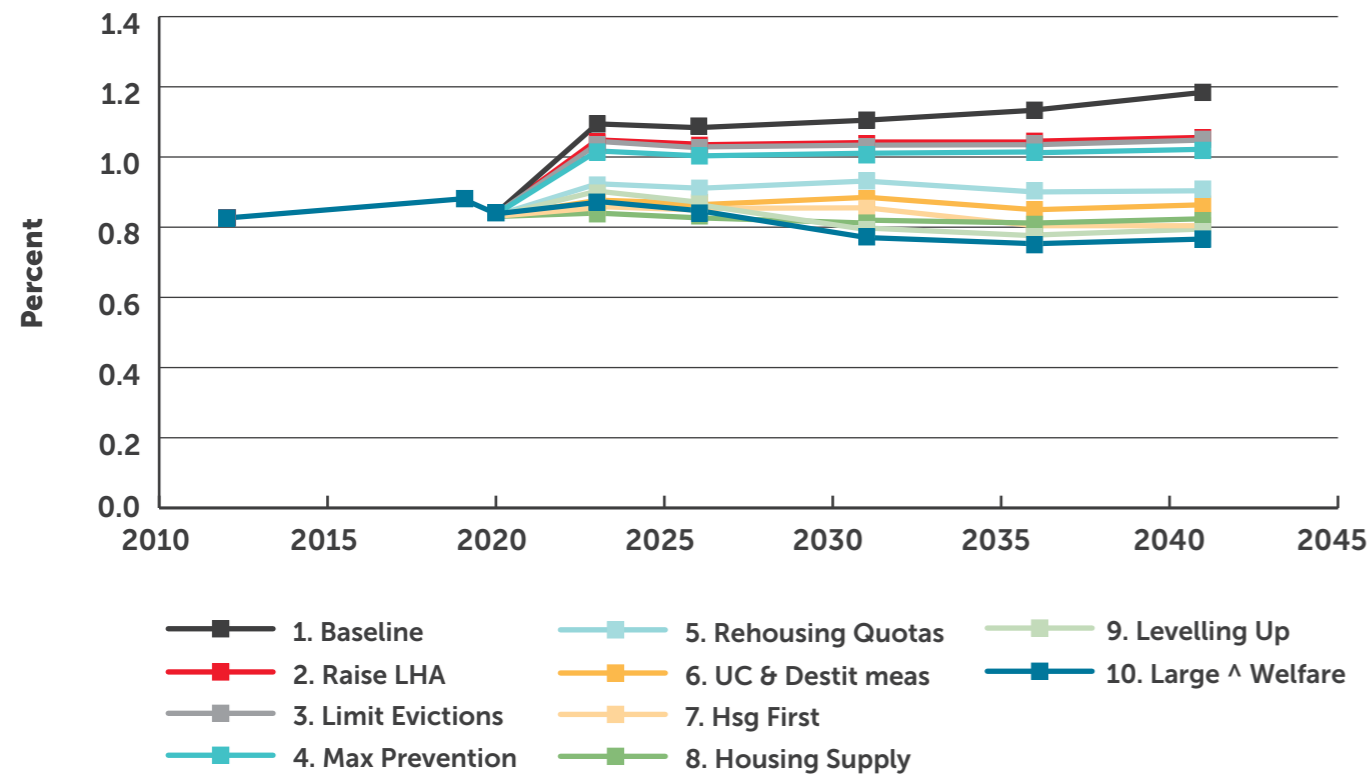
Stacking up the impacts

So far, we have looked at policy options individually, enabling us to compare their individual effectiveness, short or longer term. While that gives a fair guide to 'what works', it is not necessarily the same as what the effect would be of adding that particular policy to others already in place. Sometimes, adding a fresh policy approach may work in a synergistic way to increase the impact so that it

284 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B., Wood, J., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2019*. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/scotland/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2019/>

285 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Young, G. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2021*. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/scotland/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2021/>

Figure 5.8: Core homelessness rates predicted for England with the sequential addition of ten policy scenarios, 2012-2041 (% of households).



Source: Authors' projections of core homelessness.

is greater than the sum of its parts. However, more commonly, the more policies you add, the less they may appear to add, relative to what might have been expected from looking at them in isolation. That may be because the different policies are, to varying degrees helping the same people, and the pool of those remaining 'at risk' may be getting smaller the more policies are in place.

