



BRIEFING PAPER

Number 01164, 29 March 2017

Statutory Homelessness in England

By Wendy Wilson
Cassie Barton

Inside:

1. The causes of homelessness
2. The number of statutorily homeless households
3. Government policy & comment
4. Local authorities' duties



Contents

Summary	3
1. The causes of homelessness	5
The end of an assured shorthold tenancy	6
Housing Benefit restrictions	7
2. The number of statutorily homeless households	8
2.1 A complete picture of homelessness?	8
2.2 Official statistics	10
3. Government policy & comment	11
3.1 Coalition Government policy (2010-2015)	11
3.2 Government policy (2015 onwards)	13
The Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17	15
3.3 Use of private rented & out of borough placements	17
3.4 The Gold Standard	19
3.5 Housing Benefit reforms	20
3.6 CLG Select Committee inquiry	23
4. Local authorities' duties	23
4.1 Assessing applications from homeless households	23
4.2 Homelessness strategies	25
4.3 The performance of local authorities	27
Homelessness prevention and relief	27
Meeting their homelessness duties	28
Legal challenges	30
Homeless 16 and 17 year olds	31
Appendix	33

Contributing authors

Cassie Barton, statistics

Summary

Local authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category. There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people. For example, there is no statutory duty to secure housing for homeless single people and couples without children who are not deemed to be vulnerable for some reason. Official statistics on statutory homelessness are published quarterly by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in March, June, September and December. These quarterly bulletins are now published with statistics on local authority prevention and relief work.

The financial year 2010/11 saw a 10% increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/4. Homelessness acceptances continued to rise over the next three years but fell by 3% between 2012/13 and 2013/14. The 2014/15 financial year recorded a further increase, with acceptances 36% higher than in 2009/10 (but 60% below the peak in 2003/4). The 2015/16 financial year saw acceptances increase by a further 6% on 2014/15.

Organisations such as Shelter and Crisis argue that the official statistics do not give a full picture of homelessness in England. The figures exclude those who are homeless but who do not approach a local authority for assistance and those who do not meet the statutory criteria. Local authorities are increasingly adopting informal responses to tackling homelessness, which can result in households falling outside the official quarterly monitoring process. In December 2015 the UK Statistics Authority published [an assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) in relation to DCLG's homelessness and rough sleeping statistics. The assessment found that the Homelessness Prevention and Relief statistics "do not currently meet the standard to be National Statistics."

Homelessness arising from parents/friends/relatives being no longer willing or able to provide accommodation remains significant, as does homelessness arising from the breakdown of a violent relationship. However, the most frequently cited reason for loss of the last settled home is now the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector. In the fourth quarter of 2016 this reason was behind 39% of all statutory homeless acceptances in London.

The increase in statutory homelessness since 2009/10 is attributed to a number of factors, of which the most important is identified as the continuing shortfall in levels of new house building relative to levels of household formation. Housing Benefit reforms are also viewed as a significant contributory factor, particularly in London. In addition to contributing to levels of homelessness, local authorities in areas of high housing demand argue that benefit reforms are also making it more difficult for them to secure housing for eligible applicants. [Homelessness Monitor: England 2017](#) states:

Almost two thirds (64%) of councils across England are struggling to find social tenancies for homeless people, while half find it 'very difficult' to assist applicants into privately rented accommodation.

The report, which includes evidence from 162 of England's 326 local authorities, reveals that councils are finding it particularly difficult to house homeless young people and large families, with 85% of responding councils having difficulties assisting single people aged 25-34 into accommodation and 88% finding it difficult to house large families.

The Coalition Government declared tackling homelessness to be a key priority. A Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness was established which published [Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness](#) (August 2012). March 2015 saw publication of [Addressing complex needs: improving services for vulnerable homeless people](#), which summarised the work of the group since its inception in 2010. The current Government has appointed the Minister for Local Government, Marcus Jones, to head up the homelessness brief at the DCLG..

On 17 December 2015 the Communities and Local Government Select Committee launched [an inquiry into the causes of homelessness](#), as well as the approach taken by national and local government to prevent and tackle homelessness. The Committee's [report](#) was published on 18 August 2016. The Committee identified significant variations in the level of service offered to homeless applicants by local authorities and called on the Government to initiate a "renewed, cross-Departmental Government strategy".

Also on 17 December 2015, the Government said it would work with homelessness organisations and across government departments "to explore options, including legislation, to prevent more people from facing a homelessness crisis in the first place."

During summer 2015 Crisis established an independent panel of experts to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current homelessness legislation in England. The panel's findings were published in April 2016: [The Homelessness legislation: an independent review of the legal duties owed to homeless people](#). The panel concluded that the case for reform was strong, and favoured changes to place more emphasis on preventative work within a statutory framework, particularly in relation to single people and childless couples. The annex to the report included suggested amendments to the legislative framework.

Bob Blackman, a member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, drew second place in the 2016 Private Members' Bill Ballot. He introduced the [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#) on 29 June 2016. The Bill has now completed its parliamentary stages and is awaiting Royal Assent having attracted Government and cross-Party support. More information on the Bill can be found in these Library papers: [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#) and [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17: Progress in the Commons and Lords](#).

Duties owed to the non-statutory homeless are covered in the Library briefing paper entitled [Rough Sleeping \(England\)](#) (02007). A separate paper focuses on the placement of statutorily homeless households in temporary accommodation ([02110](#)). For an overview of statistical indicators see: [Homelessness: Social Indicators](#) (02646). Local-level data on homelessness in England can be viewed using the Library's online tool ([07586](#)).

There are now significant variations in approaches to homelessness in Scotland and Wales – these variations are outlined in [Comparison of homelessness duties in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#) (07201).

1. The causes of homelessness

Research into the causes of homelessness has identified a number of factors, some of which relate to the wider state of the economy and the housing market, and others which are personal to the individual or family.¹

Structural factors contributing to homelessness include:

- A lack of affordable housing supply in England which is more acute in some areas than others. Homelessness is the most visible manifestation of the long-term failure of successive Governments to build enough housing to meet growing need. Research conducted by Centrepoin in 2013 for Cambridge University concluded that by 2021, at current rates of construction, there could be a shortfall of submarket rent homes of over 900,000.²
- The social housing sector has declined as a proportion of all housing in recent years. This reflects sales under the Right to Buy and reduced investment in the development of social housing. Shelter's evidence to the CLG Select Committee's inquiry into homelessness argues for the development of 250,000 new homes a year of which 30% should be at a low rent.³
- The affordability of home ownership has been impacted by tighter mortgage regulation and the requirement for higher deposits from first-time buyers. Even in areas where house prices are relatively affordable, mortgage regulation can act as a barrier to access.

The CLG Select Committee's 2016 report, [Homelessness](#), identified a case "for the development of homes for affordable rent which we encourage the Government to act on by working with local authorities to deliver the homes that are needed at a local level."⁴

Personal factors that trigger homelessness include relationship breakdown, mental illness and addiction issues, discharge from prison and leaving the care system. The immediate causes of homelessness have remained fairly constant over the years. Family breakdown is highlighted as a significant cause. The circumstances in which families become homeless tend to differ from those of single homeless individuals, with the latter experiencing more chaotic lifestyles.⁵

¹ *More than a Roof – a new approach to tackling homelessness* Department for Transport and Local Government, March 2002

² [Centrepoin's written evidence submitted to the CLG Select Committee's 2016-17 inquiry into homelessness \(HOL31, para 14\)](#).

³ [Shelter's written evidence submitted to the CLG Select Committee's 2016-17 inquiry into homelessness \(HOL94, paras 23-24\)](#)

⁴ [CLG Select Committee, Third Report of 2016-17, Homelessness, HC 40](#), August 2016, para 24

⁵ DCLG, [Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness](#), August 2012, paras 17-20

The table below shows the reasons for homelessness recorded by local authorities in 2015/16 (see Table 3 in the statistical appendix for a full breakdown over time).⁶

Reasons for loss of last settled home⁷

Proportion of all households accepted as homeless, 2015/16

End of assured shorthold tenancy	31%	■
Parents no longer able to accommodate	15%	■
Other relatives/friends no longer able to accommodate	12%	■
Relationship breakdown - violent	11%	■
Loss of other rented or tied housing	6%	■
Relationship breakdown - other	5%	■
Mortgage or rent arrears	4%	■
Other	16%	■

The end of an assured shorthold tenancy

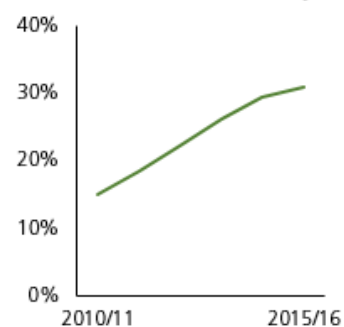
Most of these proportions have remained fairly stable over time, but there has been a substantial increase in homelessness due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy. In 2010/11, this was given as a reason in 6,630 cases (15% of the total), rising to 17,900 cases (31% of the total) in 2015/16. In London, 39% of homeless acceptances between October and December 2016 were due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy.⁸

Research conducted by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (published in August 2010) found that almost a fifth of local authorities had reported an increase in homelessness as a result of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). LHA replaced Housing Benefit for new claimants in the deregulated private rented sector from April 2008 – as a general rule it is paid directly to claimants rather than their landlords.⁹ There was evidence to suggest that direct payment of LHA to claimants had resulted in increased rent arrears (and evictions) of private sector tenants.¹⁰

In June 2016 the Minister, Brandon Lewis, wrote to all local authority CEOs in England to remind them of the Homelessness Code of Guidance's contents when dealing with applications from households facing eviction from an assured shorthold tenancy:

It says that housing authorities should not, in every case, insist upon a court order for possession and that no local authority should adopt a blanket policy in this respect. The Guidance states that if the landlord intends to seek possession and there would be no defence to an application for a possession order then it is unlikely that it would be reasonable for the applicant to continue to occupy the accommodation.

Proportion of households who lost their last home due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy



Source: DCLG, Live Table 774

⁶ The information submitted by local authorities is collated and published quarterly by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

⁷ DCLG, *Statutory Homelessness* statistical release (30 June 2016), Live Table 774

⁸ DCLG Statistical Release, 23 March 2017, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: October to December 2016](#); DCLG [Live Table 774](#)

⁹ For more information see Library briefing paper 3211.

¹⁰ DWP, *The Local Authority Omnibus Survey – Wave 20*, August 2010

7 Statutory Homelessness in England

Unless a local authority has very good reason to depart from the statutory guidance then they should not be placing households in this position.¹¹

Measures have been included in the [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#) which are aimed at addressing local authorities' approaches to this issue.

Housing Benefit restrictions

There is concern that reductions in the amount of LHA payable since April 2011 (and further Housing Benefit changes implemented in January 2012 and April 2013) are having an adverse impact on levels of homelessness and the ability of local authorities to use private rented accommodation in order to discharge their duties to homeless households.¹² London Councils published [Tracking Welfare Reform: Meeting the financial challenge](#) (September 2013) in which it highlighted an increased risk of arrears and homelessness as a potential outcome of the Government's various Housing Benefit measures. These issues are discussed further in section 3 of this briefing paper.

