



Statutory homelessness: Technical note

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Experimental statistics and H-CLIC

From 1st April 2018 the **Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC)** data system replaced the aggregated data return (collected using the **P1E form**) for all new homeless applications. The replacement of the aggregated return coincided with the introduction of new legislation, the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA). This new system collects more detailed data than previously on households, the activities offered to assist them, and their outcomes. The H-CLIC data specification, with detailed guidance for each field and guidance on how to enter the data through MHCLG's DELTA system, are all available on a dedicated Homelessness Statistics User Forum webpage <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/user-facing-pages/mhclg-homelessness-statistics-user-forum/>. MHCLG have also published a series of newsletters about progress on the H-CLIC project which are also available on the user forum.

Missing values are imputed to ensure national headline figures are representative. Where there was no data for previous quarters to compare under the new prevention and relief duties, imputation has not been possible. Authorities who failed to submit any H-CLIC data for the new Act since April 2018 were excluded from previous totals. This means the national totals for the first year were an underestimate, yet to be adjusted. Details of excluded authorities can be found in the detailed local authority (LA) live tables.

For households in temporary accommodation, missing values are reduced by allowing local authorities to complete a P1E as well as the H-CLIC return. We have also allowed main duty data to be submitted via P1E or H-CLIC in all quarters except the April to June 2019 data collection. This is explained in more detail in the data quality section.

The format and content of the release will change as the quality of data in the new fields improves. In order to cut down time needed to produce and quality assure tables for the release some tables will only be published once a year as annual tables by financial year. The annual publication will include all quarterly tables with the addition of the annual tables to provide a more detailed look at the homelessness system. Quality checks between MHCLG and LAs may mean published values and trends may change during the financial year.

Data collection and methods

Local housing authorities report their homelessness activities under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to MHCLG by completing the quarterly H-CLIC statistical return. H-

CLIC is an upload of all cases about statutory homelessness and the authority's activities within the legislative framework. Data in the temporary accommodation and main duty sections is also supplemented by additional data provided through P1E in most quarters, where accurate data through H-CLIC was not available.

1. Rates per 1,000 households have been calculated using the 2014-based household projections for 2019 produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. These were published on 12 July 2016 and are available at Table 406 at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-household-projections>

2. National and regional figures in the text and accompanying tables are presented rounded to the nearest 10 households or applicants. Local authority figures provided in the accompanying Live Tables are unrounded. Local authority to regional and regional to national sum totals may not match due to rounding.

3. In tables containing information that is considered sensitive, breakdowns have been suppressed at local authority, regional or national level to protect the identity of individuals. Suppressed data is clearly marked in the live tables and may mean the sum of local authority data provides a lower figure than the regional or national rounded totals.

