

I-SPHERE evidence on homelessness to The Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Introduction

The Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University welcome the opportunity to provide written evidence to the committee. The mission of I-SPHERE is to use world-class research to help drive change for people affected by extreme disadvantage, including homelessness and housing exclusion. Established in 2014 building on an interdisciplinary research pedigree spanning four decades, I-SPHERE has an international reputation for high-impact, policy-applied research that prioritises 'real world' change. Through our research we aim to (1) drive forward policy and legislative change to improve the lives of society's most vulnerable members (2) help governments and charities target funds effectively and (3) set the parameters of local/national/global academic and policy debate on extreme disadvantage. In 2019, Heriot-Watt University was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize – the highest honour in UK higher education – in recognition of I-SPHERE's work on addressing homelessness and extreme disadvantage.

Dr Beth Watts is a Senior Research Fellow in I-SPHERE. She leads the Crisis-funded Homelessness Monitors research study, which has tracked the impacts of economic and policy change on homelessness across the UK since 2011. In 2018, she led research on temporary accommodation use in Scotland, funded by Social Bite and which informed the deliberations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group and Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan. She is an international expert on 'what works' in responding to homelessness.

This written evidence draws primarily on the recently published *Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2021*¹ which tracked the impact of economic and policy trends on homelessness, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study draws on data including:

- in-depth interviews with key stakeholders from across the statutory and voluntary sectors in Scotland;
- statistical analysis on relevant economic and social trends in Scotland and the scale, nature and trends in homelessness;
- a bespoke online survey of Scotland's local authorities (LAs) in spring 2021, exploring local homelessness trends and also on the impacts of a range of relevant policy developments across the country; 29 of Scotland's 32 LAs responded to this year's survey;
- a statistical modelling exercise which both estimates 'core' forms of homelessness, and projects trends in these forms of homelessness into the future.

Summary and key points

Our analysis suggests that the priority for addressing homelessness in Scotland should be a sustained focus on effectively implementing the current policy agenda,

¹ Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H. & Young, G. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2021*, London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/scotland/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2021/>

and addressing the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on implementation to date. While there has been good initial progress implementing many aspects of the Ending Homelessness Together (EHT) Action Plan, the Plan reflects a highly ambitious transformation agenda that is far from complete. The Committee may therefore wish to explore how this momentum is sustained beyond the initial five-year implementation period and gains solidified and built upon, rather than lost.

- There has been significant progress delivering the EHT Action Plan, particularly in relation to local authorities' development and initial implementation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, the improved contribution of Health and Social Care Partnerships in relation to homelessness, and the scaling up of the Housing First model as a response to those facing homelessness alongside other complex needs.
- Despite strong initial progress developing and progressing Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, there was a common view that these Plans remain significantly under-resourced. This relates to broader concerns about a shortfall between the laudable and welcome ambition of the overall EHT Action Plan and the resources, both in terms of funding and housing supply, required to realise it in practice. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the implementation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, but these plans were also seen to have supported effective responses to the pandemic.
- Progress transforming the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland has not been made. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic drove up temporary accommodation use, and lengths of stay, and necessitated the widespread use of the most problematic non self-contained forms of accommodation². Stakeholders also report this being too early in the EHT Action Plan implementation process to be seeing radical downturns in temporary accommodation use, underlining the importance of continued efforts and focus in this area.
- Key stakeholders are overwhelmingly supportive of the recommendations of the Prevention Review Group (convened by Crisis at the invitation of the Scottish Government), and almost all local authority survey respondents identified aspects of the proposals that would work well in their locality, with only half identifying aspects that would be challenging. Likely to work especially well are the emphasis on improved joint working and obligations on wider public bodies. The challenges identified oriented around the practicalities of the proposed new approach.
- The Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic focused on accommodating people sleeping rough and decanting night shelter

² International and Scotland-specific evidence has consistently shown that shared and congregate forms of emergency and temporary accommodation, where residents share bedrooms and/or facilities including bathrooms, kitchen and laundry facilities (like night shelters, hostels and B&Bs) can be stressful, unpleasant and often harmful places. Self-contained accommodation where individual households have their own bedroom, bathroom, kitchen etc. are preferred by the vast majority of people facing homelessness, and associated with more positive outcomes. See for example: Mackie, P., Johnsen, S., and Wood, J. (2017) *Ending rough sleeping: what works? An international evidence review*. Crisis: London. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/services-and-interventions/ending-rough-sleeping-what-works-an-international-evidence-review/>; Watts, B., Littlewood, M., Blenkinsopp, J., & Jackson, F. (2018). *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Final Report*. Social Bite. http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SB_TempAccommReport_FinalReport.pdf.

