

# Single homelessness in Scotland

Peter Mackie and Ian Thomas

July 2015

## About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change.

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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Crisis for commissioning this overview of single homelessness in Scotland. It is important that we continue to reflect upon the assistance offered to single homeless people in Scotland in order to ensure that the goals of progressive legislative developments are delivered upon. We must acknowledge the guidance and support of Ligia Teixeira and Beth Reid at Crisis. As always, and with huge gratitude, we acknowledge the Scottish Government homelessness statistics team for providing administrative data so promptly and with such care. The value of such an impressive service cannot be overstated.

This report is based on research undertaken by the authors and the content does not necessarily reflect the views of Crisis. The authors, of course, accept full responsibility for any inaccuracies or omissions.

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Crisis UK (trading as Crisis). Registered Charity Numbers:  
E&W1082947, SC040094. Company Number: 4024938

© Crisis 2015  
ISBN 978-1-78519-010-0

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## Foreword

Scotland is an international leader in its approach to tackling homelessness. All homeless people in Scotland are now entitled to accommodation, providing they are unintentionally homeless.

It is single homeless people who, having been disadvantaged by the system of support in the past, stood to gain the most from Scotland's progressive approach. As this research demonstrates, the vast majority of people who need homeless support from their council are single. They have different experiences of homelessness to families and may often be more vulnerable.

Yet while single people are now entitled to accommodation, they still receive less support. They are more likely to find themselves homed for long periods in hostels and B&Bs. Fewer than half of single homeless people who go to their council for support receive a settled home at the end of the journey. And the services offered to single homeless people vary considerably across local authorities.

The reasons for this are, of course, complex. In our work with councils across Scotland we recognise the severe pressures they face. We also hear daily from people about the problems they face finding a lasting home and we walk with them on the journey as they try to sustain their lives in the meantime.

The study raises important questions about the nature of single homelessness in Scotland, how we best support people who have a variety of needs, and how we ensure that people can get support that ends their homelessness no matter where they are in the country.

As our groundbreaking legislation beds in, Crisis wants to see an overarching review of how homelessness support in Scotland is working, to make sure that the ambition of our legislation is matched by the ambition of our practice.

It is not just the responsibility of homelessness and housing services. People's lives are complex and they will often need support from a range of services working closely together to address the issues that have resulted in their homelessness and prevent it happening in future.

With further cuts to housing benefit and social security on the horizon, we need now more than ever to address these issues. Only when we do so will we end homelessness in Scotland.



**Ann Landels**

Director, Crisis in Scotland

## Executive summary

Since January 2013, homeless people seeking assistance in Scotland are no longer required to be in priority need in order to be entitled to permanent settled housing. Whilst the aim of this exceptionally progressive legislative development was primarily to address the discrimination faced by single homeless people, there has been relatively little attention given to the experiences of this group since the legislation came into effect.

The implementation of Scotland's legislative framework has been achieved by embracing homelessness prevention, which sits outside of the legislation and only recently has data been published on this area of local authority homelessness services. There is evidence elsewhere in the UK that homelessness prevention has resulted in gatekeeping and great divergence in assistance between local authorities. Consequently, the aim of this study is to:

**Critically examine the assistance offered to single homeless people in Scotland**

This is a small-scale study, intended to highlight emerging trends and potential concerns. The specific objectives of the research are to:

- **Compare the experiences of single homeless people with those of homeless families**
- **Explore variations in assistance provided to single homeless people across Scottish local authorities**
- **Identify potential policy and practice concerns relating to assistance for single homeless people**

The study is based upon new analysis of the excellent administrative homelessness data recorded by Scottish Government, including

statutory homelessness data (HL1) and experimental homelessness prevention data (PREVENT1). The report will identify the key challenges facing policy makers and practitioners as they seek to meet the aspirations set out for single homeless people at the turn of the century.

## Key findings

### Homelessness prevention

- **Scale:** Approximately 80% of prevention approaches are made by single people but there is variation between local authorities, with the proportion of single homeless people ranging from 100% to 48%.
- **Reasons for approach:** Nearly 70% of people seek prevention assistance for homelessness reasons (rather than prevention reasons). There is significant variation between local authorities, with the proportion of single homeless people reporting a prevention reason ranging from 71% to 0%.
- **Outcomes of homelessness prevention:** These differ between single homeless people and families. Single people are less likely to find alternative accommodation in the social rented or private rented sectors (7% vs 12%), and slightly less likely to have their homelessness ended by remaining in current accommodation (24% vs 26%). Instead, single homeless people are more likely to move in with friends/relatives (3% vs 1%) or lose contact (13% vs 8%). There is variation between local authorities. The proportion of single homeless people enabled to remain or find alternative accommodation ranges from 79% to 9%.

## Homelessness applications

- *Reasons for homelessness:* Single people are far more likely to become homeless because they are asked to leave their accommodation (30% vs 16%), which correlates with the fact that a high proportion of single people become homeless from the parental/family home (29% vs 18%), from the accommodation of friends/a partner (20% vs 16%), or from long-term sofa surfing (3% vs 1%). Single people are also more likely to become homeless on discharge from prison (9% vs. 0%).
- *Factors contributing to a homelessness application:* A higher proportion of single people were recorded as facing drug/alcohol dependency (10% vs 1%), lack of support from friends/family (10% vs 5%), mental health issues (9% vs 4%), criminal/anti-social behaviour (8% vs 4%), difficulties managing on their own (5% vs 2%), and physical health issues (4% vs 2%).
- *Repeat applications:* Repeat homelessness was more common amongst single homeless people than families (7% vs 3%). There is some variation between local authorities as rates of repeat homelessness amongst single homeless people range from 1% to 12%.

## Homelessness assessments

- The proportion of single homeless people found to be unintentionally homeless varies across local authorities, ranging from 91% of decisions to 26%.
- In several local authorities more than 10% of single homeless people were determined to be intentionally homeless.

## Temporary accommodation

- The rate of temporary accommodation use for families varies between local authorities, ranging from 0 – 18 households per 10,000. In contrast, the

range is far greater for single homeless people, ranging from 6 – 53 people per 10,000.

- Single people are far more likely than families to be accommodated in hostels or B&Bs (35% vs <5%), whereas families are more likely to be accommodated in social rented housing (88% vs 54%).
- There is variation between local authorities. The proportion of single homeless people temporarily accommodated in social rented accommodation ranges from 100% to 12%.

## Homelessness application outcomes

- *Outcomes:* After making a homelessness application, approximately 66% of families were offered a Scottish Secure tenancy or a private rented tenancy compared to 47% of single people. Moreover, contact was lost with 14% of single people compared to 6% of homeless families. Outcomes vary across local authorities. The proportion of single unintentionally homeless people who were offered a tenancy ranges from 33% to 81%.
- *Duration of homelessness applications:* Unintentionally homeless single people are likely to wait approximately four weeks longer for their homelessness duty to be discharged when compared to families (233 days vs 205 days to be dealt with and closed). The duration between homelessness application and case closure varies markedly across local authorities, with the mean time ranging from less than 100 days (approx. 3 months) to more than 550 days (approx. 18 months).

## Conclusions

The abolition of priority need in Scotland removed the discrimination faced by single homeless people within the law. However, this study shows how their experiences of accessing assistance differ to those of families and also across Scottish local authorities. The study points to the following broad conclusions:

### **Single homeless people face different experiences of homelessness and accessing assistance when compared to homeless families**

Single homeless people generally appear to be more vulnerable than families; they enter homelessness from less secure accommodation, face a wider range of support needs and they are more likely to have been homeless previously. When these vulnerable individuals seek help, the assistance they receive differs to that of families both in terms of prevention interventions and when a homelessness application is made.

Whilst recognising the limits of homelessness prevention data and the fact differences are relatively small, there is a general indication that homelessness prevention services are not currently as effective in meeting the needs of single homeless people. Equally, when a homelessness application is made single homeless people are more likely to be temporarily accommodated in B&B accommodation, contact is more likely to be lost, and they are much less likely to secure a tenancy at the end of the process.

### **Inconsistencies exist in the assistance offered by local authorities to single homeless people**

Single homeless people will receive very different assistance dependent upon the local authority where they seek assistance. For example, the authority may attempt to prevent homelessness or they may take a homelessness application. Where prevention

is pursued the type and number of actions taken will vary and so too will the outcomes. Where a homelessness application is taken, decisions will vary, with a significant minority of authorities making a high proportion of intentionally homeless decisions. Moreover, B&Bs may be used extensively or not at all, a tenancy might be offered or not, and the duration of the application could range from 3 to 18 months. There are clearly wide variations in the nature of assistance single homeless people receive across Scottish local authorities.

### **Homelessness prevention poses an opportunity and a challenge for homelessness services in Scotland**

Homelessness prevention now forms a key component of Scottish homelessness services and this study is one of the first to reflect critically on its implementation. Homelessness prevention services are assisting a wide population, however there is an opportunity to do more to intervene before crisis. Many people (single and families) are only seeking assistance after crisis or a homelessness application is being taken where homelessness could potentially have been prevented. Also, people facing multiple support needs are not being assisted through homelessness prevention services. Whilst there is an opportunity to improve homelessness prevention services, great care must also be taken to ensure single homeless people receive the best possible outcomes and gatekeeping does not occur.

The following recommendations provide some direction to help achieve this goal.

## Recommendations

### **The homelessness legislative framework in Scotland**

1. Forthcoming Scottish Government and COSLA guidance on Housing Options should provide clear direction on how the statutory and prevention processes should interact so that homeless people

can access effective assistance on a fair and consistent basis. Local authorities should also set out in their housing and homelessness plans how they intend to address this locally.

2. The Scottish Housing Regulator should plan to carry out an overarching review of the operation of homelessness support in Scotland five years on from the ending of priority need (including homelessness prevention). It will be important for this review to examine variability in outcomes and differences across Scottish local authorities and across household types.

### **Homelessness prevention services**

3. Local authorities should work with Housing Options Hubs to identify ways to encourage people to access homelessness prevention services before they experience homelessness. They should work with advice and support services to ensure early referral where possible.
4. Given that many single homeless people become homeless on being asked to leave their accommodation, Scottish Government and local authorities should examine what more could be done to assist single people to either remain or make a planned exit in order to avoid homelessness (e.g. mediation services).
5. As many people (families and single) are becoming homeless because tenancies are being terminated in both the PRS and the social rented sector, Scottish Government, local authorities, RSLs and the landlords association should consider how to raise awareness among tenants and landlords of the homelessness prevention support available from local authorities, including through the new private tenancy Notice to Leave.
6. Many single homeless people are becoming homeless from prison, despite

some examples of good practice.

Scottish Government and COSLA should work closely with the prison service to improve the prevention of homelessness amongst prison leavers.

### **Intentionality and keeping in contact**

7. Scottish Government should continue to monitor the levels of intentionality decisions and lost contacts across Scotland and work with local authorities where levels are relatively high to identify the reasons and ensure these are not used as a means of gatekeeping.

### **Support for complex needs**

8. Housing Options Hubs should explore how Housing Options services might effectively assist more households with multiple support needs.
9. Homelessness and housing services should be key partners as joint boards are set up to integrate health and social care. The boards should ensure data on homelessness, including on levels of support needs, are used as part of their service planning.

### **Temporary accommodation**

10. Local authorities accommodating high proportions of single homeless people in B&Bs and hostels should seek to reduce use of these temporary accommodation forms, particularly the use of B&Bs for periods longer than 28 days.

### **Homelessness statistics**

11. Scottish Government should continue to monitor homelessness prevention data (PREVENT1) and identify any variables which may not be recorded appropriately by local authorities (e.g. vulnerabilities data).
12. Scottish Government should regularly report on statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention statistics by household type.

# 1. Introduction

## Devolution and single homelessness

Since the introduction of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, addressing homelessness has been a key priority for successive Scottish governments. Efforts to improve the assistance available to homeless people have been largely concentrated on developing and implementing a more inclusive legislative framework.

Prior to the 1999 devolution settlement, legislation across Great Britain remained fairly similar whereby local authorities were only under a duty to accommodate those households deemed to be in priority need for assistance. This meant the vast majority of homeless single households, and couples with no children, were left with little or no assistance. These single homeless people were essentially discriminated against by early homelessness legislation (Anderson 2009; Fitzpatrick et al 2012).

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced the first major development in Scotland post-1999: it entitled all homeless people in Scotland to temporary accommodation, essentially removing the need for people to sleep on the streets. The Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003 then introduced arguably the most progressive homelessness legislation in the world: it set the roadmap for the abolition of the priority need test by the end of 2012. Since January 2013, homeless people seeking assistance in Scotland are no longer required to be in priority need in order to access assistance; their homelessness entitles them to permanent settled housing.

According to Fitzpatrick et al (2012: 8); 'the key impact of the abolition of priority need was to end the traditional 'discrimination' against single people and childless couples within the statutory homelessness system.' Whilst discrimination within the law has been

removed, recent studies have shown that single homeless people sometimes face difficulties accessing their legal rights (Mackie 2014c, Scottish Housing Regulator 2014).