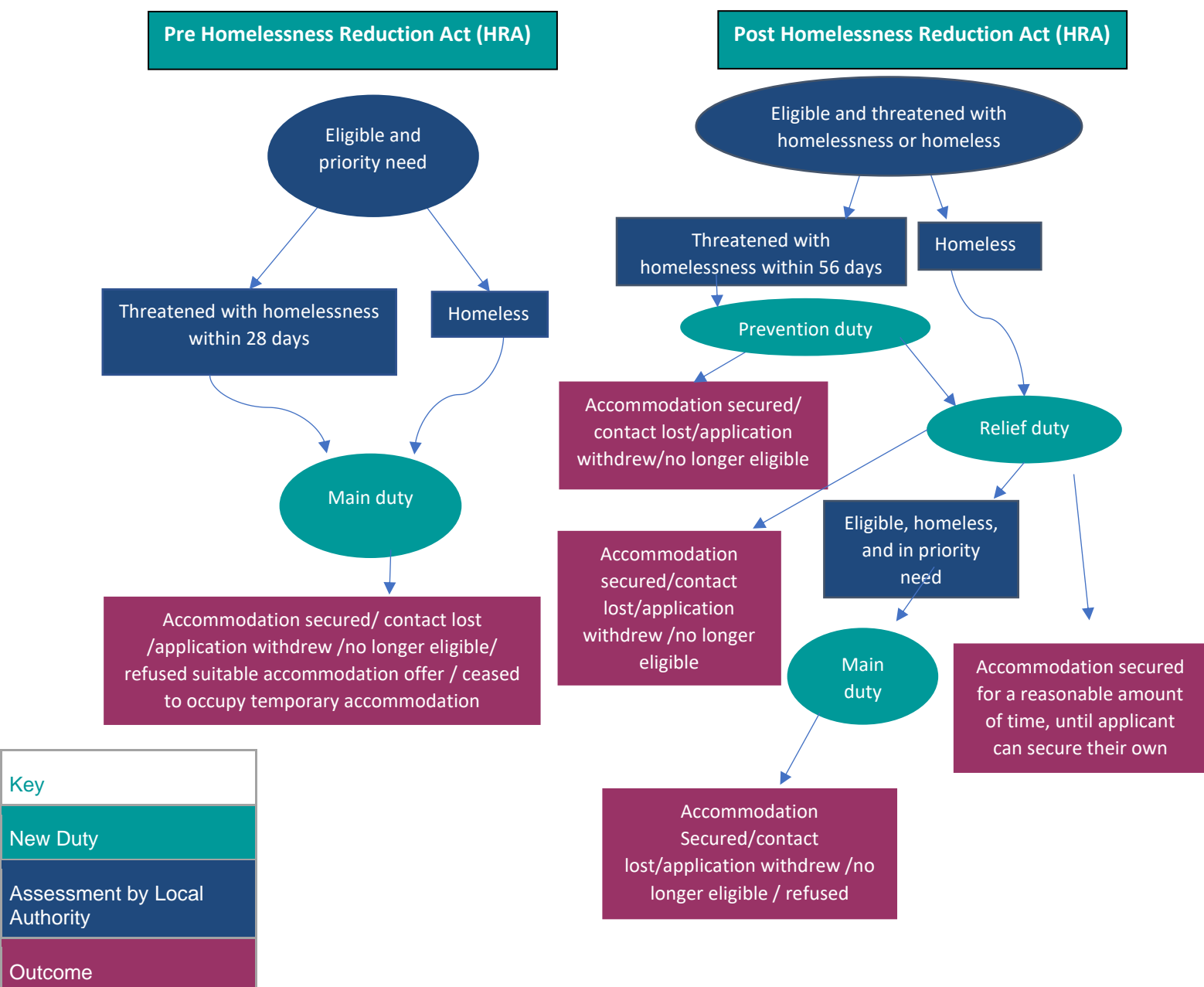
4. Missing or incomplete local authority data has been imputed and included in national and regional totals. Imputation replaces missing data with an estimated value based on additional information; where local authorities have failed to provide an accurate total, imputation is based on the quarter-on-quarter change observed in groups of local authorities. The groups aim to provide the best estimate for trends by comparing local authorities with similar characteristics, whilst keeping the groups large enough to not be influenced by large unusual changes reported by one authority within a group. This is the first quarter where all LAs with missing data had provided data for at least one previous quarter, and so all missing values could be imputed.

The three groups we use to impute are: London Boroughs; Unitaries combined with Metropolitan districts; and shire districts. Where local authorities have provided a missing or incomplete breakdown, local authorities' previously submitted data is used to estimate the values using a multiplier based on previous proportional representation within a group.

Comparability between the new H-CLIC case level collection and the old P1E summary return

Some data collected via P1E is **broadly comparable** to data collected via H-CLIC. The new method of reporting means initially any suggestion of recent trends about households in temporary accommodation should be made with caution.

Prevention and relief information collected by H-CLIC cover new legal duties introduced from the 3rd April 2018, so these are **not comparable** to the activity information collected in P1E.



Prevention and relief data in this release cannot be compared with the prevention and relief activity based on the P1E returns. Through the P1E local authorities were able to report all cases where homelessness was prevented, whether or not a homelessness application had been taken. Data submissions included, for example, households who had been provided with assistance through a third-party organisation funded by the Council to provide services that helped to prevent homelessness, such as money advice services. Prevention data reported in this release are based on case level information on homelessness applications and should only include data on prevention activity when a homelessness application has been made. Relief was previously discretionary to those not owed a main duty.

The definition of main duty acceptances remains the same, but the introduction of the new prevention and relief duties mean there are now steps local authorities take with households before they reach a main duty. This means it no longer includes households threatened with homelessness within 28 days. Any inferences about trends in main duty acceptances during 2018/19 should be made with caution.

In terms of comparability, temporary accommodation figures remain the most consistent with historical data; the criteria for temporary accommodation have not changed. An increase in households without children has been observed. We are working with LAs to understand this increase but it may be due to the number of households being offered TA whilst their circumstances and needs are assessed rather than those who are priority need and owed a s193(2) TA duty

H-CLIC is a household case level data collection and contains **new information not collected in the P1E return**. H-CLIC includes some information on all individuals within the household and not just the main applicant. This release includes numbers of initial assessments, prevention and relief activities, main homelessness acceptances, and the number of households in temporary accommodation.