The statistical release of 23 March 2017, covering the fourth quarter of the year, acknowledges affordability issues in the private rented sector:

This indicates that affordability is an increasingly significant issue, as more households facing the end of a private tenancy are unable to find an alternative without assistance. The increase in the end of tenancies is also related to the expansion of the private rented sector, which has doubled in size (since 2002) and now houses 4.5 million households (2015/16).¹³

The potential impact of wider Government housing policies on levels of homeless attracts comment in [Homelessness Monitor: England 2017](#), an annual state-of-the-nation report looking at the impact of economic and policy developments on homelessness, for example:

The capacity of the social rented sector to meet housing needs will continue to be tested in the years ahead, despite the new Government's injection of funds to modestly increase the supply of affordable housing from 2017/18, and the allowance of a degree of tenure flexibility over the use of grant. Almost two-thirds of respondents to our 2016 local authority online survey reported difficulties in accessing social tenancies for their homeless applicants, with three-quarters of respondents in London commenting that this was "very difficult". As well as emphasising the absolute shortage of social lettings in their area, many local authority respondents also reported that housing associations were becoming increasingly selective regarding applicant incomes and independent living skills.

Despite a continued growth in the overall size of the private rental sector, which is now larger than the social rental sector in England, half of all local authorities, and virtually all in London, described it as "very difficult" to assist their applicants into private

¹¹ Brandon Lewis letter to all CEOs English local authorities, June 2016

¹² For more information on the Housing Benefit changes since 2010 see Library briefing paper 5638.

¹³ DCLG Statistical Release, 23 March 2017, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: October to December 2016](#)

rental tenancies. These difficulties were attributed to the combined effects of rising rents and welfare benefit restrictions, particularly frozen Local Housing Allowance rates.¹⁴

2. The number of statutorily homeless households¹⁵

In order to monitor the number of statutorily homeless households the Government collates local authority figures on the number of homeless acceptances, i.e. the number of households deemed to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Table 2 in the statistical appendix gives a full breakdown of homeless acceptances in England.

2.1 A complete picture of homelessness?

Organisations such as Shelter and Crisis have long argued that the official statistics do not give a full picture of homelessness in England. The figures exclude those who are homeless but who do not approach a local authority for assistance and those who do not meet the statutory criteria. For example, of the 27,960 applications for assistance that English local authorities received between October and December 2016, only 52% were accepted as homeless and owed 'a main homelessness duty'; 16% were deemed to be homeless but not in priority need; and 9% were deemed to be intentionally homeless (and therefore not owed a full rehousing duty).¹⁶

[Homelessness Monitor: England 2017](#) provides estimates of *hidden* homelessness:

We estimate that there were 2.27 million households containing concealed single persons in England in early 2016, in addition to 288,000 concealed couples and lone parents. The number of adults in these concealed household units is estimated at 3.34 million. These numbers represent a rise of one-third since 2008. This rise in concealed single individuals living with others, when they would really prefer to live independently, has been associated with a fall in new household formation.¹⁷

Centrepoint commissioned Cambridge University to produce an up-to-date estimate of the number of young people aged 16 to 24 experiencing homelessness during the course of a year. The research (published in July 2015) found that over 83,000 homeless young people in the UK had been accommodated by local authorities or homelessness services during 2013/14.¹⁸ This led Centrepoint to call for coherent national data on homelessness:

¹⁴ Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor: England 2017](#), March 2017

¹⁵ These statistics do not include the number of people sleeping rough – there are separate monitoring processes in place to gather this information (see Library Briefing Paper [Rough Sleeping](#) 02007)

¹⁶ DCLG Statistical Release, 23 March 2017, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: October to December 2016](#); DCLG [Live Table 774](#)

¹⁷ Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor: England 2017](#), March 2017

¹⁸ Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, [Estimating the scale of youth homelessness in the UK](#), 2015

9 Statutory Homelessness in England

The lack of coherent national data on homelessness makes measuring the true scale of youth homelessness a real challenge.

Unless we know the true scale, we cannot know how best to tackle it nor ensure effective allocation of funding so that young people receive the support they need.¹⁹

The [UK Housing Review 2015 Briefing Paper](#) (June 2015) concluded that the story of homelessness is more complicated than the official statistics suggest:

Homelessness prevention work by local authorities means that (as Crisis found in a survey of local authority staff) official figures on 'acceptances' are no longer seen as an accurate gauge of homelessness. In fact, the parallel figures on non-statutory preventative work are growing remorselessly: from 165,000 cases in 2009/10 to almost 228,000 in 2013/14 (the last year for which data are available). Over half are found accommodation elsewhere – with 50 per cent of these going into the private rented sector – and slightly under half helped to stay where they are. The latter group is growing, and while some of those helped may have resolved their potential homelessness, it seems likely that for others the factors that provoked it (e.g. intimidation by a landlord) could easily recur.²⁰

In December 2015 the UK Statistics Authority published an assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics in relation to DCLG's homelessness and rough sleeping statistics. The Department's Homelessness Prevention and Relief statistics were deemed not to meet the standard to be regarded as National Statistics. The Authority said that these statistics should be published quarterly with the Statutory Homelessness statistics as part of "an integrated package" and that DCLG should consider: "...how these statistics might be improved to the same standard as the Statutory Homelessness statistics."²¹

The UK Statistics Authority declared DCLG's Homelessness Prevention and Relief statistics not to meet the standard for National Statistics.

On 2 March 2016 Marcus Jones confirmed that "Departmental statisticians are currently using the report to help plan future developments in homelessness statistics."²² Figures for non-statutory prevention work are now published alongside the quarterly statistics.

213,260 cases of homelessness prevention or relief were estimated to have taken place outside the statutory homelessness framework in England in 2015/16, down from 220,690 in 2014/15.²³ Preventative action was taken by local authorities for 47,420 households between October and December 2016 and a further 3,540 non-priority

¹⁹ Centrepoin, [Known Unknowns: what's the true scale of youth homelessness?](#) July 2015 [accessed 12 July 2015]

²⁰ Steve Wilcox, John Perry, Peter Williams, [UK Housing Review 2015 Briefing Paper](#), June 2015, p13

²¹ UK Statistics Authority, [Statistics on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in England \(Department for Communities and Local Government\)](#), December 2015

²² [Homelessness: Written Question-27313, 2 March 2016](#)

²³ DCLG, [Homelessness prevention and relief: 2015/16 England](#), June 2016; Live Table 787

households were helped out of homelessness (relieved) over the period.²⁴

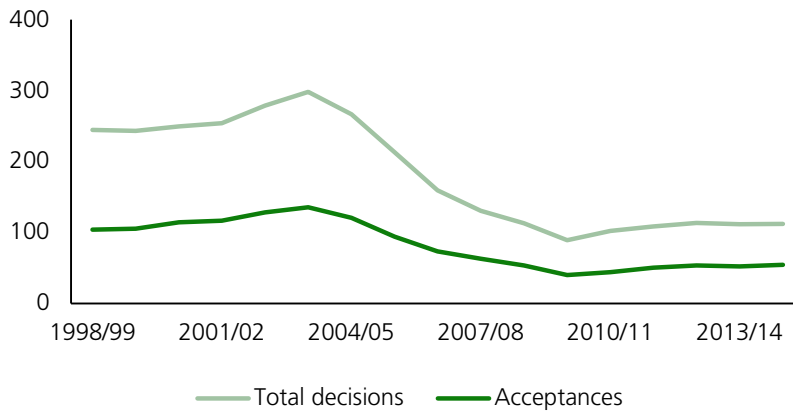
2.2 Official statistics

Between 1997 and 2003 homelessness acceptances by local authorities rose year on year. The third and fourth quarters of 2004 showed decreases in the number of households accepted as homeless; the yearly figures then fell each year from 2003 to 2010. The financial year 2010/11 saw an increase in homelessness acceptances of 10%, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/04. The 2015/16 financial year saw acceptances increase by 6% on 2014/15.²⁵

Homelessness acceptances peaked in 2003/04 and fell thereafter but have been rising again since 2010/11.

Decisions taken on eligible households and homelessness acceptances²⁶

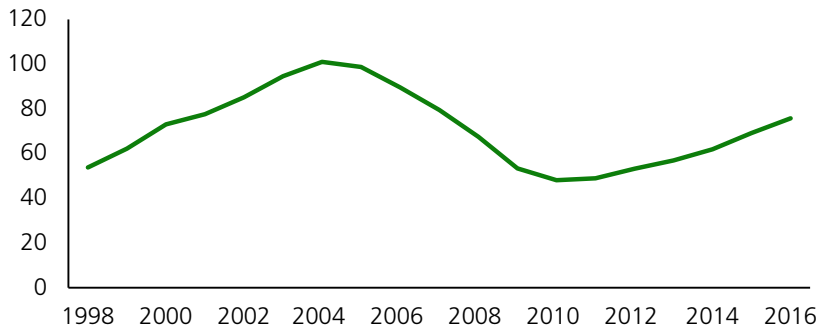
Thousands of households, 1998/99 to 2015/16



Despite the reduction in acceptances in 2004, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation exceeded 100,000 for the first time that year. The numbers in temporary accommodation began to fall after 2004 but remained at historically high levels and began to increase again in early 2010.

Households in temporary accommodation at end of year²⁷

Thousands of households, 1998 to 2015



²⁴ DCLG Statistical Release, 23 March 2017, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: October to December 2016](#); DCLG [Live Table 774](#)

²⁵ DCLG, *Statutory Homelessness* statistical release (30 June 2016), Live Table 770

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ DCLG Statistical Release, 23 March 2017, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: October to December 2016](#); DCLG [Live Table 774](#)

The most recent statistics on statutory homelessness were published on 23 March 2017.²⁸ The number of households accepted as homeless and owed the main homelessness duty (i.e. permanent re-housing) was 14,930, representing a decrease of 3% on the previous quarter. The number accepted was almost the same as the same quarter a year previously (14,480 acceptances).²⁹ London accounted for 31% of all acceptances in England during the fourth quarter of 2016 – the number of acceptances in London was 12% lower than in the same quarter in 2015.³⁰ As noted in section 1, 39% of homelessness acceptances in London between July and September 2016 arose from the termination of a private sector tenancy.

The 2015/16 financial year saw homeless acceptances rise by 6% on 2014/15.

