

Homelessness Prevention and Relief: England 2008/09

Experimental Statistics

- In 2008/09, Local Housing Authorities reported a total of **130,000** cases of homelessness prevention or relief having taken place outside the statutory homelessness framework.
- This figure is based on full or partial data reported by an average of **93 per cent** of local authorities. Estimates for missing data have *not* been made and some authorities were not yet able to record all activity in their area. The actual national total will be higher.
- **61 per cent** of reported cases of homelessness prevention and relief involved the household being assisted to obtain alternative accommodation. The remaining **39 per cent** involved the cases being assisted to remain in their existing home.
- The most common action taken by authorities and partner organisations to assist households in obtaining alternative accommodation was the use of **landlord incentive schemes** to secure private rented sector accommodation (37 per cent of the cases assisted in obtaining alternative accommodation).
- The most common action taken to enable households to remain in their own home was **assistance to remain in the private or social rented sector** (for example by resolving anti-social behaviour or tackling disrepair through action against landlords or grants to improve conditions), which comprised 17 per cent of the cases who remained in their own home.

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housing

Introduction

This annual release presents experimental official statistics on homelessness prevention and relief in England that took place outside the homelessness statutory framework in 2008/09.

Homelessness prevention means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs and avoid homelessness. Homelessness relief is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so. This is the first time figures on homelessness prevention and relief have been published by Communities and Local Government.

Under the *Homelessness Act 2002*, local housing authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. The strategy must apply to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just people who may fall within a priority need group for the purposes of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Communities and Local Government encourages local authorities to offer prevention assistance to everyone who seeks housing assistance and considers they are at risk of homelessness in the near future, including single person households and others who may not appear to the authority to fall within a priority need category.

Additionally, authorities are encouraged to take steps to relieve homelessness in cases where someone has been found to be homeless but is not owed a duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness legislation. These are cases where someone is found to be homeless but not in priority need and cases where someone is found to be intentionally homeless.

Further information can be found in the background section, towards the end of the release.

In April 2008, the quarterly P1E form (which collects data on local authorities' actions under homelessness legislation) was expanded to include a new section on the homelessness prevention and relief taking place outside the statutory framework. Authorities provide data on the numbers of households for whom casework and positive action took place in order to prevent or relieve homelessness, either by the authority themselves or by a partner organisation.

Communities and Local Government also publish a quarterly statistical release, based on data from other sections of the P1E form, which provides summary information on English local housing authorities' activities under homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996).

The most recent release on Statutory Homelessness for England is available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/publicationshomelessness/>

Results - reported data for 2008/09

A - Total reported cases of homelessness prevention and relief

Local Housing Authorities reported that a total of **130,000** cases of homelessness prevention or relief took place outside the statutory homelessness framework during 2008/09. In this release 'cases' refers to households or individuals.

This total has been derived by combining all cases of prevention and relief that were reported by local authorities over the period (including cases where particular types of activity were recorded but a grand total was not).

Full or partial data were reported by an average of **93 per cent** of local authorities each quarter over the course of 2008/09. Estimates for missing data have *not* been made and some authorities were not then able to record all activity in their area. The actual national total will therefore be higher.

Table 1 shows the total figures reported for each quarter, along with the percentage of authorities who reported full or partial information in each period.

Table 1 - Total reported cases of homelessness prevention and relief, 2008/09

Total reported cases of prevention and relief

	Full returns	Partial returns	Total cases
Apr - Jun	24,520	3,900	28,420
Jul - Sep	31,020	1,320	32,350
Sep - Dec	32,910	750	33,670
Jan - Mar	34,910	610	35,520
Total	123,370	6,580	129,950

Response rate (% LAs)

	Full return	Partial return	Overall response
Apr - Jun	82%	6%	88%
Jul - Sep	90%	3%	93%
Sep - Dec	94%	2%	96%
Jan - Mar	93%	1%	94%
Average	90%	3%	93%

It can be seen that the response rate improved generally over the period, as authorities were able to update their recording systems to collect and report fuller information. Between the third and fourth quarter, the response rate fell back slightly, but the cases reported continued to increase. This is because of some large increases in figures for those authorities that did provide data.

Despite improvements to the response rates over the period, it should be noted that some authorities who have reported information may not have been able to provide data on all prevention activity in their district - in particular, cases where systems had not yet been put in place to gather information from partner organisations - so there may be some under-reporting.

B - Outcome and type of homelessness prevention and relief

Data are also collected on the way in which homelessness was prevented or relieved.