More information and guidance about the H-CLIC data collection can be found:

<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/mhclg-homelessness-statistics-user-forum/>

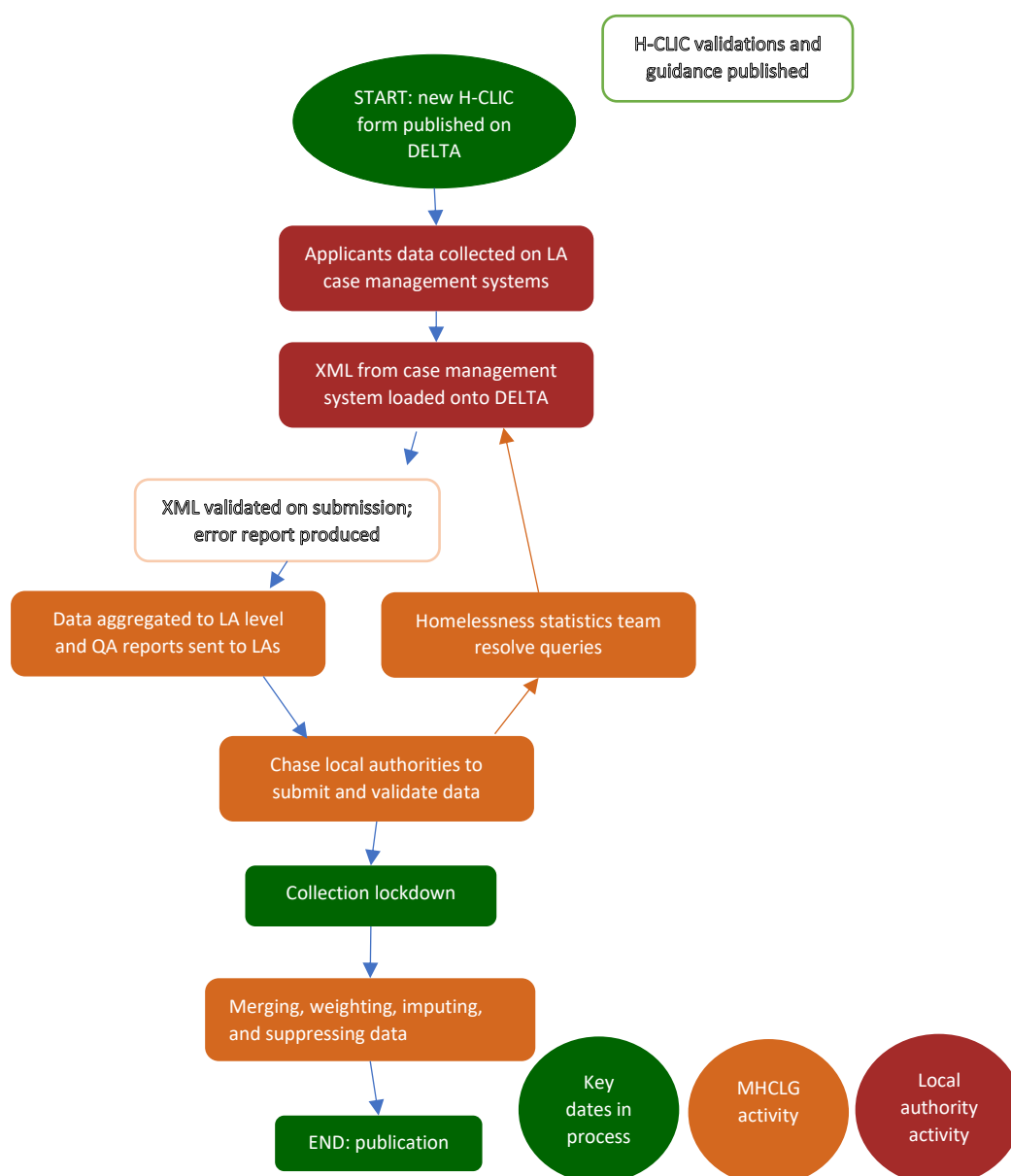
Data quality and coverage

All H-CLIC returns submitted by local housing authorities undergo thorough validation and cross-checking and late returns are chased to ensure overall response is as complete and accurate as possible. Local authorities are given a minimum of six weeks to submit accurate data and reminded when they fail to submit. Any missing returns after this period are omitted or imputed in the release. These are referenced in the main release and associated live tables.