The *Localism Act 2011* enabled local authorities (from 9 November 2012) to discharge their duty to homeless households by using private rented accommodation. DCLG began to collect figures on the use of this new power in the second quarter of 2013. The fourth quarter of 2016 marked the fifteenth quarter for which figures were collected on the use of the new power. 80 households accepted and 20 rejected such an offer during this quarter.³¹

3. Government policy & comment

3.1 Coalition Government policy (2010-2015)

A press release issued by DCLG on 15 July 2010 confirmed that the new Minister for Housing, Grant Shapps, would “do all he can to safeguard homelessness funding in the face of tough economic times.” The press release referred to the protection of Government funding for tackling homelessness against a background of “in-year savings of £6.2bn across Whitehall and the emergency Budget.”³²

DCLG’s business plan (November 2010) included a mission to “oversee housing and homelessness policy in England to meet the aspirations of a growing and ageing population and support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in communities.”³³

A cross-departmental working group of Ministers from eight different Government Departments was established to help address the problems which cause people to lose their home.³⁴ The early work of this group focused on tackling rough sleeping rather than statutory homelessness. March 2015 saw publication of [Addressing complex needs: improving services for vulnerable homeless people](#), which summarises the work of the group since its inception in 2010. Publication of this report was accompanied by a [Written Statement](#) from the Minister, Kris Hopkins, relevant extracts from which are reproduced below (some of the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² DCLG Press Release, *Rough sleeping hits 11-year low*, 15 July 2010

³³ DCLG Business Plan 2011-2015, November 2010, p3

³⁴ The minutes of the meetings can be found on the [DCLG website](#) [accessed on 2 July 2015]

references are to tackling rough sleeping rather than statutory homelessness):

This government's approach to tackling homelessness has been focused on preventing homelessness, wherever possible, and ensuring those experiencing homelessness have the support they need to get back on their feet. We have invested more than £500 million to ensure that local authorities and voluntary sector partners are able to support vulnerable people. This commitment is confirmed today by £1.9 million worth of funding which will ensure that valuable voluntary sector organisations can continue to support homeless young people, rough sleepers and those fleeing domestic violence in 2015 to 2016.

Our investment, backed by one of the strongest legislative safety nets in the world, ensures that no family should ever be without a roof over their heads and that vulnerable people facing a housing crisis receive support. Our policies are designed to increase local authority flexibility, test innovative new approaches and provide strategic support to frontline staff to deliver effective services.

For the first time, we prioritised concerted cross government action to tackle homelessness, bringing together departments across Whitehall through the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness. Throughout this Parliament, departments have worked together to coordinate action on the issues facing homeless people.

Preventing homelessness

We have maintained investment in local authority homelessness prevention services. Our £400 million has already helped authorities to prevent 730,200 households from becoming homeless since 2010.

Statutory homelessness is lower now than in 26 of the last 30 years, and around half the level it was under the last administration.

We have also helped equip local authorities and others working on the vital homelessness frontline with the skills and tools they need to support vulnerable people. We have:

- invested over £2 million in the [Gold Standard Programme](#) delivered by the National Practitioner Support Service; the programme is supporting authorities to deliver cost effective and efficient homelessness prevention services
- invested £10 million into the National Homelessness Advice Service to ensure that frontline staff are able to offer the best possible help to vulnerable people facing a wide range of housing issues
- funded umbrella organisation [Homeless Link](#) to assist local authorities and the voluntary sector to work together to improve their effectiveness and capacity to rough sleeping and homelessness; our support will ensure that this work continues into 2015 to 2016
- helped 3,000 households remain in their homes with our £221 million Mortgage Rescue Scheme; this has provided free advice to a further 60,000 in mortgage difficulty
- funded St Basil's, a leading youth homelessness charity, to support councils to implement a specialist youth accommodation pathway model designed to help young

13 Statutory Homelessness in England

people to remain in the family home where it is safe to do so and offer tailored support options for those needing to leave; our funding will allow St Basils to continue this vital work into 2015 to 2016.

As well as investing in homelessness prevention services, this government also delivered almost 217,000 affordable homes in England between April 2010 and September 2014. Management information indicates that we have exceeded our target of delivering 170,000 new affordable homes between 2011 and 2015 – it is estimated that by 20 March 173,800 homes had been delivered, with more expected.

A further £38 billion of public and private investment will help ensure 275,000 new affordable homes are provided between 2015 and 2020. This means over the next Parliament we will build more new affordable homes than during any equivalent period in the last 20 years.

We have also worked to ensure that support is in place to help statutory homeless households move on with their lives, including:

- making legislative changes in the [Localism Act 2011](#) to allow local authorities greater flexibility to move homeless families out of temporary accommodation more quickly into good quality, suitable and settled accommodation in the private rented sector; households now spend on average 7 months less in temporary accommodation than at the start of 2010
- being clear that the long term use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children is both unacceptable and unlawful
- building on the commitment set out in last week's Budget, we will also explore options to support long term investment in private rented accommodation for homeless families; this would help secure well managed, affordable accommodation for homeless families; it will also reduce financial pressures on local authorities by helping them to avoid placing families in expensive accommodation such as bed and breakfast
- providing £10 million to 148 areas across the country to stop the closure of domestic violence refuges, improve services in existing refuges and to grow the number of bed spaces; this will help ensure we maintain the resilient national network of refuges that work to keep victims and their children safe
- continuing to fund Women's Aid to run [UKRefugesOnline](#) to help those working with victims of domestic abuse find places of safety as quickly as possible.³⁵

3.2 Government policy (2015 onwards)

The current Government has appointed Marcus Jones to head up the homelessness brief at the DCLG. On 17 December 2015 a "radical package of measures" was announced to tackle homelessness.³⁶ Several measures mark a continuation of the approach adopted by the

³⁵ Kris Hopkins, [Written Statement](#), 26 March 2015

³⁶ DCLG, [Radical package of measures announced to tackle homelessness](#), 17 December 2015

Coalition Government and are aimed specifically at rough sleepers, but the inclusion of a reference to potential legislation to reduce homelessness was new:

- maintaining and protecting homelessness prevention funding for local authorities, through the provisional local government finance settlement totalling £315 million by 2019 to 2020
- increasing central government funding for homelessness programmes to £139 million over the Spending Review period
- a commitment to work with homelessness organisations and across departments to consider options, including legislation, to prevent more people from becoming homeless
- £40 million from the Department of Health to refurbish hostels and provide low cost shared accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness
- £30 million extra to councils to give them more control and flexibility over homelessness budgets by devolving the funding for managing temporary accommodation from 2017 to 2018
- a £5 million fund to the 25 local authorities facing the greatest pressures in moving people out of temporary accommodation and into a settled home.³⁷

The [Autumn Statement 2016](#) included a commitment to increase the Rough Sleeping Fund:

The government is committing a further £10 million over two years to the Rough Sleeping Fund. This will double the size of the fund, which will support and scale up innovative approaches to preventing and reducing rough sleeping, particularly in London.³⁸

From April 2017 local authorities will no longer receive a separate temporary accommodation management fee and instead will receive an allocation of the new flexible homelessness support grant. Announcing the allocations of grant for 2017/18 and 2018/19, Marcus Jones said:

Under the existing 'temporary accommodation management fee', funding can only be used for expensive intervention when a household is already homeless, rather than on preventing this happening in the first place.

The new grant will empower councils with the freedom to support the full range of homelessness services. This could include employing a homelessness prevention or tenancy support officer to work closely with people who are at risk of losing their homes.

[...]

³⁷ DCLG, [Radical package of measures announced to tackle homelessness](#), 17 December 2015

³⁸ [Autumn Statement 2016](#), para 5.12

The funding allocated for the 2 years from 2017 to 2018 is £186 million and £191 million. A further £25 million has been set aside for London boroughs to work together to provide accommodation for homeless families in the capital.³⁹

The Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17

Following the December 2015 announcement, there was speculation that the Government was looking to introduce a new duty to prevent homelessness along the lines of that introduced in Wales. This matter was addressed in some of the written evidence submitted to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's inquiry into homelessness, for example:

We understand the Committee is considering the Welsh Prevention Duty which places a duty on local authorities to help prevent homelessness and to provide private rented accommodation to all households regardless of priority need, local connection and intentionality. Homelessness prevention is already at the heart of our work and we support the principles of an approach which focuses on helping people at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness and a new responsibility for applicants to co-operate with the local authority.

However, further analysis must be undertaken to assess how a similar model might work in a central London context, particularly as Westminster has high homelessness levels and a high value private rented sector. Therefore, to better understand how a model might work in London, we would welcome a pilot of such an approach here before a move to change legislation.⁴⁰

London Councils' submission said:

We welcome the opportunity to work government to consider options, including legislation to prevent more people from becoming homeless.

It is suggested that the government explores the applicability and effectiveness of the Welsh approach to homelessness. However, this should not seek to dilute boroughs' homelessness duty towards homeless applicants. There are clear benefits to the Welsh model approach, which are worth further exploration, but it must be applied in the London context and should be fully funded, as in the case in Wales. We would be keen to work with government to explore the pros and cons of such an approach in London.⁴¹

In summer 2015 Crisis established an independent expert panel to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the current homelessness legislation in England. The Panel's findings were published in April 2016: [The Homelessness legislation: an independent review of the legal duties owed to homeless people](#). The Panel recommended a new legislative model to:

- place a stronger duty on local authorities to help to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants regardless of priority need status, local connection or intentionality;

³⁹ [DCLG Press Release](#), 15 March 2017

⁴⁰ [Westminster City Council - written evidence](#), February 2016

⁴¹ [London Councils - written evidence](#), February 2016

- extend the definition of threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days to provide local authorities with more flexibility to tackle homelessness at a much earlier stage; and
- place a new relief duty on local authorities requiring them to take reasonable steps to help to secure accommodation for all eligible homeless households who have a local connection.⁴²

Bob Blackman MP drew second place in the Private Members' Bill ballot 2016/17. His [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#) attracted Government and cross-Party support. The Bill has completed its parliamentary stages and is awaiting Royal Assent. Its main thrust is to refocus English local authorities on efforts to prevent homeless. The Bill is seeking to amend Part 7 of the *Housing Act 1996*. Its measures include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- Clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a section 21 notice of intention to seek possession from an assured shorthold tenancy.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

When in force, the Bill will create new duties for English local authorities and a good deal of debate in Public Bill Committee and on Report focused on how much these duties would cost, and whether they would be fully funded by the Government. On 17 January 2017 the Minister, Marcus Jones, [announced](#) that funding of £48 million would be provided to meet the additional costs for local authorities. Subsequent amendments to the Bill resulted in this sum increasing to £61 million. Authorities' representative gave this announcement a 'cautious' welcome but asked the Government to commit to a review of the Bill's impact after two years "to ensure that authorities are fully equipped and funded to deliver the Bill's ambitions."

More information on the Bill can be found in these Library papers: [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#) and [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17: Progress in the Commons and Lords](#).

The Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17 has attracted Government and cross-Party support

⁴² [The Homelessness legislation: an independent review of the legal duties owed to homeless people](#), April 2016, p20

3.3 Use of private rented & out of borough placements

Measures to enable local authorities to discharge their duty towards statutorily homeless households by offering a tenancy in the private rented sector are contained in the *Localism Act 2011*. Regulations implementing this measure came into force on 9 November 2012.⁴³ There is concern amongst certain housing organisations that it is inappropriate for authorities to discharge their duty towards homeless households in the private rented sector without the household's agreement at a time when homeless applications due to evictions from this sector are rising.⁴⁴ Concerns were also raised as the *Localism Bill* progressed through Parliament about the standard of accommodation in the private rented sector. The Government said it would use order-making powers (under section 210 of the *Housing Act 1996*) to specify required property standards and standards of management that will apply where a homeless household is re-housed in private rented housing.