## Homelessness prevention

As the 2012 deadline for the abolition of priority need neared, and pressures on local authority to provide temporary and permanent accommodation were becoming unsustainable (Anderson 2009), Scottish Government embraced the prevention of homelessness. In 2009 the Scottish Government published statutory guidance for local authorities on preventing homelessness. The strategy stated; 'prevention has a central role in the ways we tackle homelessness and it is essential for achieving the 2012 target' (Scottish Government 2009). Homelessness prevention was defined extremely broadly in the Scottish Government strategy; 'the approaches and activities undertaken to secure the most effective, appropriate and sustainable housing outcome for the person concerned should be deemed as acceptable prevention activity' (Scottish Government 2009).

To support the implementation of homelessness prevention, the Scottish Government launched the Housing Options Hubs programme in 2010, providing modest funding to five groupings of local authorities. Moreover, Fitzpatrick et al (2012) claim that the prevention turn really began when the Scottish Housing regulator signalled their support for the approach. Hence, since 2010 local authorities in Scotland have been implementing an array of prevention interventions which, according to Mackie (2014a, 2014b), sit awkwardly alongside the legislative framework.

Research by Mackie (2014a, 2014b) in Wales suggests that homelessness prevention can

lead to significant inconsistencies in the assistance offered by different local authorities. These emerge for two primary reasons: i] far from the linear approach to housing provision which exists under homelessness legislation (e.g. Interim accommodation, then settled accommodation), homelessness prevention is far more individualised and less predictable, with a wide range of interventions used (e.g. family mediation, rent payments, income maximisation etc.); ii] there is no duty to prevent homelessness, hence some local authorities will embrace this approach more than others. Given these conditions it is entirely likely that significant variations exist in the ways homeless people are assisted across Scotland. Homeless people should not face inequality in service provision.

In May 2014 the Scottish Housing Regulator published a report on the use of Housing Options in preventing homelessness in Scotland (Scottish Housing Regulator 2014). Whilst specific attention was not given to outcomes for single homeless people, the inquiry found evidence of good practice but it also revealed gatekeeping and that local authorities were at different stages in their implementation of this preventative approach. It recommended further guidance for local authorities and also recommended monitoring of prevention data to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention work. Guidance has subsequently been developed by the Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and is due to be published in autumn 2015.

In January 2015 the first statistics on homelessness prevention were published in Scotland. These provide the first opportunity to look at who has been assisted through prevention and what types of assistance were offered.

## Research aim and objectives

Whilst the aim of the progressive homelessness legislative framework in Scotland was primarily to address the discrimination faced by single homeless people, there has been relatively little attention given to the experiences of this group since the legislation came into effect, particularly since developments in homelessness prevention. Therefore, the aim of this study is to:

*Critically examine the assistance offered to single homeless people in Scotland*

This is a small-scale study, intended to highlight emerging trends and potential concerns. The specific objectives of the research are to:

- Compare the experiences of single homeless people with those of homeless families
- Explore variations in assistance provided to single homeless people across Scottish local authorities
- Identify potential policy and practice concerns relating to assistance for single homeless people

By describing the assistance and outcomes for single homeless people in Scotland, this study will provide an indication of the key challenges that must be overcome to ensure the aspirations of post-1999 legislative developments are met.

## Structure of the report

Following this introduction, the research methodology, which is based upon administrative data analysis, is briefly outlined (Chapter 2). The findings of the research are then set out in five sections which mirror the headings used in statistical reports by Scottish Government. First, the

report explores homelessness prevention, drawing upon the first release of prevention data by Scottish Government (Chapter 3). Second, homelessness applications are discussed (Chapter 4). Third, homelessness assessment decisions are briefly compared across Scotland (Chapter 5). Fourth, temporary accommodation use is examined (Chapter 6). The fifth findings chapter provides an important analysis of outcomes of homelessness assistance (Chapter 7). The final chapter of the report draws out the key conclusions of the study and makes policy and practice recommendations (Chapter 8).

## 2. Methodology

### Research approach

This study is based on an analysis of secondary data: it explores administrative homelessness data to provide an overview of the assistance offered to single homeless people in Scotland. Administrative data is increasingly being used to inform policy development (Administrative Data Taskforce 2012), not least in the area of homelessness (Culhane and Metraux 1997; Mackie 2014a, 2014b). Analysis of homelessness data is relatively straight forward to pursue in Scotland, when compared to the rest of the UK, as Scottish Government holds by far the most comprehensive record of administrative data held at the individual household level.

Whilst Scottish Government regularly publishes homelessness statistics, there has been little by way of research focusing on single homeless people. This study addresses this analytical gap.

### Data selection

Data was requested from Scottish Government under each of the five headings used in Scottish Government homelessness statistics publications, which in turn relate directly to key stages in the process of seeking homelessness assistance. Table 1 shows which variables were analysed under each heading. It is important to emphasise the preliminary nature of the homelessness prevention data used. Whilst it will provide the best available overview of prevention services, this data is still classed as experimental by Scottish Government (i.e. undergoing evaluation).

**Table 1.** Homelessness data used in the research analysis

Heading	Variables
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Total approaches</li> <li>▪ Vulnerability count</li> <li>▪ Reason for approach</li> <li>▪ Activity count</li> <li>▪ Activity Type</li> <li>▪ Rehousing outcome</li> </ul>
Homelessness Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Total applications</li> <li>▪ Repeat applications</li> <li>▪ Reason for applying</li> <li>▪ Previous housing circumstances</li> <li>▪ Contributing factors to loss of accommodation</li> </ul>
Homelessness Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decision</li> </ul>
Temporary accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Temporary accommodation type</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcomes of local authority action</li> <li>▪ Time between application and case closed</li> </ul>

### Sample timeframes

Data recorded by local authorities as they process homelessness cases (HL1 data) falls into three phases, 1) approach/application, 2) assessment, 3) action and case closure. The timeframes over which the reported analysis covers varies according with these phases, and is in line with methods of reporting used by Scottish Government.

Analysis of applications relates to all approaches/applications to local authorities in 2014 (1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December). Similarly the analysis of assessments relates to local authority decisions made within 2014.

However, as there is a time-lag between approach and decision, the total number of cases varies between the analysis of applications and final assessments. The 'outcomes' data refers to cases which were closed within the year (2014), and as cases can be open for several months, the total figure again will vary compared to approaches and decisions.

The data held on temporary accommodation (TA) relates to a snapshot of households within TA at a given point in time (31<sup>st</sup> December 2014). These figures were taken directly from outputs released from Scottish Government and were not analysed using individualised records.

Finally, the data on prevention cases relates to the time period 1st April 2014 to 30th September 2014 and forms part of a separate collection undertaken by Scottish Government, covering prevention work only (PREVENT1).

## Analysis and reporting

Data was analysed using STATA. Each variable in Table 1 was explored and is reported in two ways:

- i] differences in the experiences of single homeless people and families are explored at the national level.
- ii] experiences of single homeless people are compared across all Scottish local authorities<sup>1</sup>

In several instances, comparing findings across all local authorities produced very low values for some responses (e.g. several local authorities did not record any households reporting incarceration as the outcome of a

homelessness application). Where this occurs similar responses were often combined or incorporated in an 'other' category. Information on this recoding process is provided in footnotes throughout the report.

## Definitional Note

Throughout this report we use the terms 'Single person', 'Family' and 'Other' to refer to household types. These have been recoded from household categories collected as part of the HL1 and PREVENT1 submissions. Single person households refers to the categories of 'Single person' and 'Couple'. Family households refers to 'Couple with children', 'Single parent' and 'Other with children'. Other refers to 'Other' household type, as coded in the HL1 and PREVENT1 returns, and therefore no further breakdowns of this category are possible given the current dataset.

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<sup>1</sup> In a small number of cases it was not possible to report data for some local authorities as the values were too low, therefore undermining percentages and potentially endangering anonymity. Where this is the case, the missing authorities have been indicated underneath the appropriate table.

### 3. Homelessness prevention

Homelessness prevention is being implemented to some degree by all Scottish local authorities and whilst the Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) has pointed to inconsistencies in the implementation of the Housing Options approach, relatively little is known about how single homeless people fare. This section of the report analyses the prevention assistance offered to single homeless people, exploring: i] The scale of prevention; ii] The extent of people's vulnerabilities; iii] Reasons why people seek prevention assistance; iv] The type and

number of prevention actions pursued; and v] The outcomes of prevention. It is important to reiterate the fact that the data analysed in this section is experimental data and relates to only six months of data collection. Therefore, all findings must be treated as indicative only.

#### The scale of homelessness prevention

Table 2 illustrates that 80% of all *prevention approaches* are made by single people, which is higher than the proportion of *homelessness applications* attributed to single people (70% - see Table 8).

**Table 2.** Distribution of prevention approaches by household type (percent)

	Single person	Family	Other	Prevention per 10,000 pop
Eilean Siar	100	0	0	3
Inverclyde	97	3	0	60
Glasgow City	97	3	0	97
Renfrewshire	95	4	1	56
Aberdeen City	94	3	3	120
Midlothian	90	9	1	34
East Renfrewshire	83	17	0	10
Stirling	82	16	1	48
Argyll & Bute	81	18	2	25
Falkirk	80	17	3	73
Dundee City	80	19	1	105
Edinburgh	79	20	1	82
Scottish Borders	78	21	1	28
Clackmannanshire	77	23	0	15
South Lanarkshire	76	23	1	22
Aberdeenshire	75	23	3	40
West Dunbartonshire	74	25	1	99
Dumfries & Galloway	74	21	5	32
South Ayrshire	73	26	1	42
Moray	73	26	1	66
Highland	73	26	1	42
Angus	73	26	1	44
Orkney	73	23	4	12
Shetland	73	20	7	71
East Lothian	72	26	2	22
North Ayrshire	72	27	1	69
Perth & Kinross	72	27	2	71
East Ayrshire	71	28	1	8
Fife	60	37	2	44
North Lanarkshire	57	41	2	53
West Lothian	54	38	8	51
East Dunbartonshire	48	48	4	6
Scotland	80	18	2	58

The differences in the distribution of prevention approaches by household type are heightened when analysed at the local authority level (Table 2). There are six authorities where 90% or more of all prevention assistance is concentrated on single homeless people (the first six authorities listed). By contrast there are four local authorities where the household type is more evenly split, with no more than 60% of households being single (the bottom four authorities listed). There is no apparent geographical explanation for this difference, with authorities representing large urban, other urban and even remote rural areas. Whilst homelessness prevention data collection is still in its infancy, it seems likely that this divergence results from different approaches to the implementation of homelessness prevention. This is supported by the findings of the inquiry by the Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) which found differences in implementation.

The slight over representation of single homeless people in prevention work could be seen in two ways. A positive explanation would suggest it results from a greater range of prevention interventions being suited to single homeless people when compared to families. However, there is no evidence to support this explanation. A more pessimistic view would suggest this difference is a sign of gatekeeping, whereby local authorities are more likely to restrict access to permanent accommodation for single homeless people.

There is certainly a tension between attempting to prevent homelessness and pursuing the statutory right to settled accommodation. Where effective prevention options are available there are likely to be few arguments against pursuing a housing options approach, indeed the evidence suggests homelessness will be dealt with more quickly and the support will be tailored to the needs of the individual (Mackie 2014a, 2014b). However, analysis of outcomes later in this section suggests that prevention

assistance is currently often ineffective amongst single homeless people, suggesting this trend may be a symptom of gatekeeping.

Further attention should be given to this issue as more reliable data becomes available over a longer time period.

### **Vulnerability**

Local authorities record the number of vulnerabilities reported by people seeking homelessness prevention assistance<sup>2</sup> (Figure 1). Surprisingly it appears that single people and families face equal levels of vulnerability, with four in five people recorded as having no more than one vulnerability. Given recent research found that 61% of single homeless people in Scotland had four or more support needs (Mackie 2014c) it is surprising that so many single homeless people were recorded with no vulnerabilities and so few report two or more vulnerabilities. Table 3 identifies three authorities where two or more vulnerabilities are reported for at least one third of single homeless people. These authorities appear to contradict any trend of seeking to prevent homelessness only where there are few vulnerabilities reported. Beyond these authorities all others appear to conform to the broad trend of assisting only those with one or no vulnerability.