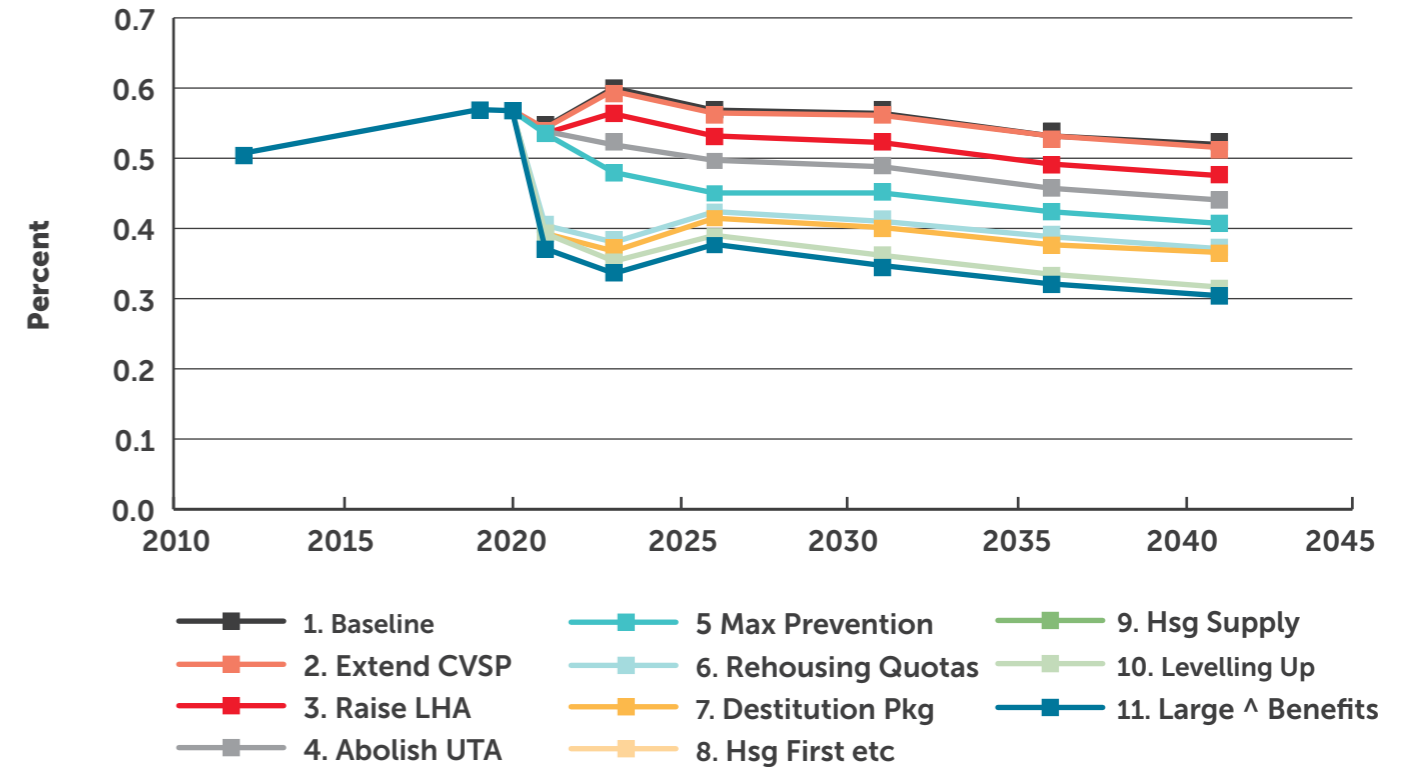
Figure 5.8 presents a picture of what the model predicts the outcome would be, in terms of total core homelessness across England as a whole, if successive policies were added, starting with some that are more straightforward to implement and working up to policies that would

be more complex and expensive and likely to take longer to implement.

The line at the top shows the combined England predicted rate of core homelessness (as % of households) under the baseline scenario, including the effects of COVID-19 around 2002-21. Introducing successive policies makes varying differences, mainly reductions, to the predicted outturn level of core homelessness. The first policy considered, raising (and appropriately indexing) the LHA makes a sizeable difference, whereas the following one (Limit Evictions) makes little additional impact.²⁸⁶ Increased prevention is the next policy, and this makes a moderate addition to the impact. Rehousing

286 The eviction scenario was only applied in England and had limited impact, while the abolition of Unsuitable TA was only implementable in Scotland.

Figure 5.9: Core homelessness rates predicted for Scotland with the sequential addition of ten policy scenarios, 2012-2041 (% of households).



Source: Authors' projections of core homelessness.