accommodation using hotel or other single-room accommodation. Funds were made available to trusted third sector partners with speed and minimal bureaucratic barriers. These measures were credited with reducing rough sleeping to unprecedentedly low levels. Intensive multi-agency working prompted by the pandemic enabled positive engagement with those with long histories of rough sleeping and complex needs.

- The inclusion of those with No Recourse to Public Funds brought a group previously hidden from services into view and enabled more consistent access to accommodation and support to this group.
- Concerns emerged, however, regarding the wellbeing of those accommodated in hotels in response to the pandemic and their exposure to exploitation and other forms of anti-social and criminal behaviour. These issues were especially acute in Glasgow during the early stages of the pandemic, when insufficient on-site support was available to this group.
- Restrictions on evictions were vital in preventing homelessness during the pandemic. The number of households citing eviction as the main reason homelessness presentation fell by 57% in 2020/21 compared to the previous year. Also ranked as highly important by local authorities were additional Scottish Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments and the Scottish Welfare Fund. The additional £5m Scottish Government funding provided to local authorities to implement Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans in November 2020 was also valued highly.
- Our projections analysis indicates that a range of measures could reduce core homelessness in Scotland over the relatively short-term, with the biggest potential associated with the use of rapid rehousing to settled accommodation e.g. social rehousing quotas for core homeless households or enhanced access to the Private Rented Sector, maximising prevention, implementing the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, and increased welfare benefit levels making the private rented sector more accessible. Specifically in relation to rough sleeping, the most impactful practices would be prioritised access to settled housing and continued use of the special COVID-related provision of hotel-type accommodation.
- In the longer term, large projected core homelessness reductions could be generated by rapid access to settled housing, prevention and welfare measures, raising the Local Housing Allowance, and sustained expansion of Housing First and accompanying reduction in traditional hostel accommodation

Progress towards delivery of the Ending Homelessness Together (EHT) Action Plan

In this section we focus on progress in relation to the following themes: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) implementation; the role of Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs); Housing First; transforming the use of temporary accommodation (TA); and the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO).

RRTP implementation

A key mechanism for the delivery of the Action Plan has been the development and implementation of 5-year RRTPs by all local authorities. Key stakeholders who participated in the *Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2021* were generally positive about the implementation of plans to date and prospects for further progress. More than half

of local authority survey respondents (15 of 29) reported that Plans in their area had led to alteration of social housing allocations policies, with changes anticipated in the near future in seven more. In most cases, these adjustments involved increasing quotas or targets for the proportion (or number) of social housing lettings for allocation to homeless households.

The key concern to emerge from the Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2021 report in relation to the implementation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans relates to resourcing. The Scottish Government has increased allocated funding twice, first in recognition of the shortfall between requested funds and allocated budgets in the first tranche of Plans, and again in response to the pandemic. The £5 million 2021/22 funding uplift was acknowledged as an important element of the COVID-19 response by most local authority survey respondents (24 of 29). Nevertheless, there was a common view that Plans remain significantly under-resourced. This relates to broader concerns about a shortfall between the laudable and welcome ambition of the overall Action Plan and the resources, both in terms of funding and housing supply, required to realise it in practice.³

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted the implementation of RRTPs. More than a third of local authority survey respondents (11 of 29) reported that the pandemic had negatively impacted local implementation of their plan. The most frequently cited challenges were the need to cope with increased demand for temporary accommodation during 2020/21; additional pressure on staff members due to pandemic-induced workload stress; and reduced ability to rehouse households out of temporary accommodation due to diminished social housing letting activity. On the other hand, having RRTPs in place supported homelessness responses to the pandemic according to most local authority survey respondents (20 of 29), not least as a result of improved partnership arrangements in place as a result of Plan their development.