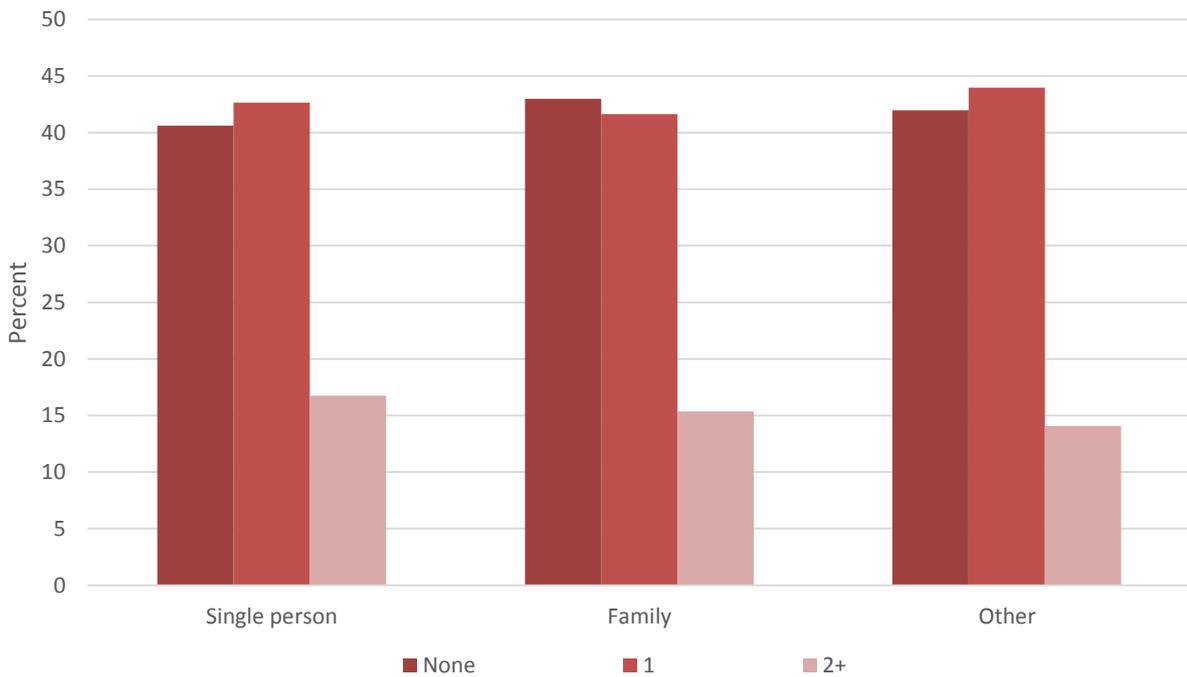
It is entirely possible that this trend is an anomaly in this experimental dataset and further work should be done by Scottish Government to ensure vulnerability data is recorded accurately for prevention cases. However, if current trends are reliable then most local authorities are only attempting to prevent homelessness with those who are least vulnerable. This may not be problematic if there is agreement amongst key partners in the homelessness sector (national and local governments, third sector organisations,

<sup>2</sup> The different types of vulnerabilities are the same as those reported during a homelessness application under 'reasons for failing to maintain accommodation'.

homeless people) that those with multiple vulnerabilities are best assisted by making a homelessness application. The Scottish Government has set improved interventions with homeless people who face multiple exclusions as a priority for the future and consideration should be given to the potential role of prevention services and early intervention, given that housing options

services are currently not assisting this group to any great extent. There is evidence that interventions such as housing first and individual budgets can be more effective with the most vulnerable single homeless people than making a homeless application but these services are hardly provided in Scotland.

**Figure 1.** Vulnerabilities of prevention cases by household type



**Table 3.** Vulnerabilities of single homeless people in prevention cases by local authority (percent and count)

	None	1	2+	Frequency
South Ayrshire	100	0	0	345
Argyll & Bute	99	1	0	179
Scottish Borders	85	15	0	249
East Lothian	84	16	0	166
Aberdeen City	42	58	0	2,583
Falkirk	95	4	1	917
Midlothian	91	8	1	261
Dundee City	89	9	1	1,238
Edinburgh	92	4	4	3,194
Stirling	46	50	4	359
Shetland	68	27	5	120
Angus	63	31	6	378
East Ayrshire	10	82	7	67
Inverclyde	17	74	9	466
Renfrewshire	29	62	10	936
South Lanarkshire	14	77	10	535
North Ayrshire	53	36	11	682
Highland	72	13	15	714
West				
Dunbartonshire	4	81	15	655
Moray	52	31	18	456
Clackmannanshire	24	57	19	58
West Lothian	15	66	19	486
Perth & Kinross	46	35	20	759
Aberdeenshire	39	39	23	770
Dumfries &				
Galloway	30	47	23	355
East Renfrewshire	19	59	23	75
Glasgow City	0	67	33	5,660
North Lanarkshire	0	67	33	1,027
Fife	0	33	67	971
Scotland	41	43	17	24,714

NB: Orkney, Eilean Siar and East Dunbartonshire not displayed due to low total cell count; less than 50 cases

### Reasons for approach

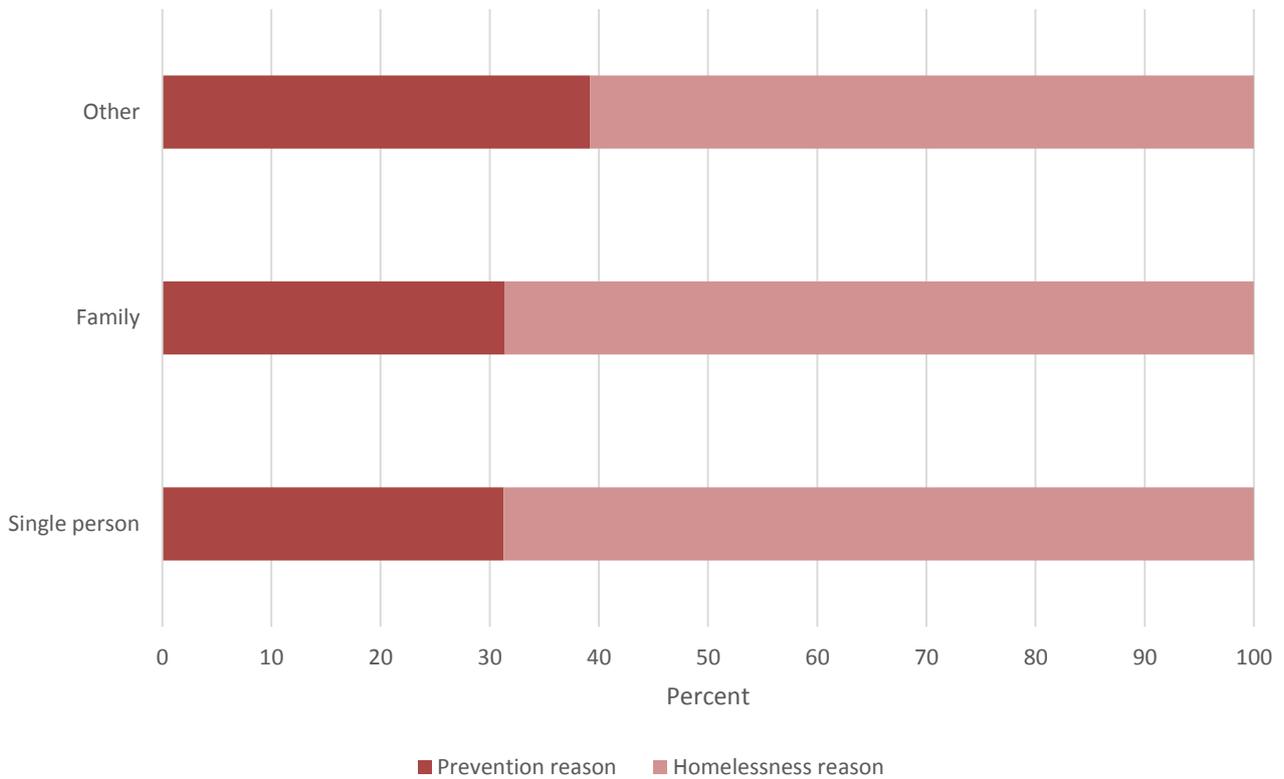
Homeless people seek assistance for a variety of reasons. Figure 2 groups reasons for seeking prevention assistance into two categories: homelessness reasons and prevention reasons. The ideal scenario would be for the vast majority of people to seek assistance before they become homeless, enabling local authorities to intervene early and prevent the trauma of homelessness. However, Figure 2 shows that nearly 70% of people seek prevention assistance for

homelessness reasons, irrespective of household type. Whilst this is preliminary data and we must recognise that in many cases homelessness cannot be prevented, this emerging trend possibly suggests more could be done to ensure people are aware of the assistance available to them before crisis. Table 4 provides clear evidence of the different approaches being pursued in the implementation of prevention services across Scottish local authorities. Local authorities

towards the end of the table appear to be attempting to prevent homelessness with people irrespective of their reason for the approach; this is demonstrated by high proportions of people reporting homelessness reasons. In essence these authorities seem to be adopting a prevention-with-all approach. By contrast, the three local authorities towards the top of Table 4 appear to be more selective, focusing mostly on

offering prevention assistance where the reasons relate to prevention, what could be termed a selective-prevention approach. These findings seem to suggest that a single homeless person seeking assistance will face very different offers of assistance depending on the local authority where they present.

**Figure 2.** Reasons for approach of prevention cases by household type<sup>3, 4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Homelessness reasons are defined in Scottish Government statistics and include: Termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments, Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy, Applicant terminated secure accommodation, Loss of service / tied accommodation, Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution, Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order from Environmental Health etc.), Forced division and sale of matrimonial home and Other reason for loss of accommodation, Dispute within household: violent or abusive, Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent, Fleeing non-domestic violence, Harassment, Overcrowding, Asked to leave and Other reason for leaving accommodation / household.

<sup>4</sup> Prevention reasons are defined in Scottish Government statistics and include: General housing options advice, Benefit issues (excluding Welfare Reform), Welfare Reform - Benefit Cap, Welfare reform - Under-occupancy penalty, Welfare reform - Other, Property Condition - disrepair, Property condition - lacking amenities, Property condition - fire / flood, "Accommodation Unsuitable" - overcrowded, "Accommodation Unsuitable" - mobility / adaptation issues, "Accommodation Unsuitable" – location, Household Experiencing personal issues, Household experiencing anti-social behaviour, Neighbour problems, Household experiencing hate crime, Household member needing care, Eviction / repossession, Eviction from UK Borders Agency (or successor organisation) accommodation, Tied / service tenancy, Asked to leave - parents, Asked to leave - other family, Asked to leave – friends, Harassment from private sector landlord, Illegal eviction - private sector landlord, Other

**Table 4.** Reasons for approach by single homeless people in prevention cases by local authority (percent and count)

	Prevention reason	Homelessness reason	Frequency
Aberdeen City	71	29	2,583
North Ayrshire	69	31	682
Argyll & Bute	68	32	179
Dundee City	43	57	1,238
North Lanarkshire	42	58	1,027
Inverclyde	41	59	466
Falkirk	39	61	917
Angus	39	61	378
Midlothian	36	64	261
Moray	36	64	456
Scottish Borders	35	65	249
East Renfrewshire	35	65	75
South Lanarkshire	33	67	535
Stirling	33	67	359
Renfrewshire	30	70	936
West Lothian	29	71	486
Perth & Kinross	27	73	759
Edinburgh	26	74	3,194
Highland	24	76	714
Aberdeenshire	24	76	770
Shetland	22	78	120
Clackmannanshire	22	78	58
East Ayrshire	22	78	67
Glasgow City	16	84	5,660
Fife	12	88	971
Dumfries & Galloway	10	90	355
East Lothian	7	93	166
West Dunbartonshire	3	97	655
South Ayrshire	0	100	345
Scotland	31	69	24,714

NB: Orkney, Eilean Siar and East Dunbartonshire not displayed due to low total cell count; less than 50 cases

## Type and number of prevention actions pursued

Key to the success of homelessness prevention efforts is the recognition that there is no single solution to preventing homelessness. In this subsection two related issues are explored: the type of prevention action taken and the number of different actions pursued. Only by exploring these issues together is it possible to build a picture of the nature of assistance offered to single homeless people when compared to families.

Based upon the typology set out in the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice, Scottish Government identifies three categories of homelessness prevention action:

- i] Active information, sign-posting and explanation (known as 'Type 1 assistance')<sup>5</sup>
- ii] Casework (known as 'Type 2 assistance')<sup>6</sup>
- iii] Advocacy, Representation and Mediation at Tribunal or Court Action.

Nearly all prevention actions relate to either active information (55%) or casework (45%), with only a very small percentage of advocacy work (<1%). Figure 3 gives an indication that there is some discrepancy in the types of actions offered to single homeless people when compared to families, with families slightly more likely to be offered more intensive Type 2 assistance (51% vs 45%). Figure 4 also illustrates a difference in

the number of actions taken, with families more likely to receive two or more actions (56% vs 37%).

Given that levels of vulnerability are documented as equal (ie. prevention assistance is currently being limited to the least vulnerable, irrespective of household type) it would be anticipated that the level of assistance offered to single people and families would be similar. Whilst it is again important to emphasise the experimental nature of this data and the short time period which it relates to, there is an indication that single people may be receiving less comprehensive prevention assistance. These trends must be monitored and if they persist, action will need to be taken to redress inequalities in service provision.