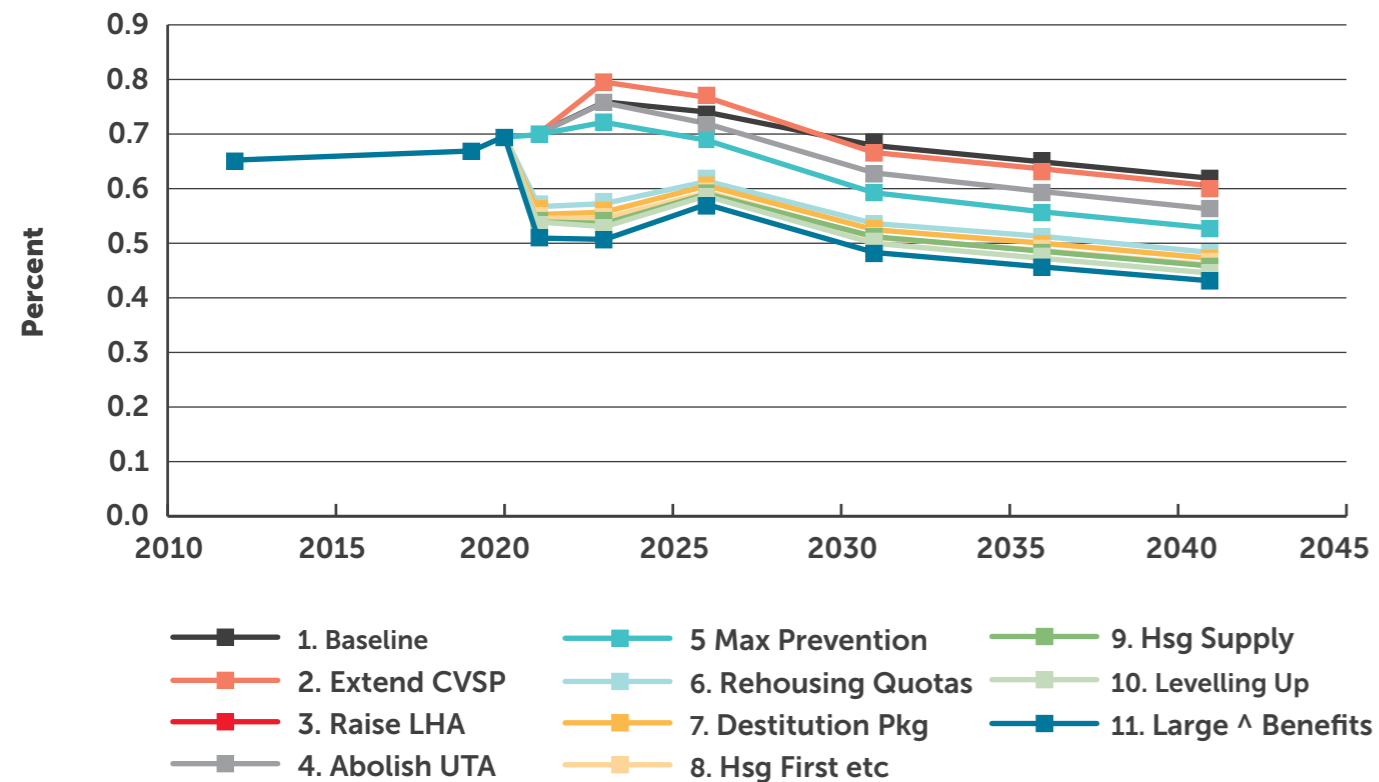
quotas are shown next, and these make the largest single contribution to the reduction of core homelessness in the stacked model. The welfare measure relating to destitution and Housing First each make useful additional contributions, the latter building up over time. Housing supply makes a similar moderate additional contribution in the period up to 2031, but weakens thereafter due to induced changes in household formation and internal migration. 'Levelling up' as operationalised in the model is associated with some increase in core homelessness in the early period, owing to housing market effects (i.e. rent increases in regions outside London and the South of England), but this turns to a more positive contribution later on. Finally, the larger hike in welfare benefit allowances makes a moderate further contribution

to reducing core homelessness in the medium to longer term.

For England this combination of policies could reduce core homelessness against baseline by 30% by 2031 and 34% in 2041. In 2031 the level would be 8% below that in 2019, so further growth is far from inevitable.

Figure 5.9 presents a similar sequential analysis of policy scenario contributions to reducing core homelessness in Scotland. There is a slight difference arising from one additional policy not tested in the other two countries, the effective abolition of Unsuitable TA. This makes a noticeable additional impact in reducing core homelessness, as does enhanced prevention, for which there is more untapped scope in Scotland. Rehousing quotas has a

Figure 5.10: Core homelessness rates predicted for Wales with the sequential addition of ten policy scenarios, 2012-2041 (% of households).



Source: Authors' projections of core homelessness.

particularly large early impact, which can be related to the current drive to implement rapid rehousing plans in Scotland. Housing First makes a growingly significant contribution over time. However, neither additional targeted housing supply nor 'levelling up' make a significant incremental contribution to reducing core homelessness, once the above policies have taken effect. The further impact of a large rise in welfare benefit rates is also quite small.

In Scotland, it appears that a combination of these measures, notably including rehousing quotas, can reduce core homelessness quite rapidly by 30-40% and maintain this improvement over the longer term (42% lower in 2041). In this scenario the level of rehousing quotas is reduced somewhat in the later period

as other policies kick in more strongly. It should perhaps be noted, however, that Scotland's greater percentage reductions represent a smaller absolute reduction in rates of core homelessness, which are markedly higher in England.

Figure 5.10 shows a similar analysis for Wales. While the pattern is somewhat similar to Scotland, thanks to a similar front-loaded approach on core homeless quotas, there is no abolition of unsuitable TA attempted in Wales. Also the additional contributions of Prevention and Housing First are rather less in Wales, the former because post-2014 Wales has already been doing more prevention, and the latter because the indicated need for Housing First in Wales is relatively less than in Scotland. The positive contributions of the welfare benefit

measures, housing supply (above existing housing targets) and 'levelling up' are all relatively marginal in this context.

Wales can achieve similar levels of reduction in core homelessness to those shown above for England, at 30% in 2041, but achieving this level of reduction earlier.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

This comparative Homelessness Monitor Great Britain has been written at a time of deepening national and global crisis. Though the United Kingdom economy has rebounded from the COVID-19-induced slump of 2020, spiralling energy, food, and other prices, seriously compounded by the war in Ukraine, are now driving a cost-of-living crisis greater than that seen for many decades. Poverty and destitution have been exacerbated by the removal of temporary measures to bolster household incomes during the pandemic, rising taxation, and the re-imposition of benefit sanctions and debt-related benefit deductions. Just as this report was being completed, the United Kingdom Government finally announced a substantial package for addressing the cost-of-living crisis, including lump sum payments to those in receipt of means-tested benefits and support with fuel bills to all householders. Nonetheless, the poorest households will be hardest hit over this coming winter, exacerbated by energy cap increases and rent rises to come.