Following a consultation exercise the [Homelessness \(Suitability of Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2012](#) was brought into force on 9 November 2012. [Statutory guidance on the Order](#) was published to which local authorities must have regard when discharging (ending) their duties to homeless households by using private rented accommodation. The guidance describes situations in which private rented housing should be regarded as unsuitable.

The [statutory guidance](#) on the *Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012* states that location of accommodation is relevant to the question of suitability and describes the factors that an authority must take into account when offering accommodation outside of the local area.⁴⁵

Inside Housing, based on information gathered by London Councils, reported a significant increase in the number of households being placed outside the capital by authorities in London over 2013/14.⁴⁶ Authorities receiving placements from London boroughs complain that they are not being informed about the presence of vulnerable families within their areas.⁴⁷ The fourth quarter 2016 statistics record 21,910 households (29%) as placed in temporary accommodation in another authority's area on 31 December 2016, representing an increase of 17% on the same date in 2015. 19,860 of these households (91% of

The Localism Act 2011 enabled local authorities to discharge their responsibilities to homeless household by using private rented accommodation.

Out of borough placements in temporary accommodation increased by 15% on 30 September 2016 compared with 30 September 2015

⁴³ *Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No.2 and Transitional Provisions) (England) Order 2012*, (S.I. 2012/2599)

⁴⁴ See section 2 of this note.

⁴⁵ Supplementary Guidance on the homelessness changes in the Localism Act 2011 and on the Homelessness.

⁴⁶ *Inside Housing*, "[Londoners housed outside capital doubles](#)", 1 November 2013

⁴⁷ *Inside Housing*, "[Councils left in dark over homeless placements](#)", 15 November 2013

the England total) were placed by London authorities, representing an increase of 10% on the same date in 2015.⁴⁸

The then Housing Minister, Kris Hopkins, was asked about the number of out of borough temporary accommodation placements made by London local authorities in June 2014:

This Government has invested £470 million to prevent and tackle all forms of homelessness over the spending review period. The homelessness legislation in England provides one of the strongest safety nets in the world for families with children and vulnerable people who become homeless through no fault of their own.

No council should be sending tenants en masse to a different part of the country— the law is clear that councils have a responsibility to take into account people’s jobs and schools when securing homes for those in need. And we have given them more power to provide families with suitable, settled accommodation in the private rented sector to avoid long waits in temporary accommodation. Indeed the average stay in temporary accommodation in England has been reduced from 20 months at the beginning of 2010 to 14 months now. The Government has also made £445 million of Discretionary Housing Payments available to local authorities to ease the transition across the welfare reforms in this Spending Review. We expect them to use these effectively to help households who have particular needs to stay, and to give short-term help, for example, through school exams.⁴⁹

In a [unanimous judgement](#) handed down on 2 April 2015 the Supreme Court held that there is a statutory duty to accommodate homeless households in-borough "where reasonably practicable" failing which "authorities are under a duty to place the household as close as possible to where they were previously living."⁵⁰ In addition, authorities were advised that they should produce and publish a policy on the procurement of temporary accommodation.

A Supreme Court judgement in 2015 held that authorities should accommodate households in-borough where reasonably practicable.

In February 2014 Shelter and Crisis published the final report of a study conducted between 2010 and 2014 into the long-term outcomes and wellbeing of vulnerable homeless households resettled into the private rented sector. The households in the study had hoped that they would be able to rebuild their lives after the trauma of homelessness in a safe and secure property with heating and hot water and that it would provide a stable long-term base. The research found that "in the majority of tenancies, these needs weren't met. This impacted housing satisfaction to the extent that two thirds of people were unhappy with the original tenancy they were moved into."⁵¹

Written evidence submitted by some London authorities to the Communities and Local Government Committee's inquiry into homelessness called for *greater* flexibility to house homeless families in

⁴⁸ DCLG Statistical Release, 23 March 2017, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: October to December 2016](#); DCLG [Live Table 775](#)

⁴⁹ HC Deb 9 June 2014 cc1-2W

⁵⁰ [Nzolamesco v City of Westminster](#) [2015] UKSC 22 (para 19)

⁵¹ Shelter/Crisis, [A roof over my head](#), 2014

cheaper areas without the threat of legal challenge. For example, [Westminster City Council - written evidence](#) said:

Suitability of accommodation - we aim to place homeless households in private rented accommodation which they can afford. However the law requires local authorities to offer housing 'in borough' where it is 'reasonably practicable'. While every effort is made to do this, we simply cannot procure enough affordable TA or PRS accommodation in-borough (or even very close to the borough). The expectation that homeless families should be placed 'in borough', or very close to the borough, also applies to those who do not have longstanding connections to Westminster. Many of our out of borough placements are challenged. While we acknowledge that some households need to be able to remain in Westminster – we suggest that the law or code of guidance should be changed so that affordability is a key issue when making placements and offers, so that people can live in good quality private rented homes which they can afford in areas where they can set down roots. Currently a number of households can only remain in Westminster as they receive Discretionary Housing Payment which is not a long term solution. The offer of private rented housing in an area which is affordable in the long term is often preferable to a wait of many years for a social home.⁵²

Some London authorities are calling for greater flexibilities to house homeless families in cheaper areas without the threat of legal challenge.

3.4 The Gold Standard

On 9 April 2013 Mark Prisk (then Housing Minister) launched a £1.7 million "Gold Standard support and training scheme" – this scheme operated over two years:

Led by a small expert team based at Winchester City Council and supported by the National Homelessness Advice Service, the peer-led scheme will provide a host of free training and support to help local authority housing options teams learn from each other and gain Gold Standard status.

- Expert help will be available to achieve this, including:
- an online toolkit to help councils identify areas for improvement
- free training in some of the most complex issues such as housing law
- expert tailored support to make services run more efficiently

To reach Gold Standard status, councils will need to meet key commitments including:

- offering a comprehensive prevention service, with advice and support for single people as well as families in need
- working with local agencies to provide employment, education and training opportunities

⁵² [Westminster City Council - written evidence](#), February 2016

- helping householders facing the threat of repossession by providing access to mortgage debt advice and support such as the Mortgage Rescue scheme
- adopting a local No Second Night Out scheme to help prevent new rough sleepers from becoming entrenched into a street lifestyle

The first 10 councils to receive Gold Standard Status will then offer advice and a critical eye to other councils looking to achieve the same.⁵³

A DCLG press notice of 10 June 2014 reported that 97% of councils had engaged with the scheme:

£582,128 will extend the [Homelessness Gold Standard](#) scheme into 2014 to 2015. The council-led support scheme helps councils improve their frontline housing services for families and single homeless people. It is run by the National Practitioner Support Service, a team of council staff seconded to Winchester Council. They provide training and other support to councils - 97% of councils have already engaged with the scheme.⁵⁴

However, in 2014 *Inside Housing* reported that authorities were struggling to undertake the steps necessary to attain the Gold Standard due to pressure on staffing and resources.⁵⁵

3.5 Housing Benefit reforms

Significant concerns have been raised about the impact of the Government's Housing Benefit and other welfare reforms on levels of homelessness. London Councils published [Tracking Welfare Reform: Meeting the financial challenge](#) (September 2013) in which it assessed the impact of various Housing Benefit measures on councils' ability to respond to households presenting as homeless. On 11 September 2014 *Inside Housing* reported on Grainia Long's (then CEO of the Chartered Institute of Housing) call for an "urgent" national review of the interaction between welfare and housing policy:

Ms Long said: 'There is a clear conflict here – the Localism Act was supposed to make it easier for local authorities to help extremely vulnerable people find a home but welfare reform is making it harder.

We think the government should carry out an urgent review. Welfare changes including the benefit cap and the bedroom tax are aimed at cutting the housing benefit bill – but ultimately the most effective way of achieving that would be to build more genuinely affordable homes.'⁵⁶

January 2016 saw the publication of [Homelessness Monitor: England 2016](#). This report is the fifth of a five-year project (2011-2016) which is tracking the impact on homelessness of economic and social policy

⁵³ DCLG [Press Release](#), 9 April 2013

⁵⁴ DCLG [Press Release](#), 10 June 2014

⁵⁵ *Inside Housing*, "[Staffing and resource pressures hinder £1.7m homelessness programme](#)", 29 August 2014

⁵⁶ *Inside Housing*, "[Rising homelessness caused by 'conflict' between benefit reforms and housing policy](#)," 11 September 2014

21 Statutory Homelessness in England

developments (note that the report covers impacts on non-statutory as well as statutory homelessness). The research is being conducted by Heriot-Watt University and the University of York on behalf of Crisis. An extract commenting on the impact of welfare reform is reproduced below:

Two thirds of local authorities in England reported that the 2010-2015 welfare reforms had increased homelessness in their area. Negative effects of welfare reform on homelessness levels were much more widely reported by local authorities in London (93%) than in the North of England (49%).

Northern local authorities most commonly cited the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate to 25-34 year olds (44%), and benefit sanctions (33%), as the primary welfare reform measures driving homelessness in their areas. In London, on the other hand, the maximum cap on Local Housing Allowance rates was by far the most frequently identified welfare change inflating homelessness (reported by 69% of London Borough Councils).

Almost three quarters (73%) of English local authorities anticipated that the roll out of Universal Credit would further increase homelessness in their area.

Particular concerns focused on the impact of altered direct rental payment arrangements on their already fragile access to private tenancies to prevent or alleviate homelessness.⁵⁷

The current Government is implementing additional welfare reforms:

- the Benefit Cap was reduced from £26,000 to £23,000 in London and £20,000 elsewhere from 7 November 2016 (measures were included in the *Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016*),
- Young people aged 18 to 21 who claim Universal Credit after April 2017 will not be entitled to the housing costs element, with certain exemptions.⁵⁸
- Housing Benefit claimants in social rented housing will have their entitlement capped at the equivalent Local Housing Allowance rate. This will apply to new tenancies entered into after April 2016 and to all social tenants in receipt of Universal Credit. Housing Benefit changes will apply from April 2019.
- Local Housing Allowance rates have been frozen for four years from 2016 with some provision for rents in the most expensive areas. This means that claimants' LHA entitlement is less likely to cover the full contractual rent due as real rents increase over time.
- *The Housing Benefit (Abolition of the Family Premium and limiting backdating) (Amendment) Regulations 2015* (SI 2015/1857) abolished the family premium for all new Housing Benefit entitlements after 30 April 2016 and for those

⁵⁷ [Homelessness Monitor: England 2016](#), January 2016

⁵⁸ For more information see Library briefing paper 6473: [Housing cost element of Universal Credit: withdrawing entitlement from 18-21 year olds](#)

who cease to have responsibility for any children or young people after 30 April 2016.

- Support for families receiving tax credits is to be limited to two children. An equivalent change will be made to Housing Benefit "to ensure consistency between both benefits." This will apply to subsequent children born after April 2017.