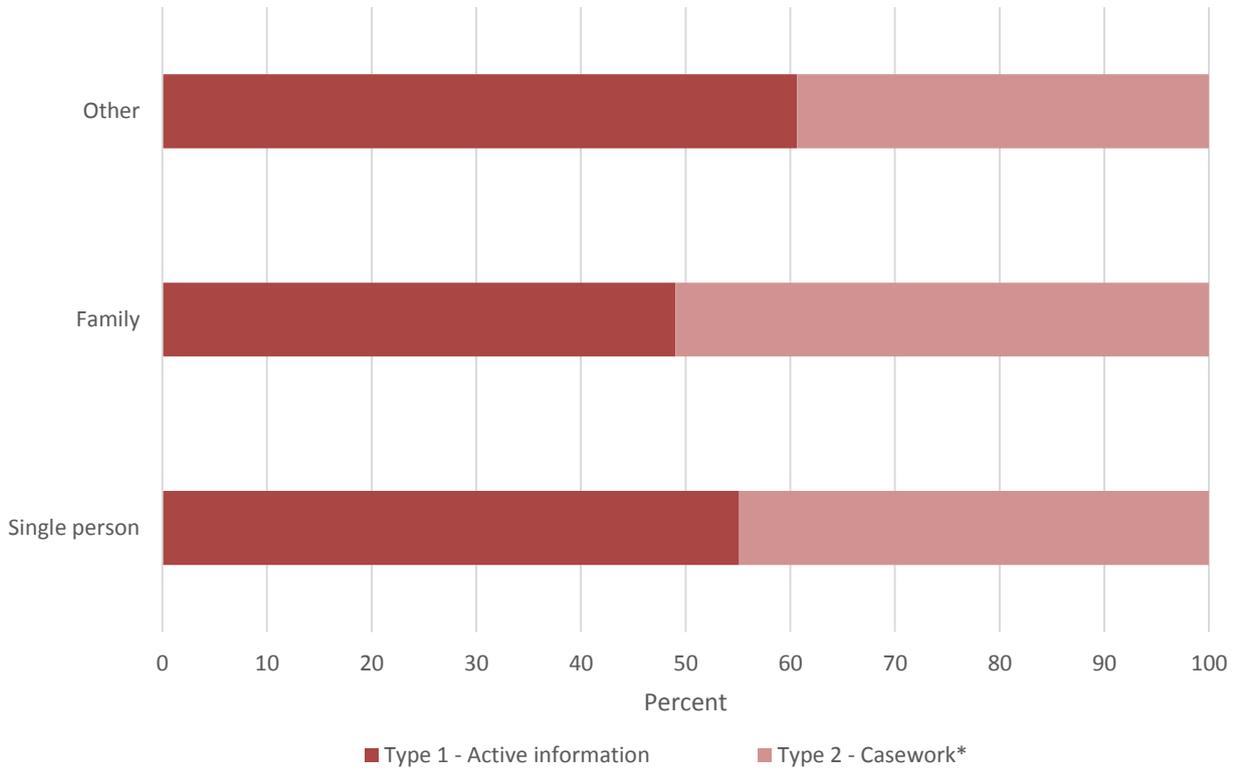
Tables 5 and 6 again show considerable variation by local authority in the assistance offered to single homeless people. The types of prevention action range from 100% of actions conforming to Type 2 provision (top of Table 5) to 0% of actions and there is similar variation in the number of actions taken<sup>7</sup>. Table 6 shows that in at least six authorities more than 90% of single homeless people were offered at least two actions, compared to five authorities where fewer than 10% of single homeless people were offered two or more actions.

<sup>5</sup> Type 1 activities include: providing information either orally or in writing, sign-posting or referring the user to other available resources or services, and, the explanation of technical terms or clarifying an official document, such as a tenancy agreement or a possession order.

<sup>6</sup> Type 2 activities include: a diagnostic interview where the problem and all relevant issues are identified, making a judgement as to whether the individual has a case that can be pursued, setting out an individual's options or courses of action, encouraging the user to take action on their own behalf, providing practical aid with letters or forms, negotiating with third parties on the user's behalf, introducing the enquirer by referral to another source of help, support to users in making their own case

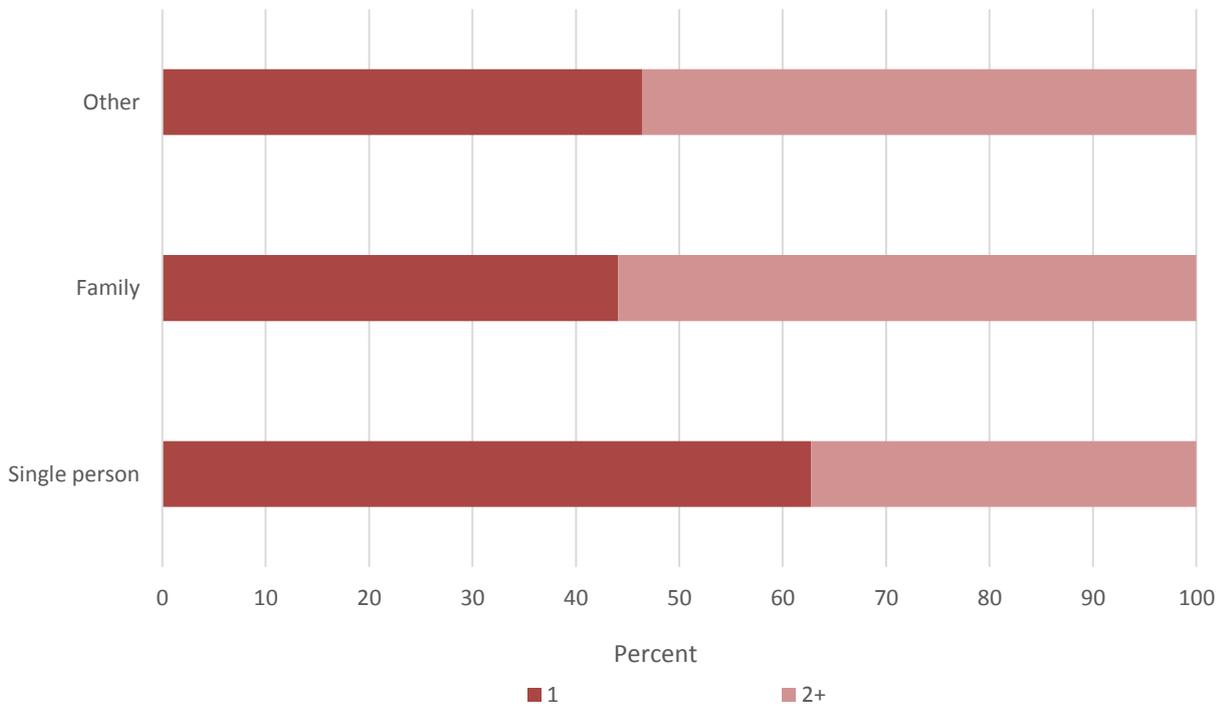
<sup>7</sup> Number of actions applies to all types of action.

**Figure 3.** Types of prevention action pursued by household type



\* Includes small percentage of advocacy work

**Figure 4.** Number of prevention actions pursued by household type<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> 'None' not displayed as percentages less than 1 percent of cases within household type

**Table 5.** Types of prevention action pursued by local authority with single homeless people (percent and count)

	Type 1 - Active Information	Type 2 - Casework <sup>a</sup>	Frequency
North Ayrshire	0	100	682
East Lothian	5	95	166
South Lanarkshire	15	85	535
North Lanarkshire	21	79	1,025
West Dunbartonshire	24	76	655
Glasgow City	36	64	5,660
Argyll & Bute	38	62	179
Scottish Borders	40	60	249
Dundee City	41	59	1,238
Perth & Kinross	41	59	759
Clackmannanshire	47	53	58
Angus	51	49	378
Dumfries & Galloway	54	46	355
Fife	56	44	971
Stirling	60	40	359
Renfrewshire	60	40	936
Highland	62	38	714
Inverclyde	65	35	466
South Ayrshire	68	32	345
Moray	73	27	456
Edinburgh	77	23	3,194
East Renfrewshire	79	21	75
Aberdeen City	81	19	2,583
West Lothian	87	13	486
Midlothian	88	12	261
Shetland	88	12	120
Aberdeenshire	94	6	770
East Ayrshire	99	1	67
Falkirk	100	0	917
Scotland	55	45	24,712

a. Includes small percentage of advocacy work

NB: Orkney, Eilean Siar and East Dunbartonshire not displayed due to low total cell count; less than 50 cases

**Table 6.** Number of prevention actions pursued by local authority with single homeless people (percent and count)

	1	2+	Frequency
East Ayrshire	0	100	67
Falkirk	1	99	917
East Lothian	2	98	166
Midlothian	3	97	261
North Ayrshire	3	97	682
West Lothian	9	91	486
East Renfrewshire	12	88	75
Angus	15	85	378
Moray	21	79	456
Clackmannanshire	22	78	58
Dumfries & Galloway	23	77	355
Highland	23	77	714
Fife	23	77	971
Shetland	29	71	120
South Lanarkshire	32	68	535
Aberdeenshire	33	67	770
North Lanarkshire	37	63	1,027
Renfrewshire	37	63	936
Dundee City	39	61	1,238
Scottish Borders	43	57	249
Inverclyde	70	30	466
Perth & Kinross	71	29	759
West Dunbartonshire	89	11	655
Glasgow City	89	11	5,660
Stirling	95	5	359
Aberdeen City	97	3	2,583
Edinburgh	99	2	3,194
Argyll & Bute	99	1	179
South Ayrshire	100	0	345
Scotland	63	37	24,714

NB: Orkney, Eilean Siar and East Dunbartonshire not displayed due to low total cell count; less than 50 cases

## Outcomes of homelessness prevention

A key issue to be explored in relation to homelessness prevention is the outcome of assistance. Figure 5 documents outcomes by household type and reveals some differences. In broad terms it appears that single people are less likely to find alternative accommodation in the social rented or private rented sectors (7% vs 12%), and slightly less likely to have their homelessness ended by remaining in current accommodation (24% vs 26%). Instead, single homeless people are more likely to move in with friends/relatives (3% vs 1%) or lose contact (13% vs 8%). It is important that losing contact is not seen as a meaningless outcome as these are individuals who seek assistance and then do not return. Mackie (2014c) found that most single homeless people had experienced three or more homeless experiences before they approached the local authority so it is likely that where contact is lost these individuals continue to face unmet needs.

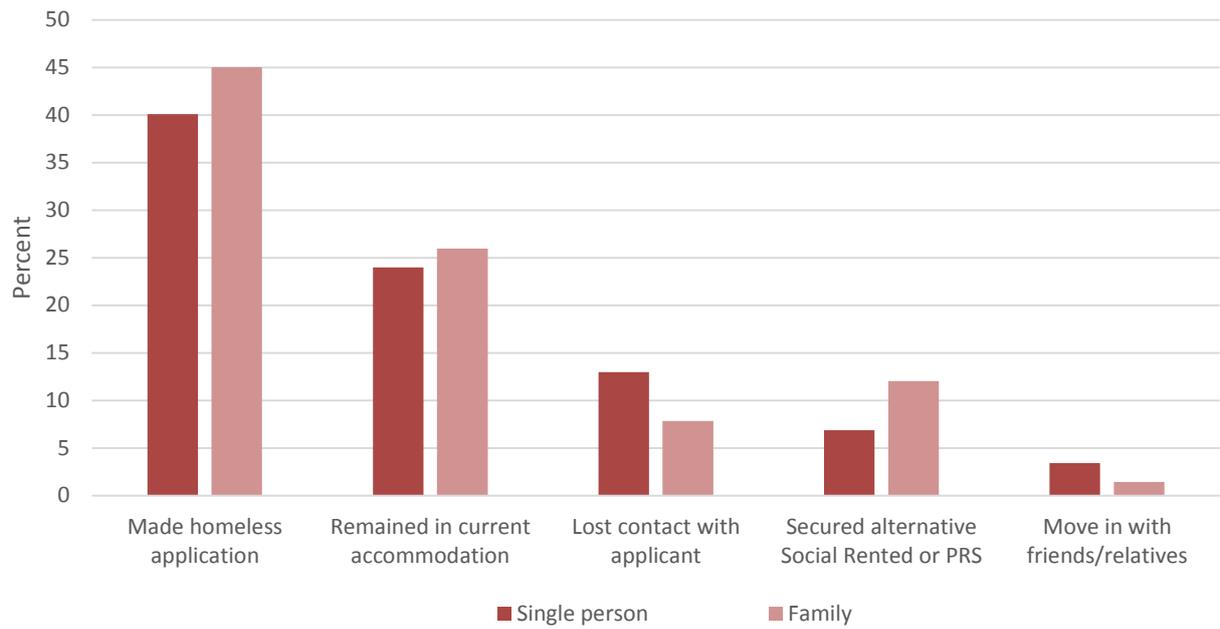
Whilst recognising the limits of the data and the fact these differences are relatively small, there is still a general indication that homelessness prevention services are not currently as effective in meeting the needs of single homeless people. This may be the result of the type and nature of the prevention actions being pursued.

The prevailing trend in homelessness prevention services is one of significant differences between local authorities and this trend continues in relation to prevention outcomes (Table 7). Local authorities at the top of Table 7 appear to enable up to 79% of single homeless people to either remain or find alternative accommodation, whilst those towards the bottom of the table do so for as few as 9% of people. Failing to prevent homelessness becomes particularly problematic in those local authorities where

people do not then go on to make a homelessness application as many of these individuals are likely to remain in housing need. It is possible that local authorities are using prevention services (possibly inadvertently) as a gatekeeping tool. Indeed, the recent inquiry by the Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) found that in some instances housing options/ homelessness prevention was being used as a gatekeeping tool.

## Conclusion

This chapter indicates that most people are seeking homelessness prevention assistance too late as they are already homeless. There is definitely scope to raise awareness of homelessness prevention services and to intervene earlier. When assistance is sought it appears the experiences of single homeless people and families vary. Whilst recognising the limits of the data and the fact differences are relatively small, there is a general indication that homelessness prevention services are not currently as effective in meeting the needs of single homeless people. Moreover, there is significant variation in the assistance single homeless people receive across Scottish local authorities.