It is in this dismal context that we reviewed progress made on addressing homelessness across the three Great Britain countries over the past five years, and in the process laid bare the extent to which England lags behind both Wales and Scotland. True, the coming into force of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 saw the introduction of a range of important new homelessness prevention and

relief duties imposed upon English local authorities. However, the breadth of this legislative turn belies a much narrower strategic approach on the part of the Westminster Government that has increasingly concentrated policy and funding activity on rough sleeping. Moreover, a large-scale longitudinal study recently published by Crisis demonstrates that, though the 2017 legislation has opened up access to support for significantly more people facing homelessness, the continuing existence of the priority need criterion that limits rehousing rights, and the overwhelming nature of the housing supply and affordability pressures faced by many English local authorities, restricts the effectiveness of this progressive legislation. While responses to rough sleeping were impressive across all three GB administrations in the early stages of the pandemic, a fissure has since opened up between Scotland and Wales on one hand, where improved protection of people with No Recourse to Public Funds, and moves to permanently close communal night shelters, seem to be holding up, and England, where these COVID-19-related, public health-inspired gains now seem to be unravelling.

Homelessness policy and law in Wales, which lacked primary law-making powers until 2011, has historically tracked that of England. However, with the passing of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which extended material assistance to single

homeless people and re-orientated statutory interventions towards a more preventative focus, Wales stole the march on its much larger neighbour, providing the model for the later 2017 English legislation. More recently, both Wales and Scotland have established expert groups charged with devising recommendations to 'end homelessness' in their respective jurisdictions, with a strong emphasis on Rapid Rehousing approaches and, within that, Housing First interventions for those with the most complex support needs. Scotland completed the process for abolishing the priority need criterion a decade ago, and since then all unintentionally homeless households have been entitled to be secured settled housing by a relevant local authority. Wales now seems set to follow a similar, progressive path, in a move now widely supported by local key stakeholders, and given significant momentum by the effective 'suspension' of the priority need test during the pandemic.

Scotland has also been the most progressive of the three Great Britain countries in restricting local authorities' use of certain forms of temporary accommodation (such as Bed and Breakfast), following the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order - previously applied only to families with children - to all household types in Autumn 2021. On the other hand, it has been slowest amongst the three jurisdictions to consider strengthening its statutory homelessness prevention measures. However, the Scottish Government consulted early in 2022 on proposals to introduce wider public sector homelessness prevention duties that go much further than the referral and cooperation duties that currently pertain in England and Wales, alongside changes to homelessness legislation to incentivise prevention within a six month period.

The policy context in Scotland is also significantly more benign than that in England, and even than that in Wales, in other respects relevant

to homelessness. Most notably, it has a social rented housing sector that is substantially larger, relative to population size, than either of the other two Great Britain jurisdictions, and Scottish social landlords allocate a higher proportion of the available lettings to those accepted as homeless, with the Rapid Rehousing agenda reinforcing this relative generosity. Furthermore, Scottish Government per capita expenditure on Local Welfare Assistance and Discretionary Housing Payments - so crucial in preventing both homelessness and destitution - have attained much higher levels than elsewhere in Great Britain. In part this reflects the Scottish Government's decision to fully mitigate the 'Bedroom Tax'.

In contrast, recent cuts in Discretionary Housing Payments allocations in England and Wales means that many more households are at risk of homelessness, while the very existence of Local Welfare Assistance schemes in much of England remains uncertain, albeit with a recent temporary boost as part of the cost-of-living package. In its retention of the national Discretionary Assistance Fund scheme, Wales enjoys a significant advantage over England. Another area where Wales does much better than both Scotland and England is the relatively much stronger protection given to its housing-related support funding ('Supporting People'), which retains the 'ring-fenced' status long since abandoned elsewhere in Great Britain; a move which presaged massive cuts, especially in England.

At first glance official homelessness statistics may appear to paint a very different picture to that suggested by this comparative policy analysis, with markedly higher rates of both statutory homelessness acceptances and temporary accommodation placements in Scotland than in the other two jurisdictions. However, to infer from this that Scotland has poorer outcomes on homelessness than elsewhere in Great Britain would be grossly unfair, as demonstrated by our

core homelessness analysis, with these statistical patterns mainly reflecting the greater inclusiveness of the Scottish statutory homelessness system. That said, stubbornly high rates of temporary accommodation use in Scotland is a well-founded concern that has, in large part, prompted the move to the Rapid Rehousing approach noted above.

Temporary accommodation placements involving families with children are notably higher in England than in either of the other two countries and, though accounting for only a small proportion of all placements, the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels has grown substantially in England over the past decade, while usage has remained comparatively low and stable in Wales and Scotland. At the same time, the costs of temporary accommodation have mounted in England, while expenditure on support, administration and prevention have been progressively squeezed down; a spending profile that flies in the face of the early intervention aims and philosophy of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Moreover, precipitated by contracting social housing availability, and a growing gap between Local Housing Allowance rates and actual market rents, temporary accommodation placements are forecast to almost double in England over the next twenty years, while rates in Wales and Scotland will be stable or slightly falling. Unless arrested, these projected trends will continue to ratchet up the pressure on English local authority homelessness budgets, skewing expenditure yet further away from pro-active support for preventative interventions, towards the mere servicing of crisis accommodation costs.