[Homelessness Monitor: England 2017](#) considers the impact of the Government's key welfare reforms on homelessness. The press release accompanying the report's publication said:

The overwhelming majority of responding councils (89%) also expressed concerns that the roll out of Universal Credit will further exacerbate homelessness, mainly due to the potential impact on landlords' willingness to let to homeless people. Meanwhile, welfare cuts and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) falling well short of rents in many locations were also cited as major barriers to councils' attempts to house homeless applicants. One council respondent from the South of England said:

*"LHA is staggeringly out of step with actual market rents, to the extent that there are virtually no properties... let at LHA rates. Coupled with landlords' increasing reluctance to accept people on benefits, and unwillingness to offer anything beyond an initial 6 month AST (Assured Shorthold Tenancy), it is now all but impossible to place people into the private sector."*⁵⁹

The report identifies issues with the roll-out of Universal Credit:

Concerns about the impact of the UC regime on rent arrears have been reinforced by the experiences of the social landlords involved in the DWP direct payment demonstration projects. Over the eighteen months of the programme average rent payment rates across the projects were estimated to be 5.5 per cent lower than would have been the case without direct payments. While rates of underpayment declined over the course of the operation of the projects, under payments were also erratic and difficult to predict (and therefore manage), reflecting the complexities and challenges of unforeseen circumstances on low income households' budgets.

A more recent independent survey by council landlord organisations has also found that UC has contributed to higher arrears levels. But it also highlighted that a high proportion of tenants had arrears even before being switched to UC, and that subsequently for more than two fifths of all tenants in arrears arrangements have now been made to make direct payments to the landlords.⁶⁰

The CLG Select Committee's [report on homelessness](#) concludes that "The impact of the welfare reforms of recent years have increased pressure on levels of homelessness."⁶¹

⁵⁹ [Councils warn housing shortfall and benefits cuts fuelling rising homelessness](#), 22 March 2017

⁶⁰ [Homelessness Monitor: England 2017](#), March 2017, p41

⁶¹ [CLG Select Committee, Third Report of 2016-17, Homelessness, HC 40](#), August 2016, para 36

3.6 CLG Select Committee inquiry

On 17 December 2015 the Communities and Local Government Select Committee launched an inquiry into the causes of homelessness, as well as the approach taken by national and local government to prevent and tackle homelessness. Launching the inquiry, the Committee Chair, Clive Betts, said:

Reports suggest homelessness is on the increase. As a Committee, we will want to examine the causes of homelessness, the steps to tackle homelessness, and how issues of social housing are having an impact on homelessness numbers. We'll also want to look at how effectively homelessness levels are being monitored – is Government recording and presenting a true picture of those in unsuitable housing or sleeping rough?⁶²

Links to the written evidence can be found on the [Committee's website](#).

The Committee's [report](#) was published on 18 August 2016. The Committee concluded:

On the strength of what we have learned throughout our inquiry, we have concluded that the scale of homelessness in this country is such that a renewed, cross-Departmental Government strategy is needed. We agree with Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive of St Mungo's, that "Homelessness is everyone's issue and it is not inevitable". All Departments need to contribute to the ending of homelessness by subscribing to a common approach. We will revisit many aspects of our report in twelve months' time to see what progress has been made.⁶³

4. Local authorities' duties

4.1 Assessing applications from homeless households

The *Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977* placed a duty on local housing authorities to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. Authorities' duties towards homeless people are now contained in Part 7 of the *Housing Act 1996* (as amended).

The type of help that an authority might have to offer a homeless household under the 1996 Act ranges from the main duty to secure permanent accommodation (which may be a private rented tenancy), to providing advice and assistance, for example through housing advice or referrals to other housing providers. Authorities only have an absolute duty to secure accommodation for households who are deemed to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Local authorities are obliged to carry out inquiries in order to satisfy themselves as to what level of duty is owed to a homeless applicant. If an applicant has become homeless unintentionally, the authority must assess whether

⁶² Commons Select Committee, [Homelessness inquiry launched](#), December 2015

⁶³ [CLG Select Committee, Third Report of 2016-17, Homelessness, HC 40](#), August 2016

they, or a member of their household, falls into a 'priority need' category. These categories are set out in section 189 of the 1996 Act and include:

- a. People with dependent children who are residing with, or might reasonably be expected to reside with them, for example, because the family is separated solely because of the need for accommodation; or
- b. People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of any emergency such as flood, fire or any other disaster; or
- c. Where any person who resides or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them, is vulnerable because of old age, mental illness, handicap or physical disability or other special reason; or
- d. Pregnant women, or a person who resides or might reasonably be expected to reside with a pregnant woman;
- e. All 16 and 17 year olds;
- f. 18-20 year old care leavers;
- g. Vulnerable care leavers;
- h. Vulnerable former members of the armed forces;
- i. Vulnerable former prisoners; and
- j. People who are vulnerable because they are fleeing violence.

Categories (e)-(j) above were added by *The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002* which came into force on 31 July 2002.

Table 4 in the statistical appendix gives a breakdown of homeless acceptances by priority need category.

The *Homelessness Act 2002*⁶⁴ and the *Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002* fulfilled the commitments given in the Labour Government's Housing Green Paper of April 2000⁶⁵ to extend the priority need categories and:

- Gave local authorities a duty to secure temporary accommodation for all unintentionally homeless households in priority need. (The provision in the 1996 Act that relieved authorities of this duty in certain circumstances was repealed.)
- Removed the restriction in the 1996 Act which provided that temporary accommodation need only be provided for a minimum period of two years.
- Removed the restriction in the 1996 Act which meant that authorities could only use their own stock as temporary accommodation for two years in any three.
- Gave local authorities power to provide temporary accommodation for non-priority homeless applicants where there is scope to do so - e.g. in areas of low housing demand.

⁶⁴ Most of the homelessness provisions in this Act came into force on 31 July 2002.

⁶⁵ *Quality and Choice: a decent home for all*, April 2000

- Strengthened the duties on authorities in relation to the prevention of homelessness and the provision of support to homeless households.

In implementing their duties under Part 7 of the 1996 Act, local authorities are obliged to have regard to the [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#), which is published jointly by the Department of Health and DCLG. The latest version of the Code was published in July 2006. It has been supplemented by additional guidance on how to deal with homelessness arising from mortgage arrears⁶⁶ and guidance on the treatment of homeless people who are victims of domestic abuse.⁶⁷

As noted in section 3 (above) the *Localism Act 2011*⁶⁸ has enabled authorities (since 9 November 2012) to discharge their duty to homeless households by offering a suitable tenancy of private rented housing.

4.2 Homelessness strategies

In addition to strengthening the duties owed to individual homeless applicants, the *Homelessness Act 2002* placed a duty on housing authorities to:

- carry out a review of homelessness in their areas;
- formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on this review;⁶⁹
- keep the strategy under review; and
- consult other local or public authorities, or voluntary organisations before adopting or modifying the strategy.⁷⁰

In [Homelessness Strategies--a good practice handbook](#) the Labour Government set out the case for the development of homelessness strategies:

Local authorities and other agencies helping homeless people need to do more than simply provide accommodation after people have become homeless. In many cases, early action can prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place. Even if people are rehoused, they may become homeless again if they are not helped to sustain their home. This is why the Government's proposals for homelessness reform, set out in the Housing Green Paper, included a policy of encouraging local authorities to take a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness. The Government believes that local housing authorities need to take a long term and strategic approach to tackling and managing homelessness, including rough sleeping, in their areas. Homelessness can only be tackled through the strategic planning of related services.

⁶⁶ DCLG, [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities: supplementary guidance on intentional homelessness](#), August 2009

⁶⁷ DCLG, [Supplementary guidance on domestic abuse and homelessness](#), November 2014

⁶⁸ *Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No.2 and Transitional Provisions) (England) Order 2012*

⁶⁹ Section 1(4) of the 2002 Act – see below, some authorities are exempt from this duty

⁷⁰ Section 3(8) of the 2002 Act

For some people, the causes of homelessness can be clear cut, such as giving up an existing tenancy or a relationship breakdown. For others, the reasons will be more complex, and for these people, homelessness is not just a housing problem. Some homeless people have other difficulties and support needs, such as physical and mental health problems, substance abuse, unemployment, histories of offending and chaotic lifestyles. These needs can be exacerbated by the trauma of homelessness and difficulties in accessing services when homeless. If levels of homelessness are to be permanently reduced, there is a need for a wide range of support and other preventive services for homeless people. For these reasons many services, for example health, social and other community services, in addition to housing providers, must be involved in successful homelessness strategies.

There are many examples of highly effective services provided by local authorities, other public bodies and voluntary organisations which help to prevent homelessness and to provide suitable and secure homes, along with any necessary support. In some areas, these services have been coordinated through local strategies, which help to reduce the level of homelessness more effectively than uncoordinated action would have achieved. Some authorities with planned strategies have been able to move beyond crisis management and to help a wider range of homeless people, even where there are high levels of homelessness and demand for social housing.

Effective local homelessness strategies can:

- provide information on the scale and nature of homelessness in the area;
- identify the additional accommodation and support required to meet those needs;
- identify the services needed to prevent homelessness occurring or recurring;
- identify the resources currently available to meet these needs;
- identify additional resources required;
- involve other public, voluntary and private agencies in partnership work;
- spread best practice among agencies.⁷¹

The initial date by which authorities had to comply with the duty to produce a homelessness strategy was 31 July 2003. Strategies had to be reviewed and renewed within five years.

Section 6 of the *Local Government Act 2000* permits the Secretary of State to dis-apply any enactment which requires a local authority to prepare, produce or publish any plan or strategy, if s/he is satisfied that it is not appropriate for such an enactment to apply. In exercise of that power, the Secretary of State made the *Local Authorities' Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) (England) Order 2005* (S.I. 2005/157) which

⁷¹ ODPM, March 2002, paras 1.1.1-1.1.4

dis-applied a number of statutory plans and strategies in relation to local authorities categorised as “excellent,” including the duty to compile a homelessness strategy. The *Local Authorities’ Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) (England) (Amendment) Order 2009 (S.I. 2009/714)* provided that local authorities rated as 4 or 3 star authorities were exempt from, *inter alia*, the duty to compile a homelessness strategy.