**Figure 5.** Outcomes of prevention actions by household type

**Table 7.** Outcomes of prevention actions for single homeless people by local authority (percent and count)

	Enabled to remain or alternative accomm. found <sup>a</sup>	Made homeless application	Moved in with friends/ relatives	Lost contact	Not known or Other <sup>b</sup>	Frequency
East Renfrewshire	79	15	3	1	3	75
Argyll & Bute	67	25	3	2	3	177
Clackmannanshire	53	32	2	11	2	53
Renfrewshire	48	34	3	3	12	840
East Lothian	48	25	12	11	5	164
South Lanarkshire	46	27	2	9	17	436
Inverclyde	45	29	4	7	14	346
Angus	45	32	5	0	18	370
Edinburgh	42	27	2	7	22	2,447
Fife	41	37	2	13	7	943
Highland	41	38	8	4	10	714
Scottish Borders	36	44	3	7	9	204
West Lothian	34	38	4	20	4	430
Moray	32	41	9	11	6	436
North Ayrshire	30	65	4	0	1	457
Aberdeenshire	30	42	5	6	16	770
Perth & Kinross	30	39	2	15	15	667
Shetland	30	57	6	0	8	88
Stirling	29	35	6	18	12	327
Dumfries & Galloway	28	55	3	7	7	244
Aberdeen City	26	24	3	37	10	1,921
Glasgow City	25	45	4	12	13	5,626
Midlothian	24	3	7	27	39	167
North Lanarkshire	22	68	1	0	8	964
Dundee City	19	43	1	23	15	1,232
South Ayrshire West	16	77	1	1	5	277
Dunbartonshire	12	80	1	4	2	627
Falkirk	9	18	0	48	26	476
Scotland	31	40	3	13	13	21,572

a. Found Social Rented housing or accommodation in the Private rented Sector, or was assisted in remain in own accommodation

b. 'Not known' and 'Other' as coded in PREVENT1 returns

NB: Orkney, Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire and East Dunbartonshire not displayed due to low total cell count; less than 50 cases

## Key points

- **Scale:** Approximately 80% of prevention approaches are made by single people, which is higher than the proportion of homelessness applications attributed to single people (70%). There is variation between local authorities, with the proportion of single homeless people ranging from 100% to 48%.
- **Vulnerability:** Four in five people (single and families) are recorded as having no more than one vulnerability. There is limited variation across local authorities, although there are three authorities where two or more vulnerabilities are reported for at least one third of single homeless people.
- **Reasons for approach:** Nearly 70% of people seek prevention assistance for homelessness reasons (rather than prevention reasons), irrespective of household type. There is significant variation between local authorities, with the proportion of single homeless people reporting a prevention reason ranging from 71% to 0%.
- **Type and number of prevention actions pursued:** Nearly all prevention actions relate to either active information (55%) or casework (45%), with only a very small percentage of advocacy work (<1%). Families are slightly more likely to be offered more intensive Type 2 assistance (51% vs 45%) and they are more likely to receive two or more actions to prevent homelessness (56% vs 37%). Across Scottish local authorities the types of prevention action range from 100% of actions conforming to Type 2 provision to 0%. The numbers of prevention actions taken also vary, with the proportion of single people offered two types of action or more ranging from 100% to 0%.

- **Outcomes of homelessness**

**prevention:** These differ between single homeless people and families. Single people are less likely to find alternative accommodation in the social rented or private rented sectors (7% vs 12%), and slightly less likely to have their homelessness ended by remaining in current accommodation (24% vs 26%). Instead, single homeless people are more likely to move in with friends/relatives (3% vs 1%) or lose contact (13% vs 8%). There is variation between local authorities. The proportion of single homeless people enabled to remain or find alternative accommodation ranges from 79% to 9%.

## 4. Homelessness applications

This section examines homelessness applications and considers: i] the scale of homelessness applications; ii] reasons for homelessness and housing prior to an application; iii] factors contributing to an application; and finally v] repeat applications.

### The scale of homelessness applications

Between January and December 2014, 36,144 homelessness applications were

made to Scottish local authorities, 70% of which were made by single homeless people (Table 8). However, this frequently reported national trend hides the heterogeneity that exists across Scotland where the proportion of homelessness applications made by single people ranges from 58% in South Lanarkshire to 85% in Inverclyde.

**Table 8.** Homelessness applications by household type and local authority (Percent)

	Single person	Family	Other	Applications per 10,000 pop.
Inverclyde	85	13	2	31
Renfrewshire	84	14	2	49
North Ayrshire	84	14	3	61
East Ayrshire	82	17	1	38
South Ayrshire	82	17	1	59
Shetland	81	18	1	67
Dumfries & Galloway	78	20	2	48
Orkney	77	22	1	37
West Dunbartonshire	77	22	2	152
Glasgow City	77	22	2	103
Eilean Siar	75	25	1	58
Dundee City	73	25	2	99
Aberdeen City	73	26	2	61
Edinburgh	71	27	2	82
Angus	71	27	3	59
West Lothian	68	27	4	77
Clackmannanshire	68	27	6	94
Scottish Borders	67	28	4	57
Falkirk	67	31	1	77
East Renfrewshire	67	30	3	42
East Lothian	67	30	3	70
Stirling	66	31	2	47
Aberdeenshire	66	32	3	46
Argyll & Bute	65	30	5	55
Highland	65	33	2	44
Fife	64	33	3	65
North Lanarkshire	62	34	4	58
Moray	62	35	3	58
Perth & Kinross	61	36	3	56
East Dunbartonshire	59	38	3	60
Midlothian	59	39	3	65
South Lanarkshire	58	40	2	63
Scotland	70	27	2	68

## Reasons for homelessness and housing prior to an application

This subsection draws together data on reasons for homelessness applications (Figure 6) alongside the type of housing prior to an application (Tables 9 and 10). Taken together these provide a good indication of why people are making a homelessness application.

Figure 6 illustrates that single people are far more likely to become homeless because they are asked to leave their accommodation (30% vs 16%), which correlates with the fact that a high proportion of single people become homeless from the parental/family home (29% vs 18%), from the accommodation of friends/a partner (20% vs 16%), or from long-term sofa surfing (3% vs 1%) – Tables 9 and 10. Single people are also more likely to become homeless on discharge from prison (9% vs. 0%<sup>9</sup>).

Families are far more likely to have a tenancy terminated by their landlord<sup>10</sup> (25% vs 12%) which correlates with the fact families are more likely than single people to become homeless from their own private (34% vs 12%) or social (16% vs 12%) rented properties. Families are also more likely to make a homelessness application due to some form of violence within the household (22% vs 12%).

These findings provide a good indication of the routes people take into homelessness and help to identify areas where policy makers and practitioners might intervene more effectively in order to prevent

homelessness. In fact, the Scottish Housing Regulator's (2014) inquiry into housing options services similarly found that many people were making homeless applications where homelessness prevention services might have effectively prevented homelessness occurring. Three issues appear to be most pronounced:

First, a high proportion of single people are becoming homeless because they are asked to leave. There is certainly scope to examine what more could be done to assist single people to remain where it is appropriate or make a planned exit in order to avoid homelessness. Mediation is one tool which has proven to be extremely effective and is obviously used by some local authorities but there appears to be scope for further services.

Second, many people (particularly families) are becoming homeless because tenancies are being terminated in both the PRS and to a lesser extent the social rented sector. Changes to repossession orders and pre-action requirements set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 have strengthened protection for tenants in social rented housing and recent proposals by Scottish Government (2015) to end no-fault grounds for eviction have the potential to reduce proportions of homelessness applications from the PRS. The potentially very positive impacts of legislative reform on evictions from the PRS and social rented housing will need to be closely monitored.

Third, it is unsatisfactory that nearly 1 in 10 single homeless people become homeless on discharge from prison. Whilst there is clearly some excellent work with prison leavers at risk of homelessness, such as prison liaison officer advice services or the Insiders Programme which trains and accredits chosen prisoners in giving housing advice,

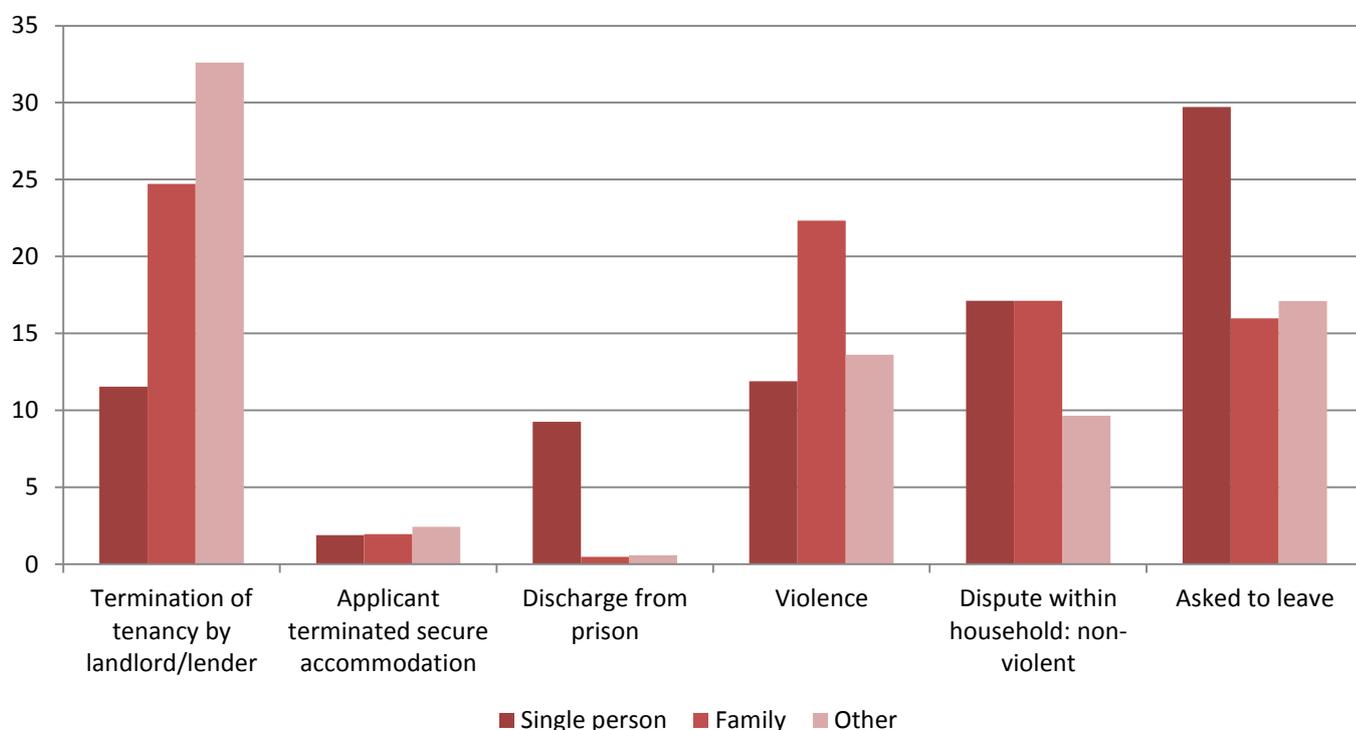
<sup>9</sup> 9% of single people became homeless because of discharge from prison. This is slightly higher than the 8% who reported prison as their housing prior to homelessness. This variation exists because a small proportion will have temporarily occupied alternative accommodation on release from prison but the cause remained discharge from prison.

<sup>10</sup> 'Termination of tenancy by landlord' includes: 1] termination due to rent arrears or the foreclosure and forced sale of a property by a mortgage lender, and 2] all other legal actions by a landlord that result in the termination of a tenancy

provision has proven to be inconsistent (Dore and Daly 2015) and the findings in this study show more could be done.

It is significant to note that there were no clear patterns or considerable differences between local authorities in the reasons for homelessness or the prior accommodation.

**Figure 6.** Reasons for homelessness application by household type (percent)<sup>11</sup>



**Table 9.** Reason for homelessness application by housing prior to application (single people, percent)

	Termination of tenancy by landlord/lender	Applicant terminated secure accomm.	Discharge from prison	Violence	Dispute within household: non-violent	Asked to leave	Total
Social Rented Tenancy	23	8	0	28	13	6	12
Own property - PRS	52	6	0	12	8	6	12
Own property - Owning Parental/family home/relatives	25	4	0	21	20	3	3
Friends/partners	3	0	0	8	23	55	29
Prison	3	0	0	16	30	42	20
Long-term sofa surfing	0	0	95	1	0	2	8
Other <sup>12</sup>	0	0	0	4	10	40	3
	7	1	12	6	8	18	13

**Table 10.** Reason for homelessness application by housing prior to application (families, percent)

<sup>11</sup> 'Other reason accommodation is no longer available' and 'Other reason for having to leave accommodation' have been excluded. These are the reasons in approximately 18% of all cases.

<sup>12</sup> Includes armed services accommodation, hospital, children's residential accommodation, supported accommodation, hostel, B&B, caravan/mobile home, 'other'.