Our 'core' homelessness analysis, focussed on the most extreme and immediate forms of homelessness, strongly corroborates this picture of relative English disadvantage. Levels of core homelessness are

consistently higher in England than in either of the other two jurisdictions, with Scotland having the lowest rate of core homelessness relative to household population. Moreover, the numbers of core homeless households are projected to grow further in England, particularly in London, unless policy steps are taken to correct this negative direction of travel. Statistical modelling indicates that the most effective policy interventions in reducing core homelessness in all three countries are quotas for rehousing core homeless groups in social housing, increasing the Local Housing Allowance rate, raising the level of Universal Credit payments, and improving the benefit in other ways, expanding the availability of Housing First and associated support measures, and maximising the use of prevention tools by local authorities. Such policies in concert could reduce total core homelessness by 35% in England and Wales, and by 42% in Scotland.

This statistical forecasting analysis reinforces key messages that have been evident right from the start of the Monitor series: homelessness is *not* inevitable or unpredictable, policy *does* matter (and matters more directly than the broader economic context), targeted interventions *can* work even for those with the most complex support needs (so long as they are evidence based and implemented appropriately), and it *is* possible to reduce or even eliminate homelessness on certain measures.

Looking ahead, the Homelessness Monitor series will continue to interrogate homelessness policies, trends, and outcomes across the three Great Britain countries at least until 2026. Inspired by the insights revealed in this comparative Great Britain analysis, we also plan to conduct periodic cross-jurisdiction analysis of the type in this report with the aim of providing pointers to valuable lessons that each country can gain from policy developments and best practice elsewhere.

Appendix 1: Key informant topic guide (Great Britain 2022)

Introduction

- Explain nature and purpose of research
- Secure consent, confirm on record
- Their job title/role; how long they have been in that position/organisation
- Nature of organisation – connection with homelessness issues (main focus, part of a broader remit, which homelessness groups, etc)

Trends in homelessness

- What have been the key trends in **levels** of homelessness in past year/over winter 2021/22 and why?
 - Probe any significant trends in subgroups: single/families; rough sleeping vs. wider homelessness; NRPF/other restricted eligibility groups, etc.
- Have there been any significant changes in the **profile** of those facing homelessness over this time period or the **triggers/drivers** of homelessness?

Statutory homelessness law and implementation

- What are the key strengths/weaknesses of the statutory homelessness framework in [E/W/S] as it stands?
 - Probe: if able to comment, strengths/weaknesses relative to other GB nations; did any particular strengths/weaknesses become evident during the pandemic?
- Have LA responses to homelessness improved or weakened recently (i.e. over winter 2021/2022)? If so, in what ways/why?
 - Probe changes in ability to **prevent** homelessness over this recent period.
- What are the key strengths/weaknesses of TA responses to homelessness in [E/W/S]?
 - Probe: quality/type of accommodation, length of stay, variation by group etc.
- Are there any policy/legal developments on the horizon that may improve or weaken homelessness responses in [E/W/S]? Views on efficacy/difference they will make?

- Probe: strengths and weaknesses of proposed new prevention of homelessness duties in Scotland; review of homelessness legislation including Priority Need in Wales. What (other) legal changes would you prioritise/like to see in [E/W/S]?
- Beyond the legal framework, what are the key strengths/weaknesses of wider Government strategy on homelessness?
 - Probe: strengths/weaknesses of emphasis on **rapid rehousing** in Scotland/Wales (progress of implementation, adequacy of funding, etc); lack of rapid rehousing agenda in England; extent of **'housing-led'** policy/practice responses to homelessness; **early/non-statutory prevention** activity.
- [If appropriate] Thinking about the legislative framework and wider homelessness strategy/policy, is there anything that you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has done better than other GB jurisdictions? Do you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has anything to learn from the other GB countries?

Rough sleeping responses and Housing First

- How effective is the current response to rough sleeping in [E/W/S]? What are the key strengths/weaknesses of that response?
- To what extent have reductions in rough sleeping seen during the pandemic been sustained? Why/why not? What would most help sustain/further those reductions going forward?
 - Probe: to what extent have improved responses to those who have NRPF/ Other restricted eligibility been maintained? What will provision look like in this area in the future?
- [England only] How likely is the UK Government to achieve its target of ending rough sleeping by 2024? Probe: key barriers /enablers.
- Have we seen a return to use of night shelters (i.e. during winter 2021/22)? What trends in night shelter use to you anticipate in the future?
 - Probe: [England] aware of Scottish/Welsh Government commitments to avoid a return to night shelter provision as a response to rough sleeping? Could/would it be desirably for that to be achieved here?
- [Scotland/Wales] How likely do you think it is that Scotland/Wales will avoid a return to night shelter provision in the future? Key barriers/enablers?
- To what extent, if at all, has the pandemic prompted a shift in the use of or nature hostel-type/congregate supported accommodation?
- What are your views on the [UK/W/S] Government's support of Housing First as a response to rough sleeping among those with more complex needs?
 - Probe: sufficient/insufficient commitment and resourcing; too much/little emphasis on Housing First?

- [If appropriate] Thinking about responses to rough sleeping, is there anything that you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has done better than [other GB jurisdictions]? Do you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has anything to learn from the other GB countries?