Over the course of the first year's data collection, an average of **90 per cent** of local authorities each quarter were able to provide full returns (although again it should be noted that there may be under-reporting in cases where the work of partner organisations has not yet been included).

Table 2 shows more detailed figures provided by those authorities able to report complete sets of figures during a quarter (i.e. those shown in the first column of Table 1). These authorities reported a total of 123,370 cases of prevention and relief having taken place over the course of the year, **61 per cent** of which enabled the household to obtain alternative accommodation while **39 per cent** enabled the household to remain in their existing home.

Table 2 - Outcome of homelessness prevention and relief, 2008/09

	Total cases of prevention / relief (full returns only)	Of which: cases assisted to obtain alternative accommodation	<i>% of total</i>	Of which: cases able to remain in existing home	<i>% of total</i>
Apr - Jun	24,520	14,640	60%	9,880	40%
Jul - Sep	31,020	18,960	61%	12,070	39%
Sep - Dec	32,910	20,120	61%	12,790	39%
Jan - Mar	34,910	21,800	62%	13,120	38%
Total	123,370	75,520	61%	47,850	39%

It should be noted that the split between the number of households assisted to obtain alternative accommodation and those able to remain in their existing home may converge over time as, in particular, authorities become able to more comprehensively record and report on all activity undertaken by partner organisations.

Table 3 gives more detail on the figures in Table 2. It shows the number of 2008/09 cases of homelessness prevention and relief broken down by the way in which the positive action was achieved.

Table 3 - Type of homelessness prevention and relief, 2008/09

	No. of Cases	%	% Grand Total
Case assisted to obtain alternative accommodation, in the form of:			
Hostel or House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	7,350	10%	6%
Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme	28,120	37%	23%
Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme	9,700	13%	8%
Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives	3,170	4%	3%
Supported accommodation	6,810	9%	6%
Social housing - management move of existing LA tenant	1,030	1%	1%
Social housing - Part 6 offer of LA accommodation or nomination to Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	11,810	16%	10%
Social housing - negotiation with an RSL outside Part 6 nomination arrangement	1,810	2%	1%
Low cost home ownership scheme, low cost market housing solution	70	0%	0%
Other	5,650	7%	5%
TOTAL	75,520	100%	61%
Case able to remain in existing home, as a result of:			
Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators	2,950	6%	2%
Conciliation including home visits for family or friend threatened exclusions	4,590	10%	4%
Financial payments from a homeless prevention fund	1,960	4%	2%
Debt advice	4,690	10%	4%
Resolving housing benefit problems	3,850	8%	3%
Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector	2,740	6%	2%
Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence	3,820	8%	3%
Crisis intervention - providing emergency support	1,440	3%	1%
Negotiation or legal advocacy enabling household to remain in private rented sector	4,290	9%	3%
Assistance enabling household to remain in private or social rented sector	8,340	17%	7%
Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	1,680	4%	1%
Other	7,500	16%	6%
TOTAL	47,850	100%	39%
GRAND TOTAL (full returns only)	123,37		100%

(i) Cases assisted to obtain alternative accommodation: 61 per cent of total

The largest group (37 per cent) of cases obtaining alternative accommodation, were assisted by means of private rented sector accommodation with a landlord incentive scheme provided by the local authority or partner organisation - for example, by means of a cashless bond, "Finders-Fee" scheme where a payment is made to a landlord, deposit payment scheme, rent in advance, landlord insurance payment scheme, or a combination of the above.

16 per cent were assisted to secure social housing, in the form of a Part 6 offer of the local authorities' own accommodation or nomination to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

13 per cent of cases were assisted to obtain private rented sector accommodation without a

landlord incentive scheme, for example, where a local authority has built a relationship with a landlord or letting agent which enables the authority to refer households on benefit direct or on a specific accreditation scheme.

10 per cent of cases were assisted to take up accommodation in hostels or Houses in Multiple Accommodation (HMOs), with support (for example, hostel support package or supporting people) or without. This might include arrangements where the hostel stay may be less than 6 months but move-on accommodation will be provided as part of the 'exit strategy'. It includes night shelter and crisis short-stay accommodation for rough sleepers, such as emergency assessment centres.

9 per cent took up Supported Accommodation, for example supported lodging schemes, or successful referrals to supported housing projects.