	Termination of tenancy by landlord/lender	Applicant terminated secure accomm.	Discharge from prison	Violence	Dispute within household: non-violent	Asked to leave	Total
Social Rented Tenancy	14	3	0	47	14	3	16
Own property - PRS	58	4	0	14	6	4	34
Own property - Owning	24	2	0	33	17	1	7
Parental/family home/relatives	3	0	0	10	25	47	18
Friends/partners	3	0	0	27	38	26	16
Prison	0	0	82	5	5	5	0
Long-term sofa surfing	0	0	0	8	18	31	1
Other	6	1	2	15	11	15	8

### Factors contributing to a homelessness application

Table 11 shows the factors which reportedly contributed to households making a homelessness application – essentially this provides an indication of housing-related support needs. In nearly all instances single people are more likely to report a problem/factor than families. For example, a higher proportion of single people were recorded as facing drug/alcohol dependency (10% vs 1%), lack of support from friends/family (10% vs 5%), mental health issues (9% vs 4%), criminal/anti-social behaviour (8% vs 4%), difficulties managing on their own (5% vs 2%), and physical health issues (4% vs 2%). The higher prevalence of housing-related support needs amongst

single homeless people is a well-established trend and the challenge this poses to local authorities is that in some instances meeting the needs of single homeless people is more likely to require non-housing interventions (e.g. support with mental health or substance misuse). The housing support duty and accompanying statutory regulations offer some assurance that these support needs are being identified and referrals to support providers are being made. However, Scottish Government has recognised that more needs to be done to meet the needs of those facing multiple exclusion and the government is currently prioritising work in this area.

**Table 11.** Factors contributing to homelessness application by household type<sup>13</sup> (Percent)

	Single person	Family	Other	Total who have experienced
Financial difficulties	9	9	16	9
Physical health reasons	4	2	8	3
Mental health reasons	9	4	8	8
Unmet need for support services	2	1	1	2
Lack of support from friends/family	10	5	6	9
Difficulties managing on own	5	2	3	4
Drug/alcohol dependency	10	1	2	8
Criminal/anti-social behaviour	8	4	4	6
Not to do with applicant household <sup>a</sup>	21	24	21	22

a. Includes landlord selling property, fire, circumstances of other persons sharing previous property, harassment by others, etc.

### Repeat applications

<sup>13</sup> Column percentages do not sum to 100 as multiple responses could be recorded. Excludes cases where question refused

Repeat applications refer to instances where a person applies to a local authority as homeless within a year of closure of a previous application. Repeat homelessness was more common amongst single homeless people than families (7% vs 3%), albeit it is important to recognise that this relatively low level of repeat homelessness relates only to repeat applications to the local authority as Mackie (2014) found that 52% of single homeless people will face three or more experiences of homelessness but they tend to seek local authority assistance only after

several prior experiences. Table 12 shows that there is some variation between local authorities as rates of repeat homelessness amongst single homeless people range from 1% in Eilean Siar to 12% in Glasgow City. Higher rates of repeat homelessness would generally be seen as problematic because a sustainable solution has not been secured, albeit it is important to recognise that pathways out of homelessness are often not linear. Further consideration should be given to reducing repeat homelessness amongst single people.

**Table 12.** Percentage of repeat applications within household type and local authority, (percent)

	Single person	Family	Other	Total
Glasgow City	12	2	1	10
Edinburgh	11	10	3	11
South Ayrshire	10	2	0	8
Renfrewshire	10	1	0	8
West Dunbartonshire	7	5	4	7
Inverclyde	7	0	0	6
South Lanarkshire	7	2	0	5
Fife	7	3	0	5
Clackmannanshire	6	1	0	4
Dumfries & Galloway	6	1	0	5
East Lothian	5	3	0	4
Highland	5	2	0	4
North Ayrshire	5	0	5	4
Dundee City	5	2	0	4
Aberdeenshire	4	1	0	3
Perth & Kinross	4	3	0	4
East Ayrshire	4	0	0	3
Falkirk	4	2	0	3
Scottish Borders	4	1	0	3
Argyll & Bute	4	1	0	3
North Lanarkshire	4	2	0	3
Moray	3	1	0	2
East Dunbartonshire	3	2	0	3
East Renfrewshire	3	1	0	2
Midlothian	3	1	0	2
Angus	3	3	0	3
Aberdeen City	2	1	0	2
Stirling	2	2	0	2
Orkney	2	0	0	1
Shetland	2	0	0	1
West Lothian	2	1	0	1
Eilean Siar	1	3	0	1
Scotland	7	3	1	6

## Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how journeys into homelessness differ between single homeless people and families. Single homeless people generally appear more vulnerable, entering homelessness from less secure accommodation, facing more support needs, and they are more likely to have been homeless previously. Significantly, this chapter also supports the conclusions of the Scottish Housing Regulator's (2014) inquiry into housing options services, finding that many people are making homeless applications where homelessness prevention services might have effectively prevented homelessness occurring.

### Key points

- **Scale:** Between January and December 2014, 36,144 homelessness applications were made to Scottish local authorities, 70% of which were made by single homeless people. The proportion of homelessness applications made by single people range from 58% to 85%.
- **Reasons for homelessness:** Single people are far more likely than families to become homeless because they are asked to leave their accommodation (30% vs 16%), which correlates with the fact that a high proportion of single people become homeless from the parental/family home (29% vs 18%), from the accommodation of friends/a partner (20% vs 16%), or from long-term sofa surfing (3% vs 1%). Single people are also more likely to become homeless on discharge from prison (9% vs. 0%).

Families are far more likely to have a tenancy terminated by their landlord (25% vs 12%) which correlates with the fact families are more likely than single people to become homeless from their own private (34% vs 12%) or social (16% vs

12%) rented properties. Families are also more likely to make a homelessness application due to some form of violence within the household (22% vs 12%).

- **Factors contributing to a homelessness application:** A higher proportion of single people were recorded as facing drug/alcohol dependency (10% vs 1%), lack of support from friends/family (10% vs 5%), mental health issues (9% vs 4%), criminal/anti-social behaviour (8% vs 4%), difficulties managing on their own (5% vs 2%), and physical health issues (4% vs 2%).
- **Repeat applications:** Repeat homelessness was more common amongst single homeless people than families (7% vs 3%). There is some variation between local authorities as rates of repeat homelessness amongst single homeless people range from 1% to 12%.

## 5. Homelessness assessments

This very brief chapter explores homelessness assessment decisions and reveals very similar decisions for all household types (Table 13), with approximately three quarters of all applications determined to be unintentionally homeless. There is a small but significant difference in the proportion of cases where contact is lost, with higher rates reported for single people (6%) than families (2%). It is important to recognise that these individuals are likely to continue to face unmet needs.

Beneath this national picture Table 14 suggests homelessness assessment decisions for single homeless people are variable across Scotland, with unintentionally homeless decisions ranging from 91% of decisions in Edinburgh to just 26% in East Dunbartonshire. In local authorities where unintentionally homeless decisions fall below the 73% national average, a range of alternative decisions are recorded.

Perhaps most worryingly, in seven of these local authorities more than 10% of decisions are intentionally homeless. Scottish homelessness statistics show that an increasing percentage of homelessness

applications are determined to be intentionally homeless (2% in 2009/10 to 5% in 2013/14). This trend was noted by the Scottish Parliament's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee (Scottish Parliament 2014). This is a potentially concerning trend given the weakened housing rights of intentionally homeless people and it warrants further exploration.

In the minority of local authorities where low unintentionally homeless decisions are made and high potentially homeless decisions are made this is less likely to be problematic as a potentially homeless decision does not exclude the person from meaningful assistance (unlike an intentionally homeless decision).

### Conclusion

This brief chapter reveals that single homeless people are likely to face very different decisions depending upon the local authority where they make an application and perhaps of greatest significance is the fact that rates of intentionality decisions are particularly high in several authorities.

**Table 13.** Homelessness assessment decisions by household type (percent)

	Single person	Family	Other	Total
Applicant resolved homelessness	4	4	5	4
Homeless - intentional	5	4	4	5
Homeless - unintentional	73	74	70	73
Lost contact	6	2	2	5
Neither homeless nor potentially homeless	4	5	7	4
Potentially homeless	4	7	8	5
Withdrew application	4	4	4	4

**Table 14.** Homelessness assessment decisions for single homeless people by local authority (percent)

	Applicant resolved homelessness	Homeless intentional	Homeless - unintentional	Lost contact	Neither homeless nor potentially homeless	Potentially homeless	Withdrew application	Freq.
Edinburgh	0	3	91	1	1	3	0	2,881
Highland	2	7	86	2	0	2	1	650
North Ayrshire	7	5	83	1	2	0	2	725
Midlothian	1	3	79	16	1	1	0	370
Perth & Kinross	6	3	78	0	10	1	2	503
Shetland	2	5	77	1	6	2	6	128
Scottish Borders	11	1	76	4	0	1	7	420
Inverclyde	7	4	75	4	2	3	4	211
South Ayrshire	2	2	75	1	9	4	7	548
Glasgow City	2	2	75	15	3	0	3	4,805
Angus	2	10	75	2	3	5	3	480
Orkney	2	3	74	0	5	6	10	62
West Lothian	2	5	74	9	7	0	3	923
West Dunbartonshire	3	3	73	1	1	1	19	1,014
Fife	5	4	73	6	4	2	7	1,513
South Lanarkshire	7	2	72	3	4	9	2	1,145
Renfrewshire	4	3	71	8	5	4	5	714
Stirling	2	11	71	7	4	1	4	276
Dundee City	7	1	70	11	2	6	5	1,066
Clackmannanshire	11	5	69	8	1	1	5	306
East Lothian	3	13	69	2	5	4	5	477
Aberdeenshire	4	8	68	4	2	8	6	799
Eilean Siar	14	10	68	6	0	1	1	118
North Lanarkshire	10	5	67	3	11	1	4	1,214
East Ayrshire	13	10	67	0	2	3	5	373
East Renfrewshire	9	4	64	2	7	13	0	252
Falkirk	5	14	58	1	6	6	9	791
Dumfries & Galloway	12	5	57	6	5	12	3	548
Aberdeen City	3	15	55	14	3	1	8	1,073
Argyll & Bute	14	9	53	1	12	8	4	316
Moray	10	13	50	0	12	4	11	343
East Dunbartonshire	0	2	26	3	17	50	1	363
Scotland	4	5	73	6	4	4	4	25,407

### Key points

- Approximately three quarters of all homelessness applications are determined to be unintentionally homeless, irrespective of household type.
- The proportion of single homeless people found to be unintentionally homeless varies across local authorities, ranging from 91% of decisions to 26%.
- In several local authorities more than 10% of single homeless people were determined to be intentionally homeless.

## 6. Temporary accommodation

This chapter briefly reflects on levels and types of temporary accommodation use across Scottish local authorities. Table 15 shows the rate of temporary accommodation use per 10,000 people and demonstrates that there is great variation across Scotland, particularly in relation to single people. The rate of temporary accommodation use for families ranges from 0 – 18 households per 10,000. In contrast, the range is far greater for single homeless people, ranging from 6 – 53 people per 10,000 (absolute numbers are expected to be greater for single homeless people given that they constitute the majority of homelessness applications).

It might have been anticipated that local authorities making greatest use of temporary accommodation would simply be those with highest levels of homelessness but there is no statistical association. Consideration should be given as to why some local authorities are accommodating a greater proportion of single homeless people in temporary accommodation and whether this is suitable.

Where a person is temporarily accommodated in social rented accommodation there is likely to be less concern over suitability, whereas being accommodated in B&B accommodation is more problematic, unless it is only used for a very short period of time. Table 16 shows that single people are far more likely than families to be accommodated in hostels or B&Bs (35% vs <5%<sup>14</sup>), whereas families are more likely to be accommodated in social rented housing (88% vs 54%). Contrary to the national picture, Figure 7 shows that in nine local authorities, the situation is more positive with more than 80% of temporarily accommodated single homeless people in social rented housing rather than hostels or

B&Bs. That said, at the bottom of Figure 7, there are 13 local authorities where fewer than half of all temporarily accommodated single homeless people are in social rented housing. This routine use of B&Bs and hostels to temporarily accommodate high proportions of single homeless people in many Scottish local authorities needs further investigation.

Notably, this analysis of temporary accommodation use has not explored the duration of the stay. A very short period of time in B&B accommodation would be a very different experience to a prolonged period. Data collection on the time spent in temporary accommodation is currently being developed by the Scottish Government statistics directorate. This data should be used to inform any examination of routine use of B&Bs with single homeless people in Scotland.

### Conclusion

This brief chapter shows that single homeless people and families face very different temporary accommodation solutions, with single people far more likely to be accommodated in B&Bs, albeit there is great variation across Scottish local authorities.

### Key points

- The rate of temporary accommodation use for families ranges from 0 – 18 households per 10,000. In contrast, the range is far greater for single homeless people, ranging from 6 – 53 people per 10,000.
- Single people are far more likely than families to be accommodated in hostels or B&Bs (35% vs <5%), whereas families are more likely to be accommodated in social rented housing (88% vs 54%).
- There is variation between local authorities. The proportion of single homeless people temporarily accommodated in social rented accommodation ranges from 100% to 12%.

<sup>14</sup> To maintain anonymity we have not published statistics where the proportion of households falls below 5%. Due to the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 the percentage of families accommodated in B&Bs is very low.