4.3 The performance of local authorities

Homelessness prevention and relief

In addition to quarterly statistics, DCLG used to publish an annual statistical release on Homelessness Prevention and Relief work taking place outside the statutory framework by local authorities in England. The [2015/16 release](#) was published alongside the statistics for the first quarter of 2016 on 30 June 2016. The main points from this release included:

- In 2015/16, a total of 213,600 cases of homelessness prevention or relief are estimated to have taken place outside the statutory homelessness framework in England. Of these cases, 198,740 (93%) were preventions and 14,250 (7%) were cases of relief.
- The total number of cases of homelessness prevention or relief fell by 3% when compared to 2014/15. This overall change includes a fall in both the number of preventions, down from 205,040 and in the number of cases of relief, down from 15,660.
- In 2015/16, 48% (95,970) of cases of homelessness prevention involved the household being assisted to obtain alternative accommodation. The remaining 52% (102,770) involved households being assisted to remain in their existing home. These proportions are similar to those achieved in 2014/15 at 47% and 53% respectively.
- Of those cases who were assisted to remain in their own homes, the most common prevention action was assistance to resolve problems with Housing Benefit (23,350 cases, or 23%).
- Of those cases who were assisted to find alternative accommodation, the most common actions of both prevention and relief were to make a Part 6 offer of local authority accommodation or a nomination to a Private Registered Provider. These constituted 31% of such prevention cases (29,960 cases).⁷²

Homelessness was prevented or relieved outside the statutory framework for 213,600 households in 2015/16

Although the release recorded a fall in prevention/relief work on 2014/15, the number of cases dealt with in this way increased by 38% from 165,200 recorded in 2009/10 to 228,400 in 2013/14 before falling back to 212,600 in 2015/16. Section 2.2 of this paper notes that the UK Statistics Authority has deemed that the Homelessness Prevention and Relief statistics "do not currently meet the standard to be National

⁷² DCLG Statistical Release, 30 June 2016, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: January to March 2016](#)

Statistics." The Authority said that the release should be published quarterly as part of "an integrated package" with the Statutory Homelessness Statistics.⁷³ The prevention and relief statistics *are* now published with the data on statutory homelessness. Homelessness was prevented for 47,420 households and relieved for 3,540 households between October and December 2016.⁷⁴

Meeting their homelessness duties

Several studies have identified variations in the quality of local authority homelessness services and funding pressures on those services.

Recurrent themes have included:

- poor coordination and collaboration with other agencies, e.g. health services and social services;
- a lack of rigorous investigation by local authorities with some applicants turned away without receiving a full assessment, leading to charges of gate-keeping;
- inconsistent assessment of vulnerability and intentionality; and
- pressure on local authority resources in terms of staffing and costs, particularly the cost of temporary accommodation.⁷⁵

The independent panel of experts established by Crisis in 2015 identified particular issues with the standard of advice and assistance given to non-priority applicants. Crisis conducted a mystery shopping exercise in 2014 in order to test the standard of advice and assistance given to single homeless people. The evidence gathered led Crisis to conclude that in a majority of cases (50 of 87), applicants received inadequate or insufficient help. A significant number of mystery shoppers had no assessment carried out and were not able to make a homeless application.⁷⁶

These findings are reinforced by data gathered using the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) in London. Over 2015/16 804 people seen rough sleeping for the first time were recorded as having approached their local authority Housing Options service for help in the 12 months prior to first being seen rough sleeping. This represents almost 10% of all new rough sleepers in the year. Of these, 728 (93%) had approached Housing Options teams in London boroughs.

While the move to a Housing Options approach by local authorities is welcomed as generating positive outcomes in terms of prevention work, there are concerns that it is being used to reduce the number of homeless acceptances amongst households in priority need. There are

Around 10% of rough sleepers seen in 2015/16 in London had contacted a local authority for assistance before sleeping rough.

⁷³ UK Statistics Authority, [Statistics on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in England \(Department for Communities and Local Government\)](#), December 2015

⁷⁴ DCLG Statistical Release, 23 March 2017, [Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief: October to December 2016](#); DCLG [Live Tables 787, 788, 789](#)

⁷⁵ For details of these studies see section 4.3 of Library Briefing Paper 01164, [Statutory Homelessness In England](#), October 2016

⁷⁶ [The Homelessness legislation: an independent review of the legal duties owed to homeless people](#), April 2016, p14

some reports of it being difficult for applicants to make a homeless application in order to trigger the local authority's statutory duties:

The problem is typically [local authorities] not just making an application difficult, but an attempt to filter people away from getting a homeless application made, let alone accepted. That has unfortunately been, in part, the role of what some local authorities have been calling their housing options routes ... Typically we find people saying that you have to go through the housing options route for 14 days or 28 days before they will take a homeless application. If someone is at risk of homelessness, that application has to be made when they present, otherwise it is gatekeeping.⁷⁷

March 2011 saw the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) voice concern over the number of complaints received where councils were employing "gatekeeping" practices in relation to homeless applications.⁷⁸ In July 2011 the LGO published *Homelessness: How councils can ensure justice for homeless people*, in which it said:

Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman suggest that people who face homelessness do not always receive the help that they are entitled to from councils. Other organisations have coined the phrase 'gatekeeping' to describe where councils refuse to accept a homelessness application or to provide interim accommodation where there is no legitimate reason.⁷⁹

The report gave examples of gatekeeping practices and contained advice for authorities on good practice in dealing with homeless applications.

In early 2016 the LGO ordered Eastbourne Borough Council to pay £2,300 in compensation after concluding that council officers failed to follow the law and the council's policies when handling a vulnerable man's homelessness application. The LGO's report on the case refers to "aggressive gatekeeping" by the council "with a view to avoid providing him [the homeless applicant] with interim accommodation."⁸⁰

The CLG Select Committee received substantial evidence of poor local authority practice when dealing with applicants for assistance during its 2016-17 inquiry into homelessness. The Committee concluded:

We acknowledge that the task facing local authorities is significant and that under the current legislation, sorting and prioritising some applicants over others is required. However it is not acceptable that the level of support offered to vulnerable people can vary significantly across the country. We welcome and applaud initiatives such as those at Newham and Camden, but remain concerned that some other local authorities have not been so proactive. As we have heard from witnesses who have been homeless: at a time when they are most vulnerable, people deserve to be treated with compassion and understanding rather than as if they were at fault. *We therefore call on the Government to monitor local authorities in order to promote best practice, to*

⁷⁷ [CLG Select Committee, Third Report of 2016-17, Homelessness, HC 40](#), August 2016, para 40

⁷⁸ *Inside Housing*, "Councils failing to accept the homeless", 25 February 2011

⁷⁹ LGO, *Homelessness: How councils can ensure justice for homeless people*, July 2011

⁸⁰ [LGO decision, Eastbourne Borough Council \(14016569\)](#), 2016

identify authorities which are not meeting their statutory duties and implement a code of practice to which local authorities should adhere. We will continue to monitor the work of local authorities and will return to the issue in twelve months and may consider commissioning independent research of local authority practises.⁸¹

Legal challenges

There have been several significant court cases in which council practices in relation to fulfilling their homelessness duties have been criticised.

The case of *R (IA) v Westminster City Council*⁸² attracted attention in 2013. IA was an Iranian national who had been granted asylum in the UK. Whilst in Iran, he had been imprisoned and tortured. Following the acceptance of his asylum application, he lived in a privately rented flat. In early 2013 the landlord sought possession as he was concerned about the ability of IA to meet future rental payments as a result of welfare benefit reforms. IA applied for assistance to Westminster Council. He provided a report from his GP setting out his mental and physical disabilities resulting from his treatment in Iran. He was interviewed by a caseworker for "an hour or so.". At the end of the interview he was issued with a section 184 notification in which the officer stated she had discussed the case with an independent medical officer and had determined, *inter alia*, that he was not in priority need.

IA obtained legal assistance and sought a review of that decision (under section 202 of the 1996 Act). He also sought accommodation pending review. The authority declined to provide accommodation and judicial review proceedings were issued. A "without notice" interim order was made requiring Westminster to provide accommodation. At the return date, the court considered whether (i) to continue the interim order; and (ii) permission for judicial review should be granted.

IA was successful on both counts. It was held that Westminster could not have carried out an adequate inquiry into the applicant's circumstances during the short interview. The decision that IA was not in priority need seemed "irrational and, indeed, perverse". Although only a decision on permission and therefore not normally capable of being cited, the judge held that, given the "importance and topicality" of the case, a direction should be made under para.6.1 of the *Practice Direction (Citation of Authorities)* [2001] 1 W.L.R. 1001, permitting the case to be cited.

In another case concerning Westminster, *R(Alemi) v Westminster CC* [2015]⁸³ HHJ Blair QC found that the council's allocation scheme was unlawful in disbarring successful homeless applicants (other than a small group) from bidding for social housing in their first 12 months on the list.

⁸¹ [CLG Select Committee, Third Report of 2016-17, Homelessness, HC 40](#), August 2016, para 50

⁸² [2013 EWHC 1273 (QB)]

⁸³ *R(Alemi) v Westminster CC* [2015] EWHC 1765 (Admin)

The failures of two London boroughs, Havering and Tower Hamlets, attracted particular criticism from Cobb J in [AM v Tower Hamlets LBC and Havering LBC](#):

As I have earlier indicated, numerous judges before me have called on local authorities to co-operate in their discharge of functions in respect of the vulnerable and needy; it appears that these exhortations continue in some quarters at least to fall on deaf ears. Judicial encouragement to good practice is underpinned by statutory expectation (see generally *section 11* of the *CA 2004*, and specifically in relation to the requirement for prompt notification: *section 208* and *section 213 HA 1996*). Regrettably the financial implications on receiving authorities of accepting responsibility for those with needs prove to be a significant deterrent to demonstrable good practice. Statutory duties have not been designed, or interpreted, to operate in insulated silos, nor should they be discharged in this way. Even though local authorities have wide powers to act in the best interests of children (see the *Localism Act 2011*, and the *section 11* of the *CA 2004*), they sometimes fail to do so. This is one such lamentable example, with the effect that the children were pushed from 'pillar to post' (see [33](xvi) above, and *R(G) v Southwark* at [28(3)]). Indeed, the strategy which each authority adopted on 2 July 2014 (rehearsed extensively at [14] above) to avoid responsibility for AM and his family was shameful.⁸⁴

Two other Supreme Court rulings handed down in 2015 have extended the definition of vulnerability, meaning that more homeless applicants may be deemed to be vulnerable;⁸⁵ councils are now also required to consider additional factors before deeming an applicant to be intentionally homeless.⁸⁶

Homeless 16 and 17 year olds

Research published by the Law Centres Network in February 2013 concluded that local authority protocols for dealing with homeless 16 and 17 year olds did not comply with the law, resulting in homeless young people failing to receive the support to which they are entitled.⁸⁷ These findings were reinforced by the Children's Society's report [Getting the house in order](#) (March 2015). Based on Freedom of Information requests to local authorities the Society estimates:

- Every year approximately 12,000 young people aged 16 and 17 present as homeless to their local authority. The actual number may be significantly higher as the data on homeless 16 and 17 year-olds is not gathered consistently. Out of the 259 responses we received, only 114 local authorities could provide complete answers to our FOIs.
- Only half of young people who present as homeless receive assessment under the Housing Act 1996 and/or the Children Act 1989. In a large minority of cases the Children Act is not given precedence over the Housing Act as it should and as has been established in case law.