The role of HSCPs

Our local authority survey also indicates positive progress in the contribution of Health and Social Care Partnerships to addressing homelessness, linked in part to the development of RRTPs, but also reflecting the impacts of the pandemic. In 2021, over half (17 of 29) of local authority survey respondents reported Health and Social Care Partnerships making a positive contribution to the prevention and/or alleviation of homelessness, almost double the number in our 2018 survey (8 of 28). However, a third of 2021 local authority survey respondents nevertheless reported that Health and Social Care Partnerships have had little impact on their ability to prevent and/or alleviate homelessness, and some noted this as a barrier to progressing the rapid rehousing agenda, so there is considerable remaining scope for improvement in this area. The recommendations made by the Prevention Review Group will help to enable this.

Housing First

³ See also The Salvation Army (2021) *Homelessness in Scotland: Research for The Salvation Army*. Online: The Salvation Army. <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/2021-03/TSA%20Report%20Homelessness%20in%20Scotland%20FINAL%20%28Full%29.pdf>. p.4

Scaling up of the evidence-based Housing First model as a response to those experiencing homelessness alongside other complex needs is a key focus in the EHT Action Plan. Key here has been Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder programme, which operates in five areas encompassing six local authorities (Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling). The interim report of an independent evaluation of conducted by I-SPHERE's Professor Sarah Johnsen found that:

“the Pathfinder has to date been highly effective at supporting homeless people with multiple and complex needs to sustain their tenancies. At the end of June 2021, by which time 531 people had been housed, the Pathfinder had achieved an overall 12-month tenancy sustainment rate of 84% and 24-month tenancy sustainment rate of 82%. These figures are commensurate with tenancy sustainment rates reported internationally, despite the Pathfinder having operated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic for more than a year.

The experiences of Pathfinder service user interviewees were extremely positive on balance. Some described the effects on their lives as transformational. They explained that the relationality, stickability, flexibility and longevity of Housing First support set it apart from other services they had used in the past. These attributes had in their views not only strengthened their ability to sustain a tenancy but also facilitated their willingness to engage with support and fostered their recovery from addiction and/or poor mental health.”⁴

Key stakeholders who took part in the Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2021 study were also positive about the Pathfinder programme, noting that all areas involved have voiced intentions to continue provision despite the tapering down of the Scottish Government funding. Our local authority survey also indicates that Housing First services are in operation in two thirds of Scottish local authorities, well beyond the Pathfinder areas, and with their introduction also planned in several more. Positive impacts reported in this wider set of local authorities include tenancy sustainment, wider benefits to tenant choice and control, and gains on partnership working. At the same time, there are ongoing challenges in relation to resourcing, access to housing, levels of buy-in from non-housing partners, and maintaining programme fidelity, concerns also raised in relation to the Pathfinder programme.

Transforming the use of temporary accommodation

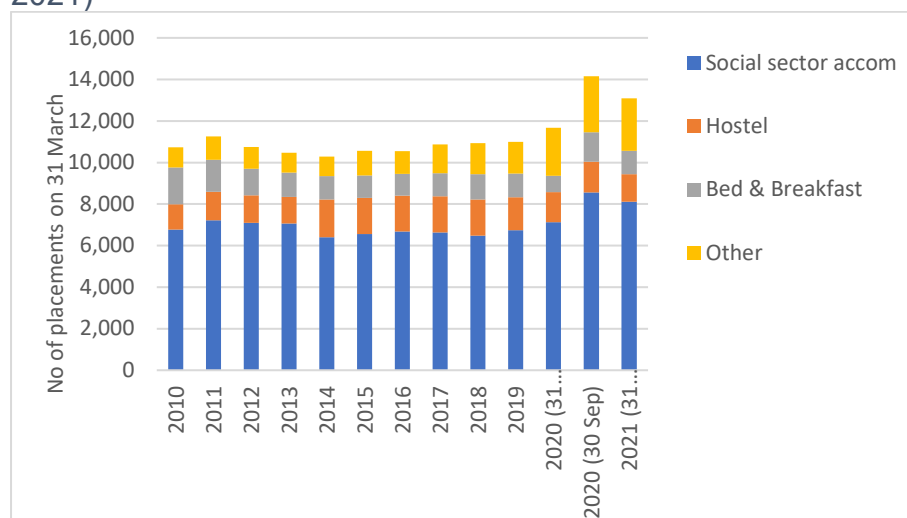
Transforming the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households in Scotland is a key focus of the Action Plan, with the ambition being to reduce the number of households residing in TA, as well as lengths of stay within it, and to minimise the use of the inappropriate non self-contained forms of TA.