**Table 15.** Occupation of temporary accommodation by household type

	Rate per 10,000 population			Frequency
	Single Person (and other)	Families	Total	
Shetland	53	11	64	148
Midlothian	43	18	60	519
West Dunbartonshire	25	4	29	256
East Lothian	25	10	34	351
Clackmannanshire	22	3	25	128
Highland	21	5	25	586
Eilean Siar	20	6	25	69
Glasgow City	20	10	29	1,753
Perth & Kinross	18	4	22	327
South Ayrshire	17	3	20	225
Stirling	16	6	22	200
North Lanarkshire	15	1	17	563
Dundee City	15	3	18	274
Edinburgh	15	5	20	970
Dumfries & Galloway	14	3	17	254
Aberdeen City	14	3	17	392
South Lanarkshire	14	8	21	665
West Lothian	12	6	18	325
Argyll & Bute	11	3	14	125
Falkirk	11	4	14	224
North Ayrshire	11	2	12	170
Fife	10	4	15	533
East Dunbartonshire	10	4	14	149
Moray	10	5	14	134
Renfrewshire	9	1	10	172
Aberdeenshire	9	5	14	364
Angus	8	0	8	98
Inverclyde	7	1	8	63
Scottish Borders	6	1	7	83
Scotland	14	5	19	10,218

NB: East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire and Orkney not displayed due to low total cell count; less than 50 cases

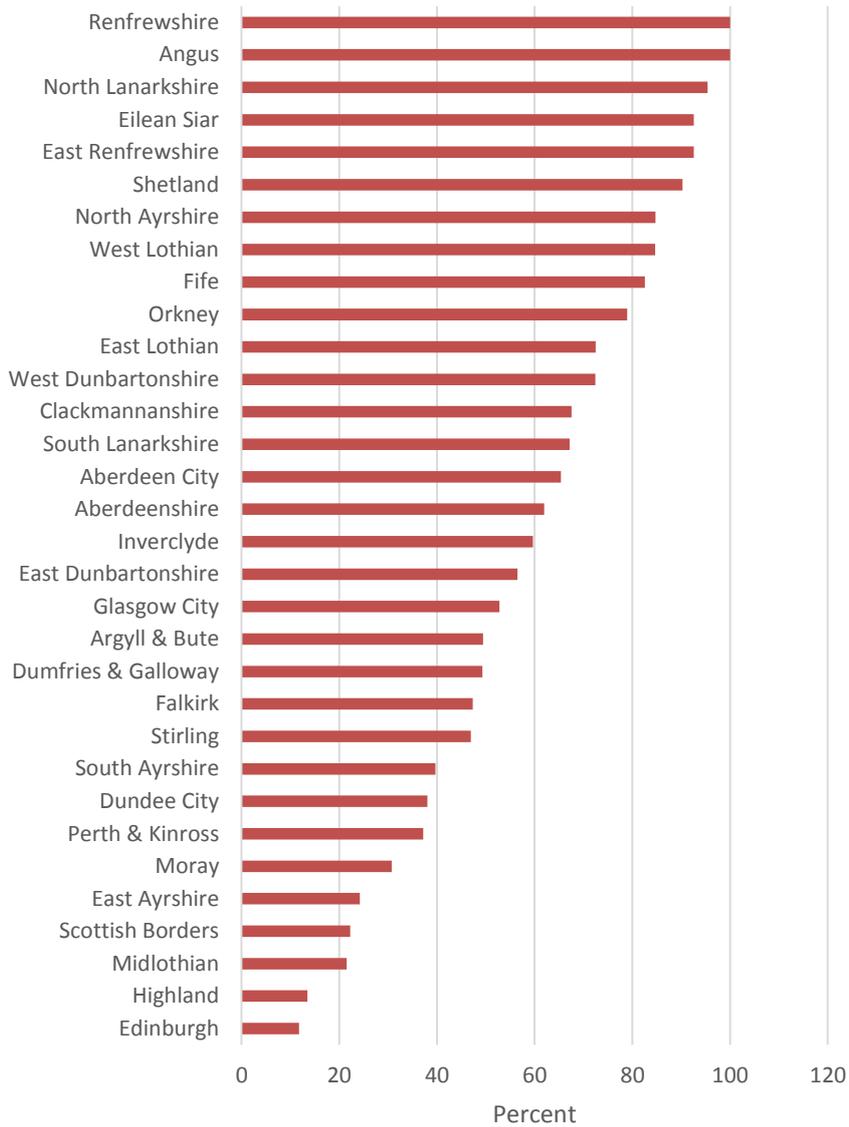
**Table 16.** Breakdown of household type by temporary accommodation used (Percent)

	Single person and other	Family	All household types
B&B	13	*	10
Hostel	22	*	17
Social sector accommodation	54	88	62
Other <sup>a</sup>	10	10	10
Total households housed (count)	7,727	2,491	10,218

\* Less than 5 percent

a. Other group refers to 'Other' category within statistical release, no further details known

**Figure 7.** Percentage of single and other households housed in temporary accommodation in the social rented sector



## 7. Homelessness application outcomes

This important chapter of the report examines how single people fair relative to families and across Scottish local authorities in terms of: i] the final outcomes of local authority homelessness assistance; and ii] the duration of their homelessness application

### Outcomes of local authority action

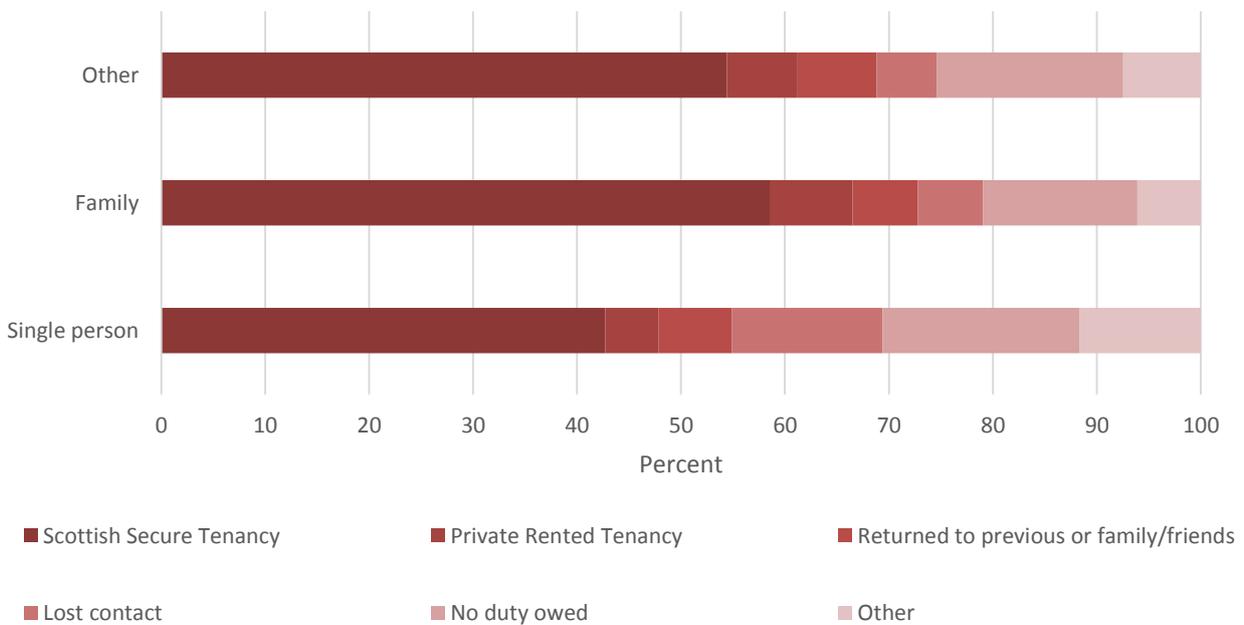
It is a concern that the outcomes of local authority action for all cases closed in 2014 appear to be more favourable for families than for single people (Figure 8).

Approximately 66% of families were offered a Scottish Secure tenancy or a private rented tenancy compared to 47% of single people. Moreover, contact was lost with 14% of single people compared to 6% of families. These outcomes help to explain Mackie’s (2014c) finding that less than half (44%) of single homeless people in Scotland found the assistance provided to them helpful. It is

important to note that outcomes include a ‘no duty owed’ category which will include some households where an application was taken whilst prevention work was pursued, potentially successfully and then the application was withdrawn.

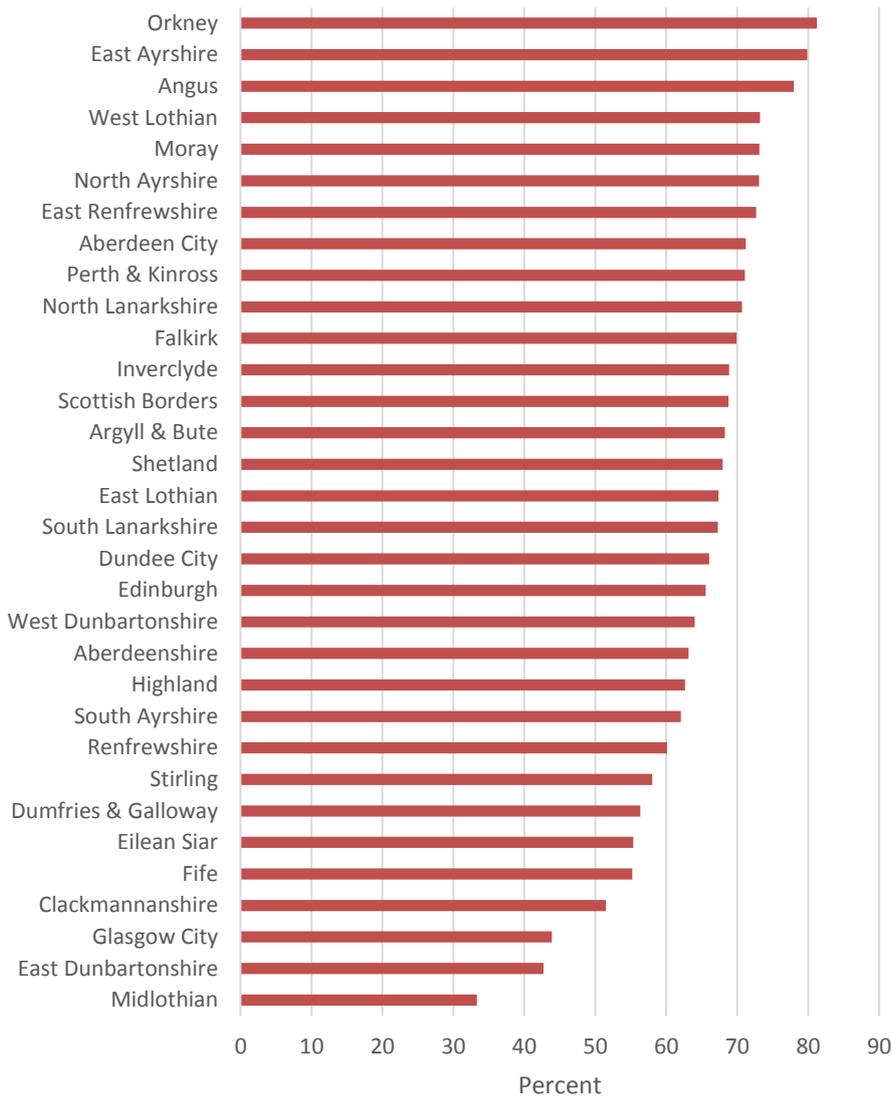
Figure 9 focuses on single homeless households who are unintentionally homeless and are therefore entitled to settled accommodation. When experiences are compared across Scotland, the proportion of single unintentionally homeless people who were offered a tenancy ranges from 33% in Midlothian to 81% in Orkney (Figure 9). This outcomes data must be read cautiously given issues about prevention recording but it certainly raises concerns about inconsistencies in the type of outcomes people face across Scotland.

**Figure 8.** Outcome of local authority action<sup>15</sup> for all cases closed in 2014, by household type



<sup>15</sup> Other includes the following categories: ‘Hostel etc.’, ‘Other known outcomes’ and ‘Outcome not known’. No duty owed relates to the closure of cases where households were neither homeless nor potentially homeless, where applicant resolved homelessness or withdrew application prior to assessment decision, or were ineligible for assistance.