Details of coverage, including imputations, by section of the release are in the Coverage section in the main statistical release.

The diagram below shows the data collection and submission process, QA checks and feedback between local authorities and MHCLG during the process.

For initial assessments, prevention and relief outcomes and wider information related to these cases.



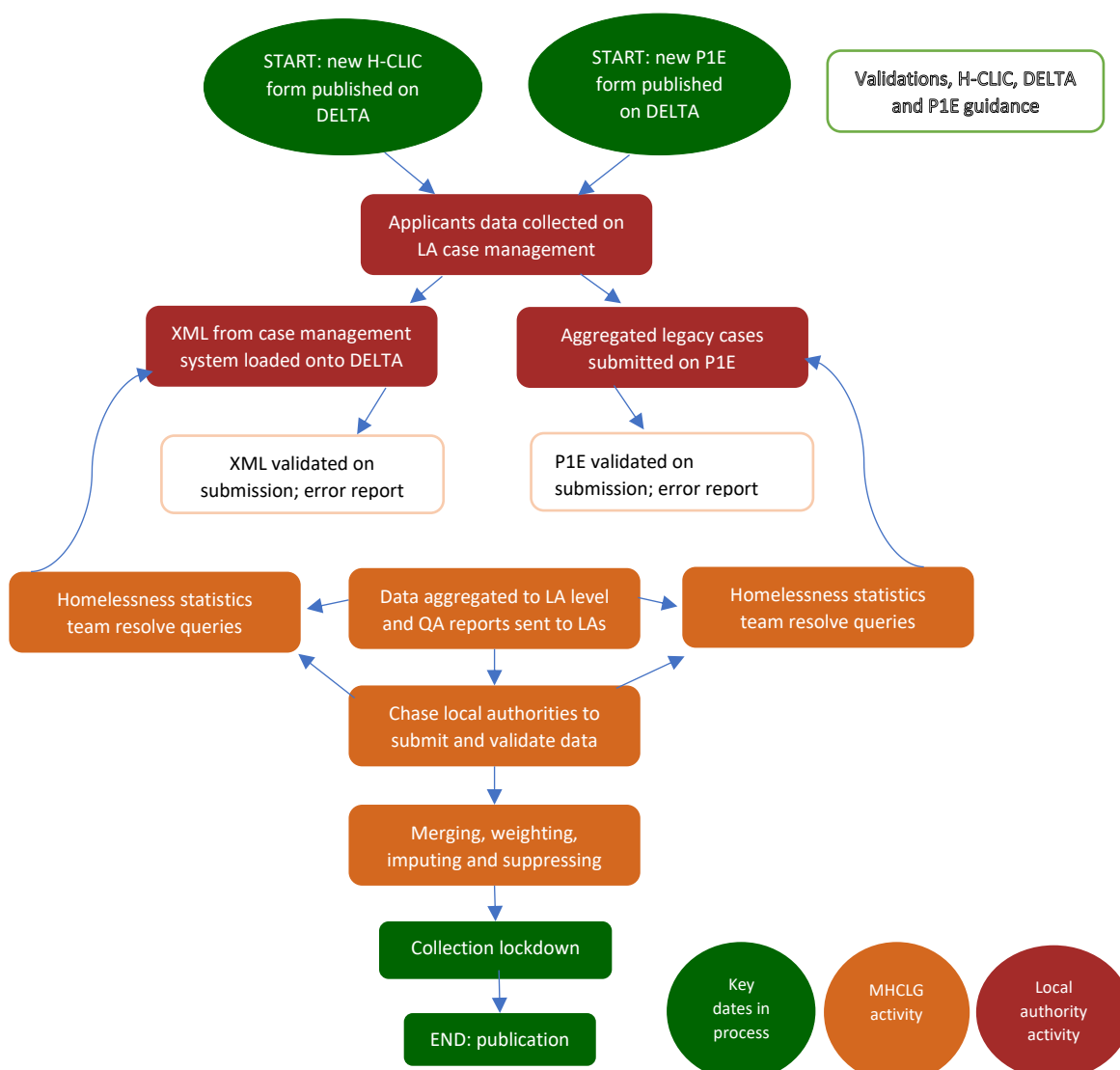
Case data is reported by local authorities onto the DELTA data collection platform. On upload a case level error report is instantly available to authorities by case ID. This allows local authorities to fix any case issues in their own systems. During the collection period and following the deadline, a summary level data QA report is sent

to the local authority. This report contains some of the metrics we plan to publish in the release. Any inconsistencies with the previous quarter or anomalous use of certain fields are flagged in these reports and sent back to local authorities for approval. Local authorities fix their data and / or report any system issues to their software suppliers. A new case level submission is then provided on DELTA and a new updated summary return is provided to the local authority.