Prior to COVID-19, total TA placements had been running at largely stable levels of 10-11,000 for the decade to 2019 (see Figure 1). These high levels of TA use reflect dramatic increases, up from around 4,000 households in 2002, following the expansion of temporary and settled rehousing entitlements initiated in the early 2000s

⁴ Johnsen, S., Blenkinsopp, J., & Rayment, M. (2021). *Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation: First Interim Report (full report)*. Heriot-Watt University. <https://doi.org/10.17861/c5n3-0h95>

and fully implemented in 2012 on completion of the phasing out of the ‘priority need’ criterion.⁵

Figure 1: Homeless households in temporary accommodation – snapshot total at financial year end (Source: Scottish Government/Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2021)



These high levels of TA use are widely acknowledged by key stakeholders to be a highly problematic aspect of the Scottish homelessness response, albeit that they are a side effect of its internationally lauded rights-based response, with the solution seen to be improved access to settled housing, as well as improved prevention.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on TA placement numbers. Between 31 March and 30 September 2020, overall TA numbers grew by 21%. Within this, B&B/hotel placements rose by 79% to stand at almost double their number a year earlier (99%). Significantly, across all forms of TA, the rise in placements seen during 2020 largely involved adult-only, rather than family households. By 31 March 2021, while somewhat reduced, total placements remained substantially higher than a year earlier, at just over 13,000. The pandemic period also saw a slight increase in lengths of stay in TA, albeit that these vary greatly by type of accommodation. While 2020 saw a very slight increase in families in non-self-contained forms of provision (primarily B&Bs), LAs succeeded in reducing such placements in Q3-4 2020/21 and they remain at very low levels historically.⁶ Nevertheless, at 31 March 2021, 3,645 households with children or a pregnant women were in TA across Scotland, the highest number for a decade.

Key informants acknowledge that the pandemic has negatively impacted on LAs’ capacity to reduce use of TA in line with aims of the EHT Action Plan and RRTPs, and see efforts to reduce this COVID-19 related backlog as likely to dominate the next few years. It was noted, however, that there were some early signs of progress in terms of

⁵ Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Watts, B., Wood, J., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2019*. London: Crisis.

https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/240002/the_homelessness_monitor_scotland_2019.pdf

⁶ The reduction likely largely attributable to ‘Unsuitable Accommodation Order’ regulations introduced in the early 2000s to restrict such placements involving pregnant women and families.

the transformation of TA, including much increased use of ‘flipping’ TA tenancies into permanent homes, especially where households have resided there for some time. Furthermore, it was a common view that LAs are still in the early stages of this radical transformative agenda, and that initial progress (discussed elsewhere in this written evidence) has laid positive foundations for further change:

“it’s too early [to be seeing significant reductions in the time spent in TA]... the fact that local authorities got on board with it, they collaborated locally to develop one [an RRTP]... and have been implementing them is positive” (Key informant, voluntary sector)

The UAO

Following recommendations from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group, in 2017 the Unsuited Accommodation Order was amended to extend restrictions on the use of hotels and Bed and Breakfasts to all household types. The order had previously only covered pregnant women or families with children, limiting their length of stay to a maximum of 7 days. The new Order, however, had not yet come into force at the onset of the pandemic, and its implementation was subsequently delayed. There was a consensus among key informants that the extension of the Order to all households was a positive and highly significant shift. Delays to its implementation were heavily criticised by a small minority of key informants in the 2021 Homelessness Monitor Scotland, but strongly defended as a necessary response to the challenges associated with the pandemic response by all statutory sector key informants and most voluntary sector participants. Nine local authority survey respondents anticipated that the extension would pose funding and resourcing challenges, reflecting the geographically concentrated nature of use of the kinds of accommodation covered by the Order. A key concern in these local authorities is their capacity to sufficiently scale back Bed and Breakfast placements that had expanded due to pandemic period demand pressures.