The remaining 16 per cent of cases were assisted to obtain alternative accommodation through other means, including accommodation arranged with friends or relatives (4 per cent), other social housing (negotiation with an RSL outside of a Part 6 nomination arrangement (2 per cent), a management move of an existing LA tenant (1 per cent)), or low-cost home ownership schemes or market housing solutions (less than 1 per cent).

(ii) Cases able to remain in their existing home: 39 per cent of total

The largest category (17 per cent) of cases who were assisted to remain in their existing home were able to do so as a result of the provision of assistance (not involving negotiation or advocacy) which enabled them to remain in their private or social rented sector accommodation. Examples of assistance include the resolution of anti-social behaviour, tackling disrepair through action against landlords or grants to improve conditions and adaptations to property.

10 per cent of cases were able to remain in their home as a result of the provision of debt advice. This includes casework covering debt advice, including negotiation with creditors and advice on budgeting and money management.

10 per cent followed conciliation, including home visits where someone may be at risk of homelessness due to a threat of exclusion from parents, other relatives, or friends. It also includes conciliation work by a partner organisation, such as youth counselling.

9 per cent followed negotiation or legal advocacy that ensured that households could remain in accommodation in the private rented sector. This includes: negotiation with private landlords who have, or have threatened to issue a section 21 notice to resolve problems; actions to resolve a threat of illegal eviction or to reinstate illegally evicted tenants; county court advocacy or court desk work by the local authority or its partners where court representation results in a case being struck-out, dismissed or adjourned; and assisting someone to afford their rent by negotiating a lower rent, increasing their income through helping them make a claim for benefits or making a discretionary housing payment or charity payment.

8 per cent followed the resolution of housing benefit problems. This includes: assisting a vulnerable person at immediate risk of homelessness through non payment of rent with making a housing benefit claim; action to deal with delays in payment; housing benefit arrears; verification of claim documents where there is a delay in benefit payments leading to a risk of homelessness; backdating of benefit claims; and making a discretionary housing payment.

8 per cent involved sanctuary schemes for domestic violence. This comprises measures to enable a victim of domestic abuse or harassment to remain in their home with professionally installed security measures, and also includes cases where someone was assisted to take legal action to protect their right to remain safely within the home.

The remaining 38 per cent were assisted to remain in their own home through other means. These include: mediation using external or internal trained family mediators (6 per cent); resolution of rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector (6 per cent); financial payments from a homeless prevention fund (4 per cent); mortgage arrears intervention or mortgage rescue, including, but not exclusively, the government's mortgage rescue schemes (4 per cent) and crisis intervention and the provision of emergency support (3 per cent).

16 per cent were in the "other" category. It is possible that a proportion of these may be "not known" rather than "other" so the P1E form has since been updated to ask for information on what the "other" work that was carried out had been.

Data source and quality

Response rates and how partial data have been used

Full or partial data were reported by an average of **93 per cent** of local authorities over the course of 2008/09, and the data reported by these authorities have been added to produce a national total of reported cases of homelessness prevention and relief (Results section A). Estimates for missing data have not been made and some authorities were not yet able to record all activity in their area. The actual national total will therefore be higher.

Full returns were completed by an average of **90 per cent** of local authorities over the course of 2008/09. Data from these returns have been used to provide breakdowns on outcomes of successful cases of prevention and relief, and methods used to achieve them (Results section B).

Types of authorities that have not provided data

Three hundred authorities (85 per cent) were able to give full or partial information for all four quarters of 2008/09; while a further 43 (12 per cent) provided figures for at least one quarter. Only 11 authorities (3 per cent) could not give any information for 2008/09. Of the missing quarterly figures, the highest proportions belonged to Metropolitan authorities in the West Midlands, and to Inner London boroughs.

Types of partial information reported

(i) Unable to distinguish between prevention and relief

The data collected on the P1E form divides assistance to obtain alternative accommodation (shown in Table 3, section 1) into:

- (1) prevention - cases where potential homelessness was prevented before it occurred, and
- (2) relief - cases where homelessness was perceived to have already occurred, but was subsequently relieved outside the statutory framework.

For the 2008/09 results, the two figures are presented as a total, both to simplify presentation and to account for the fact that a few local authorities provided combined figures only.

Furthermore, some authorities were able to provide a figure for prevention, but not for relief.

(ii) Provision of total figures, but no breakdowns by type of prevention and relief

A small number of authorities were able to provide a total figure for homelessness prevention and relief, but not to break the figure down by the type of successful prevention (i.e. whether the household was able to remain in their existing home, or be assisted to obtain alternative accommodation), or by the method used to prevent or relieve homelessness.