After the local authority returns phase is complete MHCLG collate the information and perform final QA, where any unexplained unusual local authority level changes are further chased with the authority.

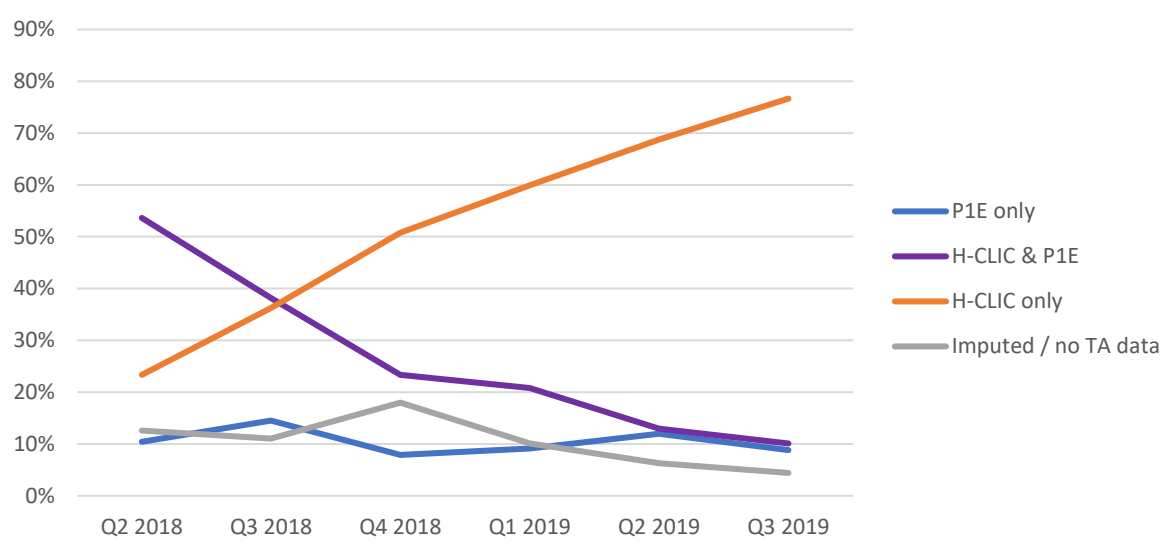
Any issues raised by local authorities are logged throughout the process. Where system based issues are identified these are then raised with the software supplier. Conversations with suppliers then lead to improvements in guidance, a correction to MHCLG or the software suppliers systems or a combination of all of these to resolve the issue.