Access to housing for homeless households

- What are the key barriers/enablers inhibiting/enabling homeless households to access appropriate and affordable settled housing in [E/W/S]?
 - Probe: welfare policy/entitlements, LA practice, private landlord practice, housing market context, access to floating support, etc.
 - Probe: variations by group (e.g. families vs. single, age, complex needs.).
- [If not already covered] Do you think homeless households are accorded sufficient priority by social housing providers in terms of housing allocations?
 - Probe: LA vs. Housing Association practice.
- To what extent does the private rented sector provide an appropriate source of accommodation to prevent or respond to homelessness in [E/W/S]?
 - Probe: [England] what difference will the proposed abolition of s.21 evictions and landlord register make? [Scotland] what difference might the 'new deal for tenants' make?
- To what extent are homeless households able to sustain settled housing after they access it? What are the key factors here?
 - Probe: affordability, support, etc.
- How effective/ineffective are current [UK/S/W Government] policies on new affordable housing supply?
 - Probe: how does this impact on homelessness responses/trends specifically.
- What impact has the removal of evictions protections had on homeless to date?
 - Probe: differences between private/social landlords; no fault, arrears or Anti-social behaviour related?
 - Probe anticipated impact from now on.
- [If appropriate] Is there anything that you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has done better than [other GB jurisdictions] in terms of ensuring access to housing for homeless households? Do you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has anything to learn from the other GB countries?

Poverty, cost of living crisis and welfare policy

- What impact, if any, have recent changes in the cost of living and trends in poverty had on homelessness in [E/W/S]? What impacts do you expect in the future?
- What are the key welfare/social security policies that are particularly helpful or counterproductive in preventing/responding to homelessness at present?
 - Probe: variation by geography/group.
 - Probe: [Scotland] To what extent do Scotland's devolved powers in relation to welfare policy/spend make a difference to homelessness responses and what is their potential to do so in the future? [Wales] To what extent if at all do Wales' devolved powers in this area (in relation to Council Tax reduction/the Discretionary Assistance Fund) make a difference to homelessness responses? What is the potential of these or extended powers in this area to do so in the future?
- [If appropriate] Is there anything that you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has done better than [other GB jurisdictions] in terms of welfare policy? Do you think [E/S/W i.e. your own jurisdiction] has anything to learn from the other GB countries?

Finishing up

- To round up, what future trends in homelessness do you anticipate over the next year or so? Probe: (if appropriate) do you expect these trends to differ across the GB nations?
- Have there been any particularly important publications on homelessness recently that we should look at?
- Anything I've missed/should have asked you about/final comments/you'd like to add?
- Thanks and close.

Appendix 2: Core homelessness estimates and projection models

Data sources for core homelessness estimates

The numbers of households experiencing core homelessness in the five main categories (as set out in Table 5.1) have been estimated using a wide range of data sources, as summarised in this Appendix, particularly Table A1.1 below. For England, no less than eleven sources were used for this purpose, with each component being based on at least four sources, and some using as many as six. Some of these sources covered Great Britain as a whole, but in some instances where sample surveys were involved these were not sufficient large to give precise estimates for Scotland and Wales. In arriving at the base period estimate for each category, different weightings were applied to different sources reflecting judgements on their reliability, coverage, and precision. With inevitable degrees of uncertainty attach to some of the numbers, we mainly relied upon a central estimate while recognising a range of uncertainty.

While some of the same sources could be used for Scotland and Wales, there were differences in the detail of the relevant administrative sources, and this particularly applied to rough sleeping. In Scotland and Wales we wanted to undertake analyses down to the LA level, so developed predictive models calibrated on the Destitution Survey linked to the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS) and then applied to relevant indicators data available for the LAs. In Scotland, the Scottish Household Survey was a valuable additional source for estimating sofa surfing.

Initial estimates focused on the period around 2019. However, time series back to 2012 were estimated, using a combination of actual annual data available in some of the data sources, and in some instances 'back projected' predictions using the predictive models established to develop the forward projections. Fuller details on the sources and methods used to estimate recent and base period core homelessness numbers are given in the relevant technical reports.²⁸⁷

As shown in the above table, it has been necessary to draw on partially differing sources to estimate core homelessness in the different countries. Nevertheless, core homelessness remains a metric which in principle does offer an objective, comparable measure, independent of eligibility policies and their implementation, focussed on the more extreme and immediate forms of homelessness.

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the numbers, directly and indirectly, but also on some of the data sources. The 'Everyone In' initiative in England and parallel exercises in Scotland and Wales led to significant movement from rough

²⁸⁷ Further detail and commentary on these sources are contained in Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections. Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. <https://doi.org/10.17861/fex5-jg80>, particularly ch.2 and Appendix A; and, Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections for Scotland and Wales*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University 10.17861/5bs8-jd60 https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/51616567/CoreHomelessnessProjections2021_TechReport_ScWa2_002_.pdf particularly chapters 2 and 5 and Appendix A.