**Figure 9.** Percentage of single unintentionally homeless households where a tenancy was offered<sup>16</sup>, by local authority



<sup>16</sup> Combines Scottish Secure Tenancy and Private Rented tenancy

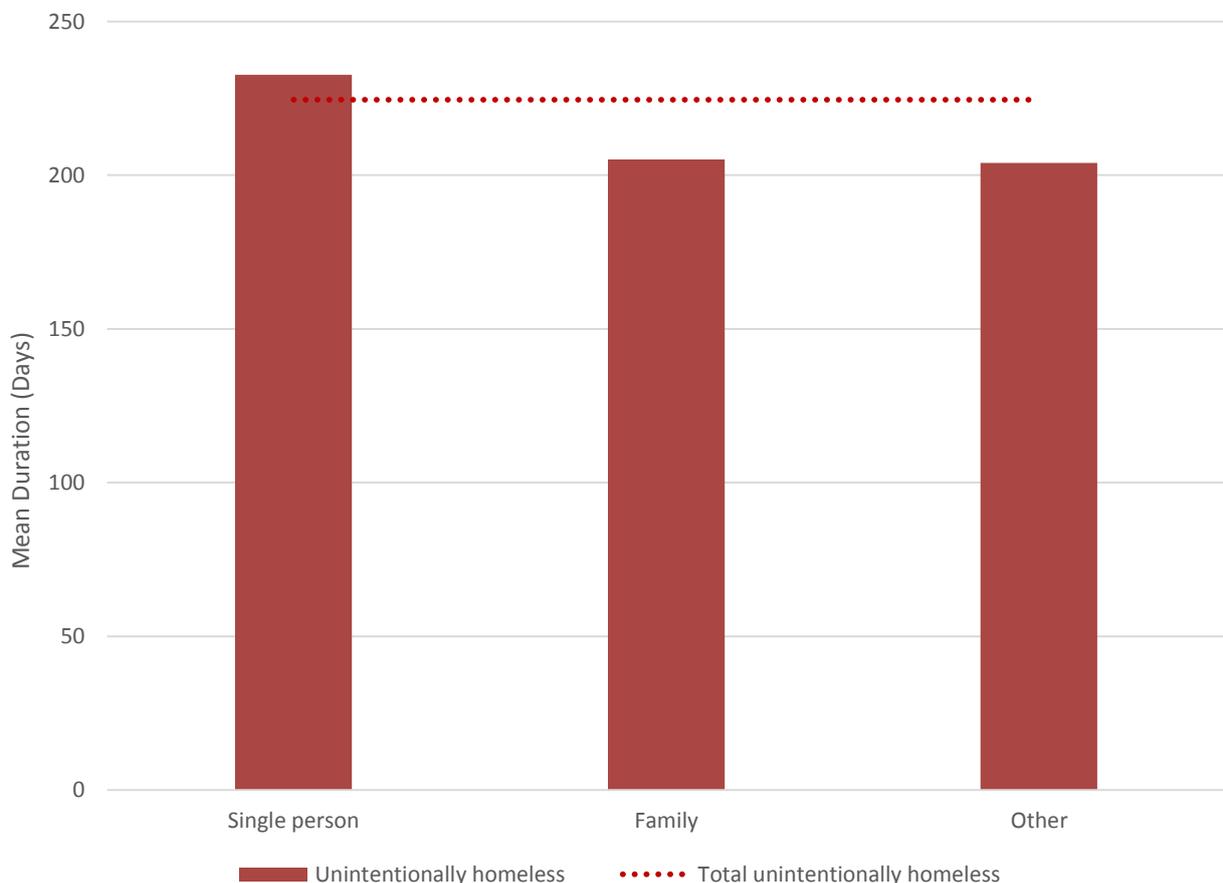
## The duration of homelessness applications

Homelessness can be traumatic and it is important that sustainable solutions are reached promptly (Crane et al 2006, Wireman 2007). Yet the average duration of an application for an unintentionally homeless person is 225 days, which would seem far too long to wait for a solution (Figure 10). When experiences are then compared by household type, unintentionally homeless single people are likely to wait approximately four weeks longer for their homelessness duty to be discharged (233 days vs 205 days to be dealt with and closed).

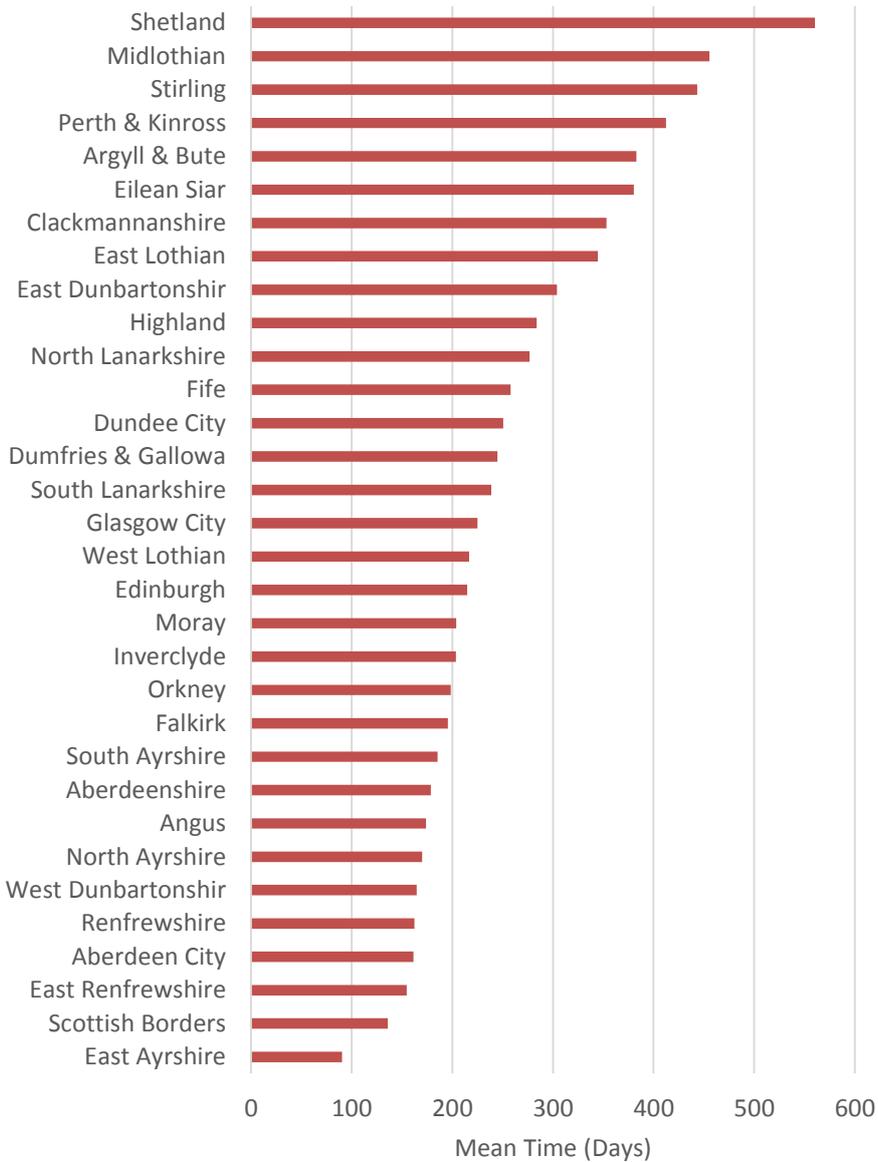
Figure 11 compares the duration of homelessness applications for unintentionally homeless single people across Scottish local authorities and it shows significant differences, with the mean time ranging from

less than 100 days (approx. 3 months) in East Ayrshire to more than 550 days (approx. 18 months) in Shetland. Many of the local authorities with average durations of greater than one year are rural which may help to explain the lengthy application times as suitable housing is likely to be more challenging to secure. In these local authorities it is important to ensure interim accommodation is of a high standard and of course efforts must be made to secure an adequate supply of affordable housing. Importantly, rurality does not sufficiently explain all variations in the duration of homelessness applications as there are also urban local authorities who appear to be facing difficulties finding suitable accommodation.

**Figure 10.** Average duration of homelessness application for unintentionally homeless households, by household type (Mean number of days)



**Figure 11.** Average duration of homelessness application for unintentionally homeless single households, by local authority (Mean number of days)



## Conclusion

This chapter raises concerns about inconsistencies in the types of outcomes people face when they make a homelessness application at a Scottish local authority. Outcomes appear to be far more favourable for families and the differences between local authorities are vast in terms of housing outcomes and case durations.

### Key points

- **Outcomes:** After making a homelessness application, approximately 66% of families were offered a Scottish Secure tenancy or a private rented tenancy compared to 47% of single people. Moreover, contact was lost with 14% of single people compared to 6% of homeless families. Outcomes vary across local authorities. The

proportion of single unintentionally homeless people who were offered a tenancy ranges from 33% to 81%.

months) to more than 550 days (approx. 18 months).

▪ **Duration of homelessness applications:**

Unintentionally homeless single people are likely to wait approximately four weeks longer for their homelessness duty to be discharged when compared to families (233 days vs 205 days to be dealt with and closed). The duration between homelessness application and case closure varies markedly across local authorities, with the mean time ranging from less than 100 days (approx. 3

## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

Developments in the Scottish homelessness legislative framework have been exceptionally progressive and are rightly considered world-leading. These changes have undoubtedly improved the statutory safety net for single homeless people when compared to the rest of Great Britain (Mackie 2014c). The implementation of Scotland's legislative framework has been achieved by embracing homelessness prevention, which sits outside of the legislation and only recently has data been published on this area of local authority homelessness services. This study has examined the experimental homelessness prevention data, alongside the well-established statutory homelessness data to build a picture of single homelessness services in Scotland, with particular attention to the outcomes for single homeless people. This final chapter presents the key conclusions and recommendations of the study, with a focus on areas of potential concern.

### Conclusions

The abolition of priority need in Scotland removed the discrimination faced by single homeless people within the law. However, this study shows how their experiences of accessing assistance differ to those of families and also across Scottish local authorities. The study points to the following broad conclusions:

#### **Single homeless people face different experiences of homelessness and accessing assistance when compared to homeless families**

Single homeless people generally appear to be more vulnerable than families; they enter homelessness from less secure accommodation, face a wider range of support needs and they are more likely to have been homeless previously. When these vulnerable individuals seek help, the

assistance they receive differs to that of families both in terms of prevention interventions and when a homelessness application is made.

Whilst recognising the limits of homelessness prevention data and the fact differences are relatively small, there is a general indication that homelessness prevention services are not currently as effective in meeting the needs of single homeless people. Equally, when a homelessness application is made single homeless people are more likely to be temporarily accommodated in B&B accommodation, contact is more likely to be lost, and they are much less likely to secure a tenancy at the end of the process.

#### **Inconsistencies exist in the assistance offered by local authorities to single homeless people**

Single homeless people will receive very different assistance dependent upon the local authority where they seek assistance. For example, the authority may attempt to prevent homelessness or they may take a homelessness application. Where prevention is pursued the type and number of actions taken will vary and so too will the outcomes. Where a homelessness application is taken, decisions will vary, with a significant minority of authorities making a high proportion of intentionally homeless decisions. Moreover, B&Bs may be used extensively or not at all, a tenancy might be offered or not, and the duration of the application could range from 3 to 18 months. There are clearly wide variations in the nature of assistance single homeless people receive across Scottish local authorities.

#### **Homelessness prevention poses an opportunity and a challenge for homelessness services in Scotland**

Homelessness prevention now forms a key component of Scottish homelessness services and this study is one of the first to

reflect critically on its implementation. Homelessness prevention services are assisting a wide population, however there is an opportunity to do more to intervene before crisis. Many people (single and families) are only seeking assistance after crisis or a homelessness application is being taken where homelessness could potentially have been prevented. Also, people facing multiple support needs are not being assisted through homelessness prevention services. Whilst there is an opportunity to improve homelessness prevention services, great care must also be taken to ensure single homeless people receive the best possible outcomes and gatekeeping does not occur.

The following recommendations provide some direction to help achieve this goal.

## Recommendations

### The homelessness legislative framework in Scotland

1. Forthcoming Scottish Government and COSLA guidance on Housing Options should provide clear direction on how the statutory and prevention processes should interact so that homeless people can access effective assistance on a fair and consistent basis. Local authorities should also set out in their housing and homelessness plans how they intend to address this locally.
2. The Scottish Housing Regulator should plan to carry out an overarching review of the operation of homelessness support in Scotland five years on from the ending of priority need (including homelessness prevention). It will be important for this review to examine variability in outcomes and differences across Scottish local authorities and across household types.

### Homelessness prevention services

3. Local authorities should work with Housing Options Hubs to identify ways to

encourage people to access homelessness prevention services before they experience homelessness. They should work with advice and support services to ensure early referral where possible.

4. Given that many single homeless people become homeless on being asked to leave their accommodation, Scottish Government and local authorities should examine what more could be done to assist single people to either remain or make a planned exit in order to avoid homelessness (eg. mediation services).
5. As many people (families and single) are becoming homeless because tenancies are being terminated in both the PRS and the social rented sector, Scottish Government, local authorities, RSLs and the landlords association should consider how to raise awareness among tenants and landlords of the homelessness prevention support available from local authorities, including through the new private tenancy Notice to Leave.
6. Many single homeless people are becoming homeless from prison, despite some examples of good practice. Scottish Government and COSLA should work closely with the prison service to improve the prevention of homelessness amongst prison leavers.

### Intentionality and keeping in contact

7. Scottish Government should continue to monitor the levels of intentionality decisions and lost contacts across Scotland and work with local authorities where levels are relatively high to identify the reasons and ensure these are not used as a means of gatekeeping.

### Support for complex needs

8. Housing Options Hubs should explore how Housing Options services might effectively assist more households with multiple support needs.

9. Homelessness and housing services should be key partners as joint boards are set up to integrate health and social care. The boards should ensure data on homelessness, including on levels of support needs, are used as part of their service planning.

### **Temporary accommodation**

10. Local authorities accommodating high proportions of single homeless people in B&Bs and hostels should seek to reduce use of these temporary accommodation forms, particularly the use of B&Bs for periods longer than 28 days.

### **Homelessness statistics**

11. Scottish Government should continue to monitor homelessness prevention data (PREVENT1) and identify any variables which may not be recorded appropriately by local authorities (e.g. vulnerabilities data).
12. Scottish Government should regularly report on statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention statistics by household type.

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## **About Crisis**

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. Our purpose is to end homelessness.

Crisis helps people rebuild their lives through housing, health, education and employment services. We work with thousands of homeless people across the UK and have ambitious plans to work with many more.

We are also determined campaigners, working to prevent people from becoming homeless and to change the way society and government think and act towards homeless people.

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ISBN 978-1-78519-010-0

Crisis UK (trading as Crisis). Registered Charity Numbers:  
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