Recommendations from the prevention Review Group’s (PRG) report

Key informants who participated in the Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2021 were overwhelmingly supportive of the recommendations of the PRG, and LA survey respondents generally positive. Almost all LA survey respondents (26 of 29) were familiar with these proposals, and of these, two thirds believed that aspects of PRG proposed actions would work well in their locality. Several LAs noted that the PRG recommendations go with the grain of recent practice changes in response to the RRTP agenda, in particular in relation to strengthened multi-agency working practices. Specific aspects of the proposals that were welcomed included:

- the proposed introduction of a prevention duty on other public bodies, and in particular health partners;
- the introduction of a six-month prevention duty on LAs;
- the potential of the recommendations overall to enhance LAs’ capacity to build partnerships supportive of RRTPs;

- their potential to resolve the tension between non-statutory Housing Options prevention work and people's legal entitlements to make a homeless application when they're at risk of homelessness within 56 days.

Key informants were clear that acting on these recommendations for legal reform was not *sufficient* to effectively prevent homelessness, with a culture shift also needed in a wide range of public bodies and other delivery partners and an emphasis on prevention work even further upstream also desirable.

Just over half of LA survey respondents (16 of 29) considered that there were aspects of the PRG recommendations that would be particularly challenging to implement in their area. Some of these anxieties were linked with uncertainty about the depth of engagement that could be expected from other public bodies in relation to a more broadly applicable 'duty to prevent'. Others warned that practical logistics around resourcing and information sharing would present a hurdle in implementing PRG recommendations. A more specific concern related to the proposed extension of 'duty to prevent' responsibilities as applicable to people at risk of homelessness within six months, which several respondents anticipated would be 'a real challenge' to implement.

Impact of Covid-19 on policy approaches and individual's experiences of homelessness

The pandemic prompted rapid shifts in responses to homelessness in Scotland. The immediate focus was on supporting people sleeping rough and those occupying 'shared air' night shelter accommodation. In March 2020, the Scottish Government made £1.5m available to third sector organisations, and Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centres were established in Edinburgh and Glasgow to replace previous shelter provision, in light of the infection dangers inherent to such 'shared air' dormitory-style provision. The crisis response was inclusive of those facing homelessness with No Recourse to Public Funds, and newly drafted guidance, emergency legislation and top-up funding to relevant third sector organisations ensured that this group had access to accommodation, support and healthcare during the pandemic. This represented a 'golden opportunity' for service providers to reach and engage with a group they had previously been unable to. The crisis context also occasioned a step-change in multi-agency working that enhanced services capacity to engage and assist those with long histories of homelessness and complex needs.

The overall speed and efficiency of the Scottish Government's response, and their focus on empowering trusted organisations and frontline workers, drew praise from key informants. These measures were also seen by key informants to have dramatically reduced rough sleeping, though reductions reported in statutory data were more modest. This disparity may reflect the geographical scope and 'inflow' focus of the statutory data, whereas key informants' comments largely focused on the 'stock' of rough sleeping in the city centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh. The move away from dormitory style night-time only shelters during the pandemic was universally welcomed by key informants, and has prompted the development of a route-map charting an end to the need for night-shelter and hotel provision as a response to homelessness, an ambition now officially adopted by Scottish Government. To our knowledge, this policy commitment is internationally unique. Pandemic responses also prompted an abrupt

end to Glasgow City Council's longstanding failure to meet its statutory duty to offer temporary accommodation to all those entitled to it.⁷ Serious concerns were raised, however, regarding the wellbeing of the large numbers of people⁸ accommodated in hotels in response to the pandemic, issues that were identified as especially acute in Glasgow in the early stages of the pandemic due to insufficient support provision. Concerns were also voiced by several key informants regarding the slow pace of move on from emergency hotel accommodation, especially in the early stages of the crisis.