For temporary accommodation data

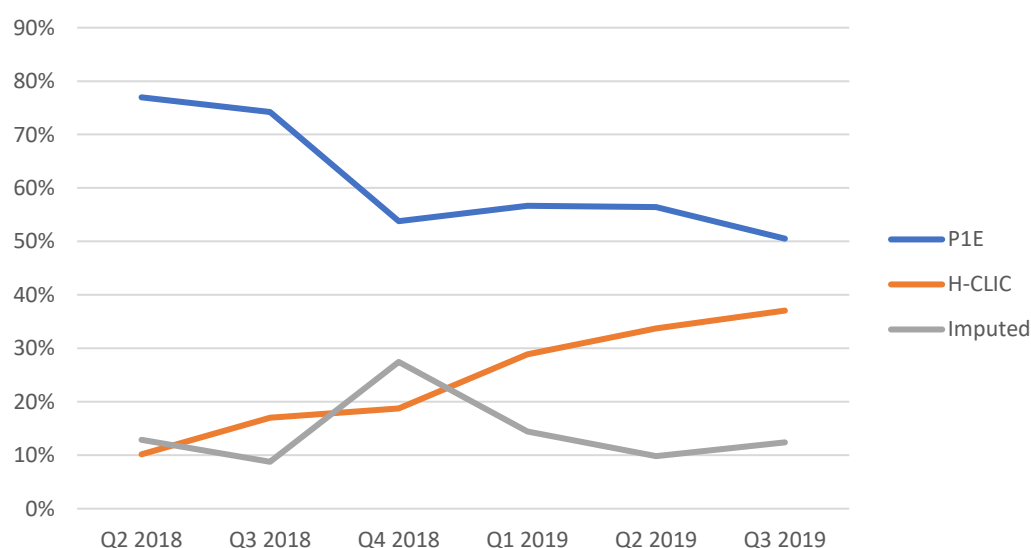


Local authorities can currently opt to provide temporary accommodation (TA) through P1E as well as H-CLIC. Main duty data can also be provided via P1E or H-CLIC in all quarters except the April to June 2019 release. Local authorities provided this information using P1E, H-CLIC or both. This flexibility is currently provided to local authorities to ensure the best data quality is achieved during the transition. Additional steps are then undertaken for these authorities to ensure no duplication or omission of data occurred. We will be moving to a H-CLIC only system and will be phasing out the use of the P1E system from April 2020.