(iii) Information on some types prevention and relief only

A small number of authorities have been able to provide information for certain types of activity, for which systems are already in place to record and report data, but not others, for which systems are not yet in place.

In all three cases above, partial information provided by authorities (shown in Table 1, column 2) is included in the grand total figure (Results section A), but only data from authorities which provided a complete set of figures (Table 1 column 1) are included in the breakdowns by outcome and type of prevention or relief (Results section B).

Possibility of under-reporting

It is possible that the first year's figures include some under-recording of prevention activity in cases where authorities have been able to accurately collate and report their own activity (as recording systems should already be in place for use in the discontinued Best Value Performance Indicator - BVPI), but do not yet have systems in place to record activity by partner organisations (i.e. any organisation who assists the authority in tackling and preventing homelessness, and is either funded by the authority or has clients referred to them by the authority). Estimates provided in the release are therefore likely to be conservative.

Consistency in reporting between local authorities

2008/09 was the first year in which authorities were asked to collect and record cases of homelessness prevention and relief, achieved by the authority and partner organisations, on the P1E form.

Detailed guidance was provided to local authorities, but the subject is complex and there are likely to be some initial differences in interpretation across authorities. CLG plans to issue more detailed guidance, which summarises responses to queries received over the first year of data collections, and consistency is likely to improve over time.

Next steps

Reporting of data on homelessness prevention and relief from 2009/10 onwards

3 per cent of local authorities have not yet been able to provide any homelessness prevention and relief figures, and CLG will be working with these authorities to get systems in place to enable collection and reporting of these data. As the response rate increases, we will have more confidence in the figures to enable us to move towards publishing a total national figure (including estimates for non response)

Cases where positive action has not been successful

The P1E form also includes a line which asks for the number of cases where casework and positive action was *not* successful in preventing or relieving homelessness.

Misinterpretation of this question has led to initial data quality problems, for example a number of authorities recording the grand total of their successful preventions for a second time, in the section of the form where it asked for the number of unsuccessful cases.

Authorities have been contacted and guidance tightened, and we aim to publish results from this section once data are being reported consistently and it yields accurate and useful data.

Background

Following the introduction of the 2002 Act, Central Government increasingly encouraged local housing authorities to place greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness. Around 2004, there was a further policy development and authorities were encouraged to strengthen their prevention activity by providing a comprehensive 'housing options' service for everyone seeking help with accommodation problems. By providing early intervention, these services can help people avoid a crisis which could otherwise require assistance to be provided under the homelessness legislation.

Data on such prevention activity has previously been collected for use as a Best Value Performance Indicator - BVPI 213. However the BVPI guidance restricted homelessness prevention cases to those where a person seeks assistance from a local housing authority. From 2008/09, for the purpose of recording on the P1E, the scope has been broadened to include cases where a person applies directly to a partner organisation which is funded by a local housing authority to assist in the prevention or relief of homelessness and cases where a local authority refer clients for assistance to help prevent that person becoming homeless.

The Department encourages local authorities to offer prevention assistance to everyone who seeks housing assistance and considers they are at risk of homelessness in the near future, including single person households and others who may not appear to the authority to fall within a priority need category (however local authorities cannot use such prevention assistance to avoid their obligations under the homelessness legislation) Prevention assistance involves providing people with ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. It includes activities which enable a household to remain in their current home, where appropriate, or enable a planned and timely move and help sustain independent living. However, it is for individual authorities to determine the scope of their homelessness prevention scheme (e.g. whether or not restricted to applicants who may be likely to have priority need for the purpose of the homelessness legislation). All persons who fall within the scope of the authority's scheme and for whom positive assistance was provided during the quarterly period (either by the authority or a partner organisation) should be included.

Additionally, authorities are encouraged to take steps to relieve homelessness and record these cases where someone has been accepted as homeless but is not owed a duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). These are cases where the authorities have been unable to prevent homelessness, but nevertheless decide to ensure the applicant secures accommodation (although under no statutory obligation to do more than ensure the provision of advice and assistance) - for example, cases where someone is found to be homeless but not in priority need and/or intentionally homeless.

Definitions of types of prevention and relief

A. Homelessness prevention- household able to remain in existing home

Examples of 'positive action'

The following are some examples of the many different types of positive action that can prevent homelessness. The list is not exhaustive.