Table A2.1: Data sources for estimates of core homelessness by country

Data Source	England	Scotland	Wales
Destitution in the UK 2019 survey of users of crisis services	Rough sleeping; unconventional accom; hostels etc; unsuitable TA	Rough sleeping; sofa surfing (via composite model with UKHLS)	Rough sleeping; sofa surfing (via composite model with UKHLS)
Public Voice retrospective survey of adult homelessness experiences, 2020	Rough sleeping; unconventional accom; hostels etc; unsuitable TA; sofa surfing	Unconventional accom	Unconventional accom
Office of National Statistics Survey of Living Conditions 2018, retrospective questions on housing difficulties	Rough sleeping; unconventional accom; hostels etc; unsuitable TA; sofa surfing		
H-CLIC administrative data on prior accommodation of homeless applicants, 2018-20;	Rough sleeping; unconventional accom; hostels etc.		
Local authority returns on households placed in TA by type	Unsuitable TA	Hostels etc; Unsuitable TA	
Local authority Rough Sleeper Counts/ estimates, augmented in London by CHAIN and supplementary LA monitoring returns, with some imputation in non-London areas	Rough sleeping		
Local authority returns to DLUHC on LA level numbers (stock and flow) in special COVID-19 hotel etc. provision under 'Everyone In', complemented by National Audit Office Report	Rough Sleeping, Hostels, etc., Sofa Surfing		
Local authority HL1 data returns on homeless applicants in Scotland		Rough sleeping	
Local Authority TA stock and flow data on T A in Scotland		Unsuitable T A	
Stats Wales data from LA aggregate count returns on homelessness and TA			Hostels etc; Unsuitable TA; limited info provided during COVID-19
Stats Wales data from LA rough sleeper counts/estimates			Rough sleeping, including during COVID-19
Homeless Link Survey of services for single homeless, 2019	Hostels, etc.		
DWP Freedom of Information dataset on HB cases in short term, emergency, or transitional accommodation, 2020 and 2021	Hostels, etc	Hostels, etc.	Hostels, etc.
DWP Freedom of Information dataset on HB cases in selected categories of TA, 2016-20 and 2021	Unsuitable TA; Hostels etc.	Unsuitable TA; Hostels etc.	Unsuitable TA, Hostels etc.
English Housing Survey data on concealed households meeting definition and temporary household members avoiding homelessness, 2017/18	Sofa surfing		
UKHLS on concealed households meeting definition, 2017/18 and earlier years	Sofa surfing	Sofa surfing	Rough sleeping, sofa surfing (partly via composite model)
Scottish Household Survey		Sofa surfing	
Labour Force Survey		Sofa Surfing	Sofa surfing

sleeping and sofa surfing as well as some communal shelters and congregate hostels into additional hotel-type accommodation, which we classify with hostels, etc. for this purpose. In net terms this led to a moderate reduction in core homelessness in 2020, particularly in England. The indirect effects of the pandemic and the lockdowns on economic activity, employment and incomes had effects working through into 2021 and later years, generally tending to increase core homelessness. The pandemic also affected homelessness data collection, with some regular statistics significantly delayed, and inconsistency in the treatment of the special provision, although some useful detailed data were provided particularly by DLUHC as shown in Table A.1.1 above.

Homelessness projection models

An integral part of the original 2017 report on core homelessness²⁸⁸ was the development and deployment of a forecasting model to examine future scenarios for the evolution of core homelessness and the potential impact of different policy options. The primary aim of these projections is to highlight the likely efficacy of different policies aimed at homelessness reduction, but also to alert stakeholders to the challenges which may lie ahead in addressing homelessness. Key numbers from the projections were used (in 2018), and could be used further, to estimate the likely costs of services addressing or responding to homelessness.

This research builds on an existing modelling framework which has been used in a number of other research studies, referred to as the Sub-Regional Housing Market Model.²⁸⁹ The model predicts levels of housing need and key homelessness numbers, for sub-regional areas in England (also Wales and Scotland), over a timescale of twenty years.

That forecasting model was comprehensively updated and refined for the Homelessness Monitor England 2021, with further refinements to some of the components of the forecasting model introduced in the 2022 edition, while input data was updated by 1-2 years in most cases.²⁹⁰ Models recalibrated using data on more recent time periods included those for total homeless applications,

288 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf

289 More information on this model was given in Appendix 3 to the 2021 Monitor: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2021/> and the longer Technical Report: Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections. Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/fex5-jg80>. See also Bramley, G. & Watkins, D. (2016) 'Housebuilding, demographic change and affordability as outcomes of local planning decisions: exploring interactions using a sub-regional model of housing markets in England', *Progress in Planning*, 104, 1-35; Bramley, G. with Leishman, C., Cosgrove, P. & Watkins, D. (2016) *What Would Make a Difference? Modelling policy scenarios for tackling poverty in the UK*. Online: Heriot-Watt University https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/10844984/Bramley_WhatWouldMakeaDifference_Report.pdf; and Bramley, G. (2018) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for low income households and homeless people. Research Report for Crisis and the National Housing Federation. Main Technical Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University. <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/housing-supply-requirements-across-great-britain-for-low-income-h>.

290 See Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections. Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/fex5-jg80> (note 17); and Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G. Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022/> Appendix 3.

total households in T A, households in unsuitable T A, rough sleeping (one of the three models used), households homeless through loss of private tenancy/eviction, and one of the models used to predict sofa surfing (from English Housing Survey).

Meanwhile in 2021 the whole basis for projecting homelessness in Scotland and Wales was upgraded and refined as part of the respective Monitors for those countries published in 2021, as described in detail in the relevant Technical Report.²⁹¹ Chapter 5 in this report presents and compares sets of future scenarios looking at the medium (2-5 years) and longer (10-20 years) term for the three countries. These scenarios mainly differ in respect of policies and provisions made by Governments, UK and devolved.