⁸⁴ [AM v Tower Hamlets LBC and Havering LBC](#) [2015] EWHC 1004 (Admin), para 48

⁸⁵ [Kanu v LB Southward; Hotak v LB Southward and Johnson v Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council](#) [2015] UKSC 30

⁸⁶ [Haile v Waltham Forest LBC](#) [2015] UKSC 34

⁸⁷ Law Centres Network, [Supporting homeless 16 and 17 year olds](#), February 2013

- As few as one in five of those who present as homeless get accommodated. And of them, only 20% are accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (and become a looked after child) as required by the statutory guidance on the provision of accommodation for homeless 16 and 17 year-olds.
- The remaining four young people in every five do not receive assistance. Many are encouraged to return home to their parents, but less than 5% receive support to help rebuild their relationship with their parents or carers – a serious safeguarding concern.⁸⁸

In October 2015 Centrepoin t said that 30,000 young people had been turned away without help:

Freedom of Information requests submitted by Centrepoin t show that at least 136,000 16-24 year-olds asked authorities in England and Wales for help because they were homeless or at risk of homelessness (based on 146 responses from councils).

The findings suggest councils are unable to cope with the volume of young people in need of support. In 2014, only 40 per cent of young people in England were given an assessment to find out whether they were eligible for emergency housing. In Wales, 60 per cent were assessed.

Without assessments in all cases, some of the most vulnerable could miss out on immediate housing support to which they are legally entitled, leaving them at risk.

In England and Wales, just 15,000 young people were found to be statutory homeless after assessment in 2014/15 – meaning that they met the criteria to legally be entitled to housing, such as: being under-18 years-old; at risk of domestic violence or having a dependent child. The proportion of young people accepted as statutory homeless after presenting to their local councils has fallen, from 20 per cent in 2012 to 12 percent in 2014.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Children's Society, [Getting the house in order](#), March 2015

⁸⁹ Centrepoin t, [30,000 Homeless Young People Turned Away by Councils](#), 11 October 2015

Appendix

Source (throughout): DCLG, [Statutory homelessness prevention and relief live tables](#)

Table 1: Homeless acceptances and households in temporary accommodation

England: 1979-2016

	Acceptances		Households in accommodation arranged by local authorities under homelessness provisions: at end of period				
			Total	Priority	Total	Bed and Breakfast Hotels	Hostels/ Woman's Refuges	Leased dwellings/ Private sector^{1}	Other/ LA/RSL stock^{1}
	Total	Priority	Total	Hotels	Refuges	Private sector ¹	stock ¹
1979	55,530		5,590	2,030	3,560	..	..
1980	60,400		4,710	1,330	3,380	..	..
1981	66,990		4,840	1,520	3,320	..	..
1982	71,620		9,340	1,640	3,500	..	4,200
1983	75,470		9,840	2,700	3,400	..	3,740
1984	80,500		12,300	3,670	3,990	..	4,640
1985	91,010		15,920	5,360	4,730	..	5,830
1986	100,490		20,790	8,990	4,610	..	7,190
1987	109,170		24,760	10,370	5,150	..	9,240
1988	113,770		30,100	10,970	6,240	..	12,890
1989	122,180		37,900	11,480	8,020	..	18,400
1990	140,350		45,270	11,130	9,010	..	25,130
1991	144,780	137,250	59,930	12,150	9,990	23,740	14,050
1992	142,890	138,740	63,070	7,630	10,840	27,910	16,690
1993	132,380	127,630	53,580	4,900	10,210	23,270	15,200
1994	122,460	118,490	45,630	4,130	9,730	15,800	15,970
1995	121,280	117,490	44,140	4,500	9,660	11,530	18,450
1996	116,870	113,590	42,190	4,160	9,640	10,980	17,410
1997	..	102,000	44,870	4,520	8,730	17,920	13,700
1998	..	104,630	53,790	7,240	9,760	19,230	17,560
1999	..	105,370	62,180	8,000	9,660	24,190	20,330
2000	..	111,340	73,080	9,870	10,790	28,100	24,320
2001	..	117,830	77,510	11,890	9,850	28,400	26,570
2002	..	123,840	85,140	13,240	9,640	34,680	27,580
2003	..	135,590	94,610	8,420	10,370	48,360	27,470
2004	..	127,760	101,030	6,450	10,060	56,780	27,730
2005	..	100,170	98,730	4,950	9,230	60,330	24,220
2006	..	76,860	89,510	4,210	7,840	58,620	18,840
2007	..	64,970	79,500	3,530	6,620	53,440	15,910
2008	..	57,510	67,480	2,560	5,250	47,740	11,930
2009	..	41,780	53,370	1,880	4,150	39,160	8,180
2010	..	42,390	48,010	2,310	4,160	34,110	7,430
2011	..	48,510	48,920	3,170	4,310	33,450	7,990
2012	..	53,480	53,140	3,820	4,280	35,940	9,090
2013	..	53,210	56,940	3,920	4,710	38,740	9,560
2014	..	53,410	61,930	4,540	5,090	41,780	10,530
2015	..	56,500	69,140	5,120	5,360	46,190	12,480
2016	..	59,260	75,740	5,990	5,700	50,020	14,040

Note: ¹ Figures from 1997 are taken under both the 1985 and 1996 Housing Acts, presentation of these differs from earlier years and are not directly comparable. Prior to 1997 the headings of the final two columns are 'Leased Dwellings' and 'Other'. From 1997 the figures in these columns relate to 'Private sector' dwellings and 'LA/RSL stock'.

The totals may not equal the sum of components because of rounding.

Table 2: Decisions taken on applications from eligible households

England: 1991-2016

	Unintentionally homeless & in priority need	Intentionally homeless & in priority need	Homeless but not in priority need	Not homeless	Total decisions
Number of decisions					
1991	137,250	6,370	80,240	77,760	301,620
1992	138,740	6,380	79,820	80,700	305,640
1993	127,630	5,790	72,690	82,140	288,250
1994	118,490	5,080	65,990	80,070	269,630
1995	117,490	4,920	65,480	83,610	271,500
1996	113,590	5,070	60,950	84,290	263,900
1997	102,000	4,960	58,000	77,380	242,340
1998	104,630	6,120	55,480	79,120	245,350
1999	105,370	7,330	55,150	75,440	243,290
2000	111,340	8,860	51,610	75,380	247,190
2001	117,830	8,420	54,330	74,500	255,080
2002	123,840	9,460	60,170	75,870	269,330
2003	135,590	12,230	67,120	82,040	296,970
2004	127,760	13,640	63,300	76,780	281,460
2005	100,170	13,830	48,990	64,270	227,260
2006	76,860	11,410	33,910	46,360	168,530
2007	64,970	9,920	24,630	38,190	137,690
2008	57,510	8,890	17,460	33,600	117,460
2009	41,780	6,880	16,230	28,710	93,600
2010	42,390	6,900	18,990	28,930	97,210
2011	48,510	7,840	19,920	30,970	107,240
2012	53,480	8,200	19,820	31,380	112,880
2013	53,210	8,640	20,800	30,280	112,920
2014	53,410	8,760	20,660	29,070	111,900
2015	56,500	9,420	19,540	27,860	113,310
2016	59,260	9,890	19,710	27,350	116,200
Per cent of total					
1991	46%	2%	27%	26%	100%
1992	45%	2%	26%	26%	100%
1993	44%	2%	25%	28%	100%
1994	44%	2%	24%	30%	100%
1995	43%	2%	24%	31%	100%
1996	43%	2%	23%	32%	100%
1997	42%	2%	24%	32%	100%
1998	43%	2%	23%	32%	100%
1999	43%	3%	23%	31%	100%
2000	45%	4%	21%	30%	100%
2001	46%	3%	21%	29%	100%
2002	46%	4%	22%	28%	100%
2003	46%	4%	23%	28%	100%
2004	45%	5%	22%	27%	100%
2005	44%	6%	22%	28%	100%
2006	46%	7%	20%	28%	100%
2007	47%	7%	18%	28%	100%
2008	49%	8%	15%	29%	100%
2009	45%	7%	17%	31%	100%
2010	44%	7%	20%	30%	100%
2011	45%	7%	19%	29%	100%
2012	47%	7%	18%	28%	100%
2013	47%	8%	18%	27%	100%
2014	48%	8%	18%	26%	100%
2015	50%	8%	17%	25%	100%
2016	51%	9%	17%	24%	100%

Note: Figures from 1997 are taken under both the 1985 and 1996 Housing Acts
The totals may not equal the sum of components because of rounding.

Table 3: Homeless acceptances in priority need by reason for loss of last settled home

England: 1991-2016

	Relative/friends no longer able to accommodate			Relationship breakdown			Loss of rented accommodation						Total
	Parents	Others	Total	Violent	Other	Total	Mortgage arrears	Rent arrears	End of shorthold tenancy	Loss of other rented or tied accommodation	Total	Other	
1991	..	..	61,020	..	..	23,620	16,630	3,930	..	..	19,960	19,630	144,780
1992	39,750	19,180	58,930	15,260	8,740	24,000	13,710	3,090	8,710	12,140	20,850	22,310	142,890
1993	33,210	17,310	50,520	16,950	8,420	25,370	10,740	2,320	11,010	11,690	22,700	20,740	132,380
1994	25,240	16,040	41,280	17,590	7,900	25,490	10,150	2,070	11,830	11,580	23,410	20,060	122,460
1995	20,930	15,050	35,980	19,880	7,830	27,710	9,960	2,140	13,110	11,460	24,570	20,920	121,280
1996	19,560	14,230	33,790	20,080	7,930	28,010	8,210	2,310	13,630	11,010	24,640	20,050	117,010
1997	15,880	11,310	27,190	18,800	7,010	25,810	6,000	2,370	13,530	9,340	22,870	17,780	102,000
1998	16,690	11,730	28,420	18,370	6,920	25,290	6,130	2,640	15,390	8,520	23,910	18,280	104,630
1999	17,070	13,130	30,200	17,770	7,290	25,060	4,880	3,130	14,430	8,090	22,520	19,630	105,370
2000	19,030	14,840	33,870	17,980	7,710	25,690	3,780	3,050	16,590	8,670	25,260	19,700	111,340
2001	21,920	17,240	39,160	17,810	8,300	26,110	3,090	3,580	17,520	8,250	25,770	20,890	118,610
2002	23,480	18,900	42,380	17,900	8,660	26,560	2,230	3,120	17,240	7,910	25,150	24,410	123,840
2003	29,000	20,790	49,790	17,290	9,370	26,660	2,020	2,970	17,300	7,590	24,890	29,310	135,590
2004	29,210	19,640	48,850	16,300	8,650	24,950	2,020	2,550	16,820	6,700	23,520	25,880	127,760
2005	23,490	15,080	38,570	12,880	6,530	19,410	2,180	2,230	13,150	5,570	18,720	19,150	100,170
2006	17,920	10,900	28,820	10,260	5,010	15,270	2,590	1,730	10,470	3,750	14,220	14,280	76,860
2007	14,980	8,630	23,610	8,260	3,970	12,230	2,380	1,620	9,960	3,340	13,300	11,850	64,970
2008	13,250	7,690	20,940	7,110	3,250	10,360	2,340	1,400	7,870	3,130	11,010	11,470	57,520
2009	9,610	5,270	14,880	5,880	2,550	8,430	1,370	1,170	4,580	2,270	6,850	9,080	41,780
2010	8,430	5,590	14,020	5,690	2,600	8,290	1,050	1,140	6,150	2,470	8,620	9,290	42,390
2011	9,600	6,670	16,270	6,080	2,690	8,770	1,520	1,340	8,540	2,760	11,300	9,320	48,510
2012	9,800	7,350	17,150	6,450	2,960	9,410	1,360	1,540	11,230	3,190	14,420	9,620	53,480
2013	8,810	6,960	15,770	6,310	2,620	8,930	1,070	1,700	13,560	3,090	16,650	9,070	53,210
2014	7,830	6,440	14,270	6,550	2,650	9,200	850	1,650	15,420	3,050	18,470	8,990	53,410
2015	8,410	6,850	15,260	6,530	2,650	9,180	490	1,810	17,190	3,430	20,620	9,140	56,500
2016	8,620	7,240	15,860	6,580	2,890	9,470	360	1,620	18,750	4,010	22,760	9,190	59,260