Percentage of local authorities by temporary accommodation submission method



Percentage of national total in temporary accommodation by submission method

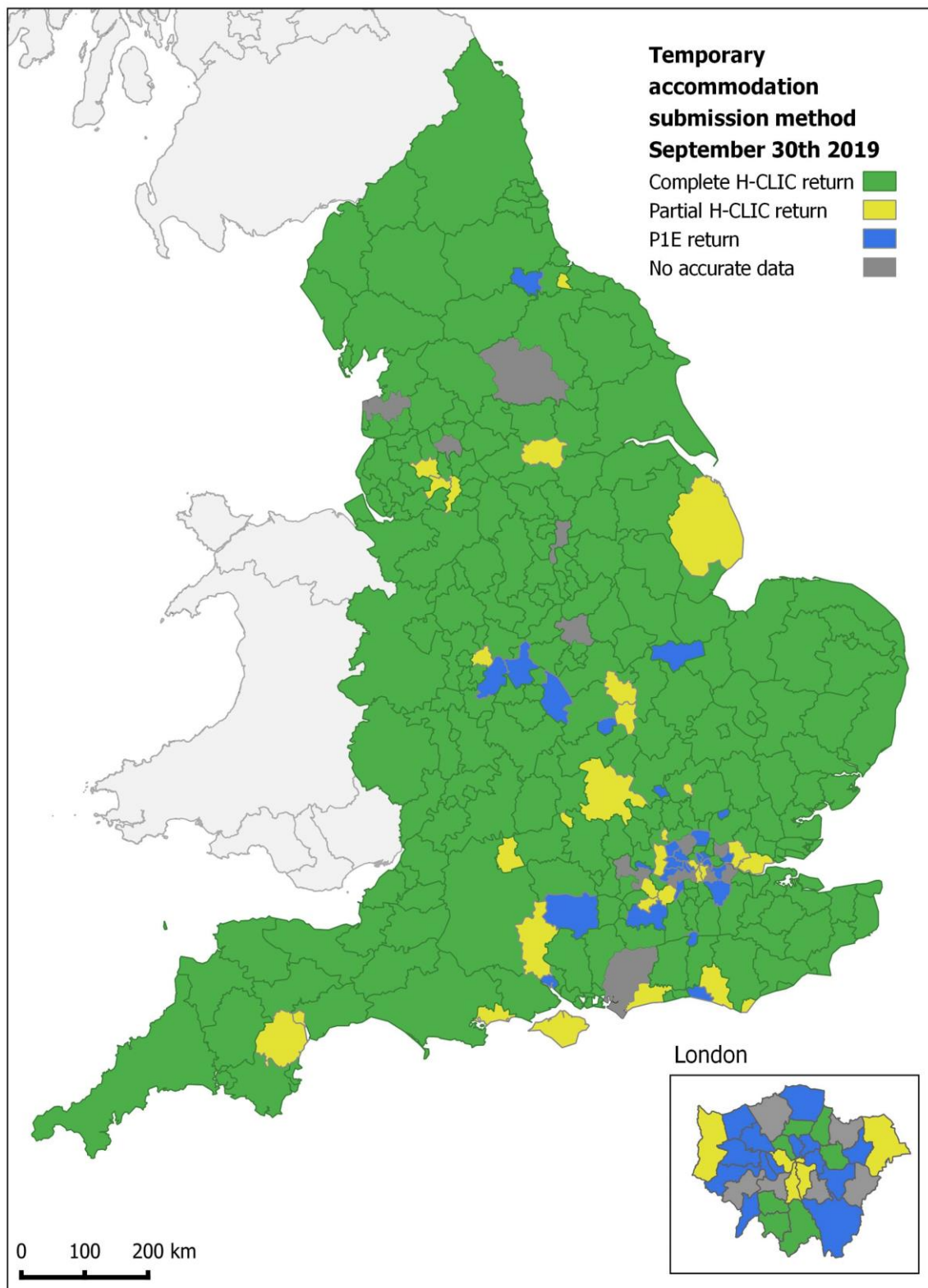


The proportion of local authorities providing case-level temporary accommodation data through H-CLIC has risen from 23% in the first quarter to 77% in the latest collection. This is largely due to fewer local authorities requiring P1E to report legacy (pre-HRA) cases in temporary accommodation. Pre HRA cases are typically stored on

a separate software system that cannot export data in H-CLIC format. In addition, the number of authorities failing to provide accurate temporary data, where we have imputed data in the England total has been falling since Q4 2018.

Around 10% of local authorities have consistently submitted aggregated temporary accommodation data through P1E only. Authorities with the largest temporary accommodation usage are significantly represented among those reliant on P1E, which is why over half, 51%, of the national total in temporary accommodation continues to be provided on the legacy collection system in aggregate rather than case level format. We are working with these authorities to overcome the technical difficulties in moving temporary accommodation reporting to an accurate, case-level data return on H-CLIC. This is being achieved through the central and local government information partnership group for housing, where local authorities have the opportunity to feedback on any issues and developments.

A map showing temporary accommodation submission methods in England.¹



Produced by Homelessness Statistics Team, MHCLG
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Data sources: OS boundary line,
Local authority HCLIC returns

¹ This refers to submissions deemed accurate by MHCLG.

QA principles, standards and checks applied by data suppliers

Most software suppliers have incorporated the H-CLIC reporting requirement into their case management systems. Software suppliers and local authorities were invited to test their XML extracts during May to June 2018. H-CLIC is an XML data submission, uploaded to MHCLG's DELTA² data collection system. The DELTA system checks the format of H-CLIC files, and the fields in each case are checked using schema validation tool. The schema checks are XPath coded scripts that test the validity of the data structure. Once the data has been uploaded onto DELTA the values submitted in each case are checked for consistency. Any omitted fields or inconsistent reporting variables are validated using a validation report that is shared immediately with the authority on the DELTA website. Local authorities reporting this data are required to check and correct the inconsistencies. MHCLG welcome feedback on any issues resulting from these and work with authorities to continually improve the process.

Additionally there are number of local authorities who have not adopted a H-CLIC compatible reporting requirement. These include Kingston upon Thames, Oxford, Melton, and Swindon, among others, who manually fill out case level form and their data is less reliable. We are working with those affected to adopt systems in the future. Data for these LAs is more likely to be omitted from the published data.

Producer's QA investigations and documentation

Case level validations in DELTA are explained with information flags marked against the reportable fields and text validation messages that help local authorities identify the cause of their mistake. Where a combination of errors are flagged MHCLG have produced a validations glossary that helps local authorities understand and correct these errors.

Many software suppliers have incorporated MHCLG's schematron, a validation script run against the xml file, into local authority systems to enable local authorities to identify and fix errors at the point of collection. This allows the administrative officers who collect the information to resolve any issues at the source.

After local authorities complete their H-CLIC submission on DELTA, MHCLG send out a number of quality assurance reports. The reports check for any significant changes against similar fields collected in the previous quarter and highlight any possible issues. These quality assurance reports aggregate activity totals for the homelessness duties owed, outcomes, temporary accommodation and several other breakdowns. Local authorities should check these quality reports against their internal reports to confirm if the data is correct. Any significant changes or data artefacts are flagged to

² <https://delta.communities.gov.uk/login>

authorities with an expectation that these issues would be explained or case data revised to correct for known mistakes.

Some examples of data issues highlighted in the report include:

- Duplicates – if some legacy cases are submitted via P1E and also some legacy cases are submitted via HCLIC this is flagged as a potential duplicate. The local authority is then contacted to confirm if the submissions are duplicates or separate cases.
- Large absolute or proportional changes between the data reported in the previous quarter.

During the quality assurance process a number of authorities raise concerns with their submission. MHCLG's homelessness statistics team work with these authorities and their software suppliers to resolve any incorrectly formatted data, data omissions or misunderstanding of the data requirement. Lessons have been learned throughout the process and guidance documentation, new documentation and test sites are all made available to continually improve the quality of all local authority submissions. This quality assurance process has significantly improved the data in this release.