Supportive wider policy changes were also vital in protecting homeless people and other low-income groups during the public health emergency. Restrictions on evictions from the rented sectors were seen by all local authority survey respondents to have been important in preventing or minimising homelessness in their area, with 90% seeing them as very important. The number of households presenting as homeless due to the loss of rental tenancies fell by 57% in 2020/21 compared to the previous year (from 4,651 to 1,999). The Scottish Government's boost to the 2020/21 Discretionary Housing Payment and Social Welfare Budgets were also highly valued by local authorities, with almost all survey respondents (28 and 27 out of 29, respectively) describing these as important in minimising or preventing homelessness. Key informants were scathing about the inadequacy and poor design of the Scottish Government's Tenants Hardship Loan Fund intended to assist those ineligible for other forms of support to pay rent, with Fund data revealing very low award levels.⁹ In response to low take-up, the Scottish Government announced grant fund to support households struggling to pay their rent as a direct result of the pandemic in June 2021, though we understand this was taken from the £50m committed to implementing the EHT Action Plan.¹⁰

The UK Government's furlough scheme was also crucial in mitigating homelessness risks during the COVID-19 crisis: all local authority survey respondents considered it 'very' or 'somewhat' important in this regard. The £20 per week uplift in the Universal Credit standard allowance (which ends in September 2021) was identified as important by 25 of 29 local authority respondents, with very high proportions also ranking as important the suspension of benefit sanctions in the early stages of the pandemic (23), the increase of Local Housing Allowance caps to the 30th percentile (23) and the suspension of debt-related benefit deductions (22).

Priorities for homelessness policy

⁷ Scottish Government (2018) *Homelessness in Scotland 2017-2018*. Online: Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2017-18>; Scottish Housing Regulator (2018) *Housing people who are homeless in Glasgow*. Online: Scottish Housing Regulator. <https://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-people-whoare-homeless-glasgow>; Shelter Scotland (2017) *Evidence of Gatekeeping in Glasgow City Council*. Online: Shelter Scotland. https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/evidence_of_gatekeeping_in_glasgow_city_council

⁸ Although Scottish Government did not collect separate data on the numbers accommodated on this basis, key stakeholders reported that around 600 people were accommodated in emergency hotels in Glasgow alone at the peak.

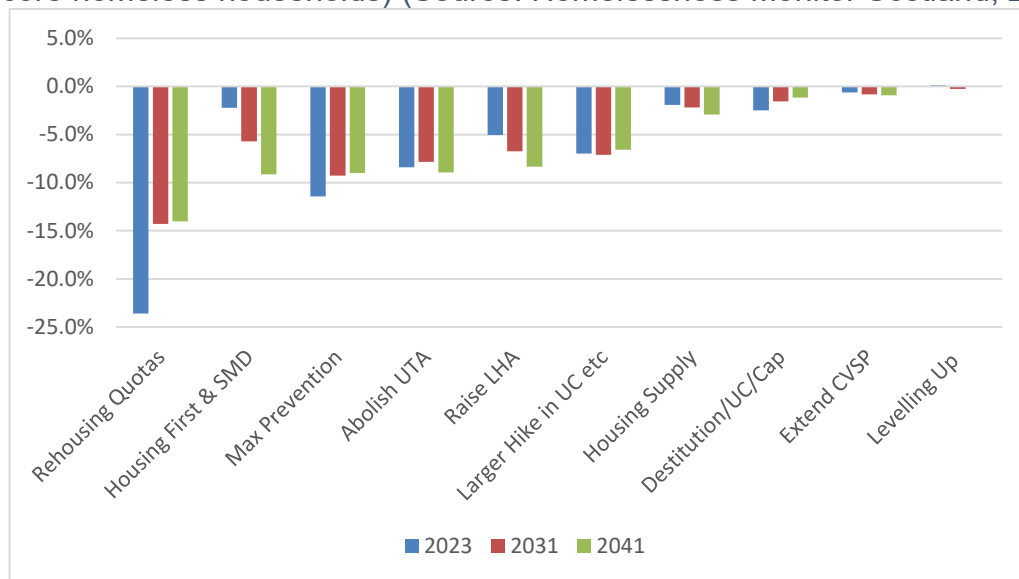
⁹ Scottish Parliament (2021) *Official Report of Meeting of the Parliament: Thursday 20 May 2021- Covid-19 (Protection from Eviction)*. Online: Scottish Parliament. <https://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13228>

¹⁰ Scottish Housing News (2021) *Scottish Government announces £10m grant fund for tenants in arrears due to COVID-19*. 23 June. Online: Scottish Housing News. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/article/scottish-government-announces-10-million-grant-fund-for-tenants-in-arrears-due-to-covid-19>

This Homeless Monitor Scotland includes quantitative analysis of ‘core homelessness’, which captures some of the most severe and immediate forms of homelessness. The relevant categories include people sleeping rough, staying in places not intended as residential accommodation (e.g., cars, tents, boats, sheds, etc.), living in homeless hostels, refuges and shelters, placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (e.g., Bed and Breakfast hotels, Out of Area Placements, etc.), and sofa surfing (i.e., staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions).