Our economic scenario assumption for the period of emergence from the pandemic are mainly based on the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts but also have regard to Treasury-published average of independent forecasts. The projection factors in the current spike in inflation and the specific events, notably the nationwide hike in house prices during 2020/21. Future economic prospects (Gross value added (GVA) and productivity growth) are modelled at sub-regional level based on a combination actual estimates for 2011-15 and model forecasts for the period to 2021 and beyond. These forecasts were provided by David Simmonds Consultancy using their DELTA Land Use and Transport Interaction model informed by Department for Transport and Experian projections. The baseline projections assume a balanced blend of national and recent/forecast sub-regional trends in overall GVA and GVA per worker. The 'levelling up' forecast is mainly weighted towards the national projection.

These economic assumptions have not explicitly factored in the additional impacts on the economy of the conflict in Ukraine and associated economic disruption, as neither these nor government responses have not been fully revealed at the time of writing. However, these events reinforce the case for adopting a relatively pessimistic baseline for the short term economic scenario.

Policy packages

Looking forward, nine variant policy packages were tested by running the projection model forward over twenty years with each policy in place. These policy options are described in more detail in Table A2.2

While there is broad similarity in their projected implementation across the three countries, there are some detailed differences reflecting relevant differences in the GB country contexts and differential pursuit of these policy options to date (see chapter 2).

Table A2.2: Policy measures tested in alternative scenarios by country

Policy Measure	England/general	Wales	Scotland
With-COVID-19 Baseline	Includes effects of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown and associated economic recession with heightened unemployment and destitution, including tapering legacy of 'Everyone In', informed by DWP Freedom of Information on TA and emergency accom to Aug '21	As England, but using specific data on emergency provision in Wales; ongoing continuance of special provision assumed as per policy	As England, but relying mainly on mainstream HL1 stats and DWP Freedom of Information data
Max Prevention	More effective prevention, raising the ratio of prevention to total cases and the proportion of prevention cases found/secured accommodation to the level of better performing authorities	Aims and methods same as Scotland, but scope for increased use of Private Rented Sector is less in Wales as already widely used	Raising proportion of applicants engaged with prevention to maximum; and (from 2023) using Private Rented Sector options and financial advice/assistance to same level as better performing English LAs.
Rehousing Quotas	Allocating up to 20% of net social lettings to core homeless households on an ongoing basis	Allocating up to 20% of net social lettings to core homeless in period 2021-25, 10% thereafter. Also, increasing share of net social lettings allocated to homeless by 70% s.t. max share of 80%	As Wales
End use of Unsuitable T A	Not proposed or modelled for England	Not proposed or modelled for Wales	From 2023 eliminate 90% of Unsuitable TA, with consequential negative impact on net available relets
Raise LHA	Raise LHA to median level in all LA areas and maintain relative level in real terms through effective indexing (vs. baseline assumption of 30th percentile 2020 indexed on CPI)	As England	As England
Limit Evictions	Legal & administrative measures to limit and delay evictions from private renting, to reduce core homelessness precipitated by eviction from the Private Rented Sector by the same order of magnitude as observed in 2020	Not tested in Wales (lack of suitable evidence to model)	Not tested in Scotland (lack of suitable evidence to model)
UC & destitution measures	Reinstate £20 per week enhancement to UC personal allowance, end 5-week wait for first UC payment, curb debt deductions from benefits, reduce Personal Independence Payment 'fails', improve Local Welfare Support and scrap Benefit Cap [2]	As England	As England
Housing First & Severe and Multiple Disadvantage reduction	Increase by 3x the level of Housing First provision, with associated increase in rehabilitation services for drug and alcohol support & offending, leading to progressive reduction in hostel etc accommodation and crime rates	Achieve a high level of Housing First and Rapid re-housing with Critical Time Interventions provision, with associated increase in rehabilitation services for drug and alcohol support & offending, leading to progressive reduction in hostel etc. accommodation and crime rates. The option exemplified targets the highest level recommended based on analysis of Hard Edges Scotland studies and 'Destitution in the UK' surveys (c.1,200 p.a.).	Achieve a high level of Housing First provision, with associated increase in rehabilitation services for drug and alcohol support & offending, leading to progressive reduction in hostel etc. accommodation and crime rates. The highest level of annual programme tested is exemplified based on analysis of Hard Edges Scotland studies and 'Destitution in the UK' survey (3,500).
Housing Supply	Increase in total and social rented housing supply in line with recommendations of 2018 Crisis/NHF 'Housing Requirements' report i.e. c.340,000 per annum total, up to 85,000 per annum social rented, targeted on areas of greater net need	Increase in total and social rented housing supply above the current commitments, i.e. by approx. 80% (up to 5,000 social completions per annum in Wales)	Increase in total and social rented housing supply by approx. 50% (to 7,500 social completions per annum in Scotland), strongly concentrated in localities with a clear shortfall of supply relative to need.
Levelling up	Raising economic growth rates in regions beyond London & SE to reduce growth gap by c. 65%	Raising economic growth rates in GB sub-regions beyond London & SE to reduce growth gap by approx. 65% gap (includes specific enhancements to GVA growth and net domestic in-migration for Wales).	Raising economic growth rates in GB sub-regions beyond London & SE to largely eliminate growth
Large hike in UC rates	Similar to the 'UC & destitution' scenario but with 3x larger increase in UC personal allowances	As England	As England

291 See Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on New Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections for Scotland and Wales*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University 10.17861/5bs8-jd60 https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/51616567/CoreHomelessnessProjections2021_TechReport_ScWa2_002_.pdf particularly chapters 4-6 and Appendices B-D. .

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