1. *Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators* This could be an external mediation service such as Relate or an in-house local authority service where training in mediation has been provided.
2. *Conciliation including home visits for family friend threatened exclusion* This includes :
 - home visits, where someone may be at risk of homelessness due to a threat of exclusion from parents, other relatives, or friends.
 - conciliation work by a partner organisation such as youth counselling
3. *Financial payments from a homeless prevention fund to enable someone to remain in the existing home* There are many innovative ways that local authorities have used payments from their 'homelessness prevention fund' to resolve a risk of homelessness, including payments to landlords to resolve problems caused by tenant damage. Any payments from a prevention fund to resolve rent arrears should be recorded in this section.
4. *Debt advice* Include casework covering debt advice, including negotiation with creditors and advice on budgeting and money management.
5. *Resolving housing benefit problems* Include actions to resolve housing benefit problems including assisting a vulnerable person at immediate risk of homelessness through non payment of rent with making a housing benefit claim; action to deal with delays in payment; housing benefit arrears; verification of claim documents where there is a delay in benefit payments leading to a risk of homelessness; backdating of benefit claims; making a discretionary housing payment
6. *Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector* This may include case work help that supports a household to manage any arrears repayment schedule. Housing benefit resolutions should be recorded at Row 5.
7. *Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence* Measures to enable a victim of domestic abuse or harassment to remain in their home with professionally installed security measures. Include also cases where someone was assisted to take legal action to protect their right to remain safely within the home.

8. *Crisis intervention - providing emergency support* This includes cases where there is an imminent risk of homelessness because someone is unable to cope with his or her affairs and emergency intervention or crisis support is provided. Exclude cases where someone is receiving Supporting People Funded services.

9. *Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector* This includes:

- negotiation with private landlords who have or have threatened to issue a section 21 notice to resolve problems.
- actions to resolve a threat of illegal eviction or to re instate illegally evicted tenant.
- county court advocacy or court desk work by the local authority or its partners where court representation results in a case being struck-out, dismissed or adjourned
- assisting someone to afford their rent by negotiating a lower rent, increasing their income through helping them make a claim for benefits or making a discretionary housing payment or charity payment

10. *Providing other assistance that will enable someone to remain in accommodation in the private or social rented sector* This includes

- resolving anti-social behaviour,
- tackling disrepair through action against landlords or grants to improve conditions,
- adaptations to the property

11. *Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue* This includes

- negotiation with mortgage lenders and banks to reschedule debt payments or payment terms or offer a repayment break period;
- providing support to enable re-mortgage; conversion to an interest-only mortgage to reduce outgoings; conversion to shared ownership.

B. Homelessness prevention / Homelessness relief- household assisted to obtain alternative accommodation

Examples of alternative accommodation

The following are different types of alternative accommodation that someone might be helped to obtain to prevent or relieve homelessness. The list is not exhaustive, but could include:

1. any form of hostel or HMO with or without support (including arrangements where the hostel stay may be less than 6 months but move-on accommodation will be provided as part of the 'exit strategy') (Excludes night shelter and crisis short-stay accommodation for rough sleepers such as an emergency assessment centre)
2. private rented sector accommodation (with landlord incentive scheme provided by the local authority or partner organisation, including BOND schemes where no cash is paid up front, "Finders- Fee" schemes where a payment is made to a landlord, deposit payment schemes; rent in advance; landlord insurance payment schemes; or a combination of the above,
3. private rented sector accommodation (without landlord incentive scheme) for example, where a local authority has built a relationship with a landlord or letting agent which enables the authority to refer households on benefit direct or properties on a specific accreditation scheme.
4. accommodation arranged with friends or relatives.
5. supported accommodation including supported lodging schemes or successful referrals to supported housing projects.
6. social housing (a management move of an existing LA tenant).
7. social housing (a Part 6 offer of LA own accommodation or nomination to an RSL).
8. social housing (negotiation with an RSL outside Part 6 nomination arrangements).
9. low cost Home Ownership scheme or low cost market housing solution.

Notes

1. Figures in the tables are presented rounded to the nearest 10 households.
2. Details of officials who receive pre-release access to the Communities and Local Government quarterly Statutory Homelessness Statistical Release up to 24 hours before release can be found at;

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/statistics/nationalstatistics/>
3. We plan to publish the Homelessness Prevention and Relief Statistical Release on an annual basis.

Enquiries and user consultation

This Statistical Release and supplementary guidance for recording the Prevention and Relief section (E10) of the P1E form can be accessed and downloaded electronically, from the Communities and Local Government website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/homelessnesspreventionrelief>

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