As well as reviewing trends in core homelessness, we also report the findings of a predictive model projecting trends in core homelessness under a range of policy scenarios into the future. This model indicates that, without additional policy intervention, core homelessness would be likely to increase in 2021 before stabilising again from 2023 onwards, albeit with reductions in rough sleeping and sofa surfing offset by the higher numbers in substitute COVID hotel etc. provision. Against these projected post-COVID-19 trends, we systematically tested the impact of ten different policy changes on forecast core homeless outcomes over the short (to 2023) and longer-term (to 2031/41) (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Scale of impacts of selected policy scenarios on core homelessness at three time points (percentage difference from with-Covid baseline in snapshot number of core homeless households) (Source: Homelessness Monitor Scotland, 2021)



Rapid rehousing into settled accommodation, for example via social housing quotas or enhanced access to private rental tenancies, stands out as having the biggest impacts in reducing core homelessness on all time horizons, but notably significant impacts in the short term to 2021. Maximised prevention¹¹ also performs strongly in the short as well as longer term, as does ending the use of unsuitable temporary

¹¹ This scenario involves more extensive and effective prevention, including by raising the proportion of applicants engaged with prevention to maximum; and (from 2023) using PRS options and financial advice/assistance to the same level as better performing English LAs.

accommodation¹² and raising Universal Credit allowances substantially. Policies which achieve a more gradual build up to long term substantial impacts include Housing First¹³, raising Local Housing Allowance rates to make the private rented sector more accessible¹⁴, and (to a smaller extent) targeted housing supply¹⁵.

Our analysis indicates that rough sleeping is more sensitive to many of the policy scenarios, in proportional terms, than other elements of core homelessness. The policies with the biggest impacts on rough sleeping are the application of rehousing quotas for core homeless households, a proportion of which would go to rough sleepers; increasing the scale of Housing First programmes, enabling a rundown of hostel capacity; and extending the special hotel provision made in response to COVID-19 over the next four years, and then at a lower level indefinitely beyond that. Other policies with projected positive impacts are increases in Universal Credit personal allowances combined with other measures to reduce destitution including ending the five-week wait and the benefit cap, and maximising prevention.

A comprehensive and appropriately sequenced programme of measures is forecast to reduce core homelessness by 40-45% in the relatively short term (2023) and on a sustained basis, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies. This scenario would see overall core homeless 40% below the level of 2019-20. Furthermore, unsuitable temporary accommodation would go down by 95%, rough sleeping would be reduced by 63%, sofa surfing down by 38% and hostels down by 31%. There would also be large reductions in statutory homelessness.

Many, though not all, of the changes identified as impactful in reducing core homelessness are within the power of the Scottish Government, and moreover, largely consistent with the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan. This applies, for example, to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order extension, to the pursuit of the Prevention Review Group's recommendations, to commitments on mainstreaming Housing First, and to more strongly prioritising homeless households in social housing allocations.

¹² This scenario involves eliminating the use of 90% of unsuitable temporary accommodation from 2023, with consequential negative impact on net available relets (in line with the UAO amendments, albeit that there is some uncertainty about timing of the Order coming into force).

¹³ This scenario involves achieve a high level of Housing First provision, with associated increase in rehabilitation services for addictions & offending, leading to progressive reduction in hostel etc. accommodation and crime rates. Three levels of annual programme are tested, including the number of units achieved by the pathfinders to date (c.550), a level where all authorities would perform at pathfinder level, relative to need (1500), and the level recommended based on analysis of HES and 'Destitution in the UK' survey (3,500).

¹⁴ This scenario involves raise LHA to median level in all LA areas and maintaining relative level in real terms through indexing (in contrast with alternatives of 30th percentile with Consumer Price Index indexing, or no indexing subject to maximum LHA gap of £100pw).

¹⁵ This scenario involves increasing the total and social rented housing supply by approx. 50% (to 7,500 social completions per annum in Scotland), strongly concentrated in localities with a clear shortfall of supply relative to need.