Share of total acceptances													
	Parents	Others	Total	Violent	Other	Total	Mortgage arrears	Rent arrears	End of shorthold tenancy	Loss of other rented or tied accommodation	Total	Other	Total
1991	..	..	42%	..	..	16%	11%	3%	..	..	14%	14%	100%
1992	28%	13%	41%	11%	6%	17%	10%	2%	6%	8%	15%	16%	100%
1993	25%	13%	38%	13%	6%	19%	8%	2%	8%	9%	17%	16%	100%
1994	21%	13%	34%	14%	6%	21%	8%	2%	10%	9%	19%	16%	100%
1995	17%	12%	30%	16%	6%	23%	8%	2%	11%	9%	20%	17%	100%
1996	17%	12%	29%	17%	7%	24%	7%	2%	12%	9%	21%	17%	100%
1997	16%	11%	27%	18%	7%	25%	6%	2%	13%	9%	22%	17%	100%
1998	16%	11%	27%	18%	7%	24%	6%	3%	15%	8%	23%	17%	100%
1999	16%	12%	29%	17%	7%	24%	5%	3%	14%	8%	21%	19%	100%
2000	17%	13%	30%	16%	7%	23%	3%	3%	15%	8%	23%	18%	100%
2001	18%	15%	33%	15%	7%	22%	3%	3%	15%	7%	22%	18%	100%
2002	19%	15%	34%	14%	7%	21%	2%	3%	14%	6%	20%	20%	100%
2003	21%	15%	37%	13%	7%	20%	1%	2%	13%	6%	18%	22%	100%
2004	23%	15%	38%	13%	7%	20%	2%	2%	13%	5%	18%	20%	100%
2005	23%	15%	39%	13%	7%	19%	2%	2%	13%	6%	19%	19%	100%
2006	23%	14%	37%	13%	7%	20%	3%	2%	14%	5%	19%	19%	100%
2007	23%	13%	36%	13%	6%	19%	4%	2%	15%	5%	20%	18%	100%
2008	23%	13%	36%	12%	6%	18%	4%	2%	14%	5%	19%	20%	100%
2009	23%	13%	36%	14%	6%	20%	3%	3%	11%	5%	16%	22%	100%
2010	20%	13%	33%	13%	6%	20%	2%	3%	15%	6%	20%	22%	100%
2011	20%	14%	34%	13%	6%	18%	3%	3%	18%	6%	23%	19%	100%
2012	18%	14%	32%	12%	6%	18%	3%	3%	21%	6%	27%	18%	100%
2013	20%	13%	33%	13%	6%	20%	2%	3%	15%	6%	20%	22%	100%
2014	20%	14%	34%	13%	6%	18%	3%	3%	18%	6%	23%	19%	100%
2015	18%	14%	32%	12%	6%	18%	3%	3%	21%	6%	27%	18%	100%
2016	17%	13%	30%	12%	5%	17%	2%	3%	25%	6%	31%	17%	100%

Notes: The totals may not equal the sum of components because of rounding.

Table 4: Homeless acceptances in priority need by need category

England: 1991-2016

	Household with dependent children	Household member pregnant	Household member vulnerable through:						Homeless in emergency	Total in priority need
			Old age	Physical Disability	Mental Illness	Young Person	Domestic Violence	Other		
Number of acceptances										
1991	88,950	18,830	5,860	4,430	4,750	..	..	12,610	1,820	137,250
1992	85,320	18,540	6,230	5,440	6,080	4,460	6,470	4,930	1,270	138,740
1993	76,390	16,500	5,920	5,400	6,490	4,470	7,060	4,250	1,150	127,630
1994	68,620	14,060	6,050	6,050	7,100	4,090	7,370	4,170	980	118,490
1995	66,290	13,430	5,890	6,550	7,430	3,760	8,430	4,550	1,160	117,490
1996	63,420	12,930	5,510	6,250	8,180	3,580	8,220	4,410	1,090	113,590
1997	59,380	10,580	4,160	5,220	6,910	3,170	6,380	5,080	1,130	102,000
1998	61,610	10,590	3,800	5,010	7,170	3,390	6,320	5,850	910	104,630
1999	62,280	10,350	3,850	5,160	7,610	3,540	6,140	5,500	940	105,370
2000	65,330	10,930	3,920	5,350	8,440	4,400	6,450	5,440	1,070	111,340
2001	67,180	11,610	4,250	6,130	10,000	5,730	6,330	5,560	1,050	117,830
2002	66,900	12,000	4,330	6,760	10,540	6,930	6,770	8,700	950	123,840
2003	68,840	13,950	4,330	7,330	12,050	10,860	6,210	11,140	860	135,590
2004	64,930	14,240	3,740	6,450	11,430	10,930	6,390	8,990	690	127,760
2005	52,370	12,090	2,530	4,970	8,060	8,970	4,420	6,220	560	100,170
2006	42,000	9,060	1,540	3,720	5,650	6,750	3,180	4,610	410	76,860
2007	37,480	7,570	1,140	3,240	4,460	5,220	2,230	3,230	450	64,970
2008	34,300	6,460	900	2,770	3,870	4,320	1,830	2,690	380	57,510
2009	23,850	4,970	600	2,460	3,230	3,000	1,600	1,900	190	41,780
2010	25,350	4,340	710	2,840	3,460	2,200	1,400	1,850	230	42,390
2011	30,370	4,840	740	3,160	3,860	2,060	1,460	1,790	240	48,510
2012	34,120	5,120	810	3,540	4,320	1,820	1,500	2,040	210	53,480
2013	34,520	4,350	790	3,700	4,490	1,560	1,540	2,080	180	53,210
2014	35,550	3,880	890	3,620	4,370	1,350	1,500	2,040	220	53,410
2015	38,040	3,990	860	3,960	4,780	1,160	1,390	2,060	260	56,500
2016	40,530	3,760	840	4,260	5,350	1,030	1,360	1,890	240	59,260
Per cent of total										
1991	65%	14%	4%	3%	3%	..	..	9%	1%	100%
1992	61%	13%	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	4%	1%	100%
1993	60%	13%	5%	4%	5%	4%	6%	3%	1%	100%
1994	58%	12%	5%	5%	6%	3%	6%	4%	1%	100%
1995	56%	11%	5%	6%	6%	3%	7%	4%	1%	100%
1996	56%	11%	5%	6%	7%	3%	7%	4%	1%	100%
1997	58%	10%	4%	5%	7%	3%	6%	5%	1%	100%
1998	59%	10%	4%	5%	7%	3%	6%	6%	1%	100%
1999	59%	10%	4%	5%	7%	3%	6%	5%	1%	100%
2000	59%	10%	4%	5%	8%	4%	6%	5%	1%	100%
2001	57%	10%	4%	5%	8%	5%	5%	5%	1%	100%
2002	54%	10%	3%	5%	9%	6%	5%	7%	1%	100%
2003	51%	10%	3%	5%	9%	8%	5%	8%	1%	100%
2004	51%	11%	3%	5%	9%	9%	5%	7%	1%	100%
2005	52%	12%	3%	5%	8%	9%	4%	6%	1%	100%
2006	55%	12%	2%	5%	7%	9%	4%	6%	1%	100%
2007	58%	12%	2%	5%	7%	8%	3%	5%	1%	100%
2008	60%	11%	2%	5%	7%	8%	3%	5%	1%	100%
2009	57%	12%	1%	6%	8%	7%	4%	5%	0%	100%
2010	60%	10%	2%	7%	8%	5%	3%	4%	1%	100%
2011	63%	10%	2%	7%	8%	4%	3%	4%	0%	100%
2012	64%	10%	2%	7%	8%	3%	3%	4%	0%	100%
2013	65%	8%	1%	7%	8%	3%	3%	4%	0%	100%
2014	67%	7%	2%	7%	8%	3%	3%	4%	0%	100%
2015	67%	7%	2%	7%	8%	2%	2%	4%	0%	100%
2016	68%	6%	1%	7%	9%	2%	2%	3%	0%	100%

Notes: The totals may not equal the sum of components because of rounding.

Table 5: Homeless acceptances in priority need by ethnicity

England: 1997-2016

	White	Black or Black British	Asian or Asian British	Other Ethnic Origin	Ethnic Origin Not Known	Total acceptances
Number of acceptances						
1997	78,100	6,930	4,790	5,170	7,040	102,000
1998	78,970	7,060	5,090	6,190	7,310	104,630
1999	77,620	7,590	5,550	7,100	7,530	105,370
2000	82,080	8,990	6,120	6,870	7,300	111,340
2001	84,440	10,350	6,810	7,900	8,330	117,830
2002	87,100	11,610	6,850	9,440	8,850	123,840
2003	97,620	13,050	7,070	9,760	8,090	135,590
2004	93,730	12,980	7,010	7,360	6,670	127,760
2005	74,460	10,340	5,280	5,120	4,970	100,170
2006	57,040	7,780	4,330	3,900	3,820	76,860
2007	47,420	6,670	3,870	3,360	3,660	64,970
2008	40,050	7,180	3,560	3,550	3,170	57,510
2009	28,670	5,680	2,700	2,820	1,920	41,780
2010	28,500	6,090	2,660	3,000	2,150	42,390
2011	32,490	6,810	3,260	3,660	2,290	48,510
2012	34,570	8,140	3,960	4,140	2,670	53,480
2013	33,430	8,260	4,590	3,890	3,030	53,210
2014	32,990	8,480	4,720	4,010	3,210	53,410
2015	33,510	9,270	5,330	4,680	3,710	56,500
2016	35,540	9,680	5,590	4,900	3,540	59,260
Per cent of total						
<i>1997</i>	<i>77%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>1998</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>1999</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2000</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2001</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2002</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2003</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2004</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2005</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2006</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2007</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2008</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2009</i>	<i>69%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2010</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2011</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2012</i>	<i>65%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2013</i>	<i>63%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2014</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2015</i>	<i>59%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>2016</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Notes: The totals may not equal the sum of components because of rounding.

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).