Ongoing quality improvements

The quality of data in this publication are continually being improved. This publication is currently labelled as experimental to reflect the new methods being used to aggregate case level information to provide summary outputs. New methods are also being developed to impute for missing data, where a local authority has not provided data for certain sections of the form or when the data provided is not consistent. The purpose of publishing these statistics as experimental is to allow users to review the statistics with an understanding of the statistics' quality and limitations and make qualified use of them before they are fully developed.

Current plans to further improve the publication and future processes of this collection include:

- Working to agree standard rules/principles around quarter on quarter revisions and imputations.
- Continue standardising imputation processes for missing/invalid data.
- Continue automating processes to reduce human error and speed up processes.
- Monitoring and evaluation of key indicators which can be used to assess when a 'steady state' has been reached. This can be done by monitoring fluctuations in the dataset.

- Working with users and data suppliers to better understand issues and improve data submission processes, and quality issues for data providers.
- Analyse user views from the online consultation which closed on the 22nd November 2019. Hold user workshops in 2020 to provide updates on progress, discuss the presentation and publication of the statistics and better understand user requirements.

MHCLG anticipate that these changes to quality will take some time to complete and updates will be provided with each quarter.

Data limitations

Detailed information on the data coverage and limitation per H-CLIC section can be found on the front page of each of the [live tables](#).

Time series

As discussed in the comparability section of the release, time series may show trends in the data which are either not directly comparable, or due to data quality improvements.

Initial assessments

Initial assessments include information on the new prevention and relief duties as assessed at the point of application. Applicants who were assessed as being owed a prevention duty at their initial assessment and were subsequently owed a relief duty are only reported as owed a prevention duty in the initial assessment section.

As local authorities adjust to the new system of collecting data, figures may have misreported. For example, some local authorities have previously reported a large proportion of the 'not threatened with homelessness' cases, incorrectly logging 'advice only' cases that were never formally issued a homeless decision under this category. These authorities have worked to correct these mistakes, and data in recent and future quarters may show a decrease in these categories due to improvements in data quality.

Some local authorities may be reporting upstream preventions as prevention duties lasting only one day, which may represent some over-reporting of prevention duties.

One local authority, Kingston upon Thames, appears to be reporting only on the main applicant of each household, resulting in all households being reported as single adult households. However, this effect is thought to be 0.1% on the total. This authority does not have an H-CLIC compliant reporting system.

Prevention and relief

Feedback from local authorities who provided data suggest that prevention and relief activities may have been underreported in April to June 2018, caused by issues with their new software extracting and uploading such data. Many local authorities and software suppliers have since corrected these issues. Therefore, some of the trends from 2018/19 may be an effect of data improvement.

As local authorities get to grips with the new Act, MHCLG's HAST team have been using the H-CLIC data to identify how local authorities are adopting the new legislation, checking fields are being applied correctly where certain categories are higher than expected – refusal to cooperate and prevention duty ends after 56 days and no further action. Further improvements to figures are expected in future quarters.

Main duty

Both H-CLIC and P1E forms were used to collect data in the July to September 2019 data collection. Some users of particular software systems have suggested that their main duty data is not being exported correctly. We are continually working with local authorities and data suppliers to assist with these issues so quality can be improved.

Main duty decisions are the most volatile duty figures reported, and are revised up in subsequent quarters. For example, April to June 2019 main duty acceptance figures in this revised release are 6% higher than in the original release.

It should be noted that many main duty outcomes and a small number of main duty decisions refer to legacy cases – households whose duty began prior to the introduction of the HRA, and therefore did not receive prevention or relief duties. Reviews, reapplication duties, and reassessments, as well as the end of duties, are still occurring for these households.

Temporary accommodation

As part of the initial consultation to move from a P1E summary return to H-CLIC case level submissions local authorities identified a potential issue linking their homeless cases to the associated temporary accommodation placements. To assist local authorities, a transition period was offered where local authorities could separately report temporary accommodation data through the old P1E return as an alternative or addition to H-CLIC. It was up to local authorities to choose the most suitable option. Those local authorities who procured a new software system typically reported via both returns. Whilst those who updated existing software tended to return P1E or H-CLIC. The transition period will come to an end in April 2020, when all local authorities

are expected to complete a H-CLIC temporary accommodation return.

Double counting of temporary accommodation placements was a risk when collecting information via both P1E and H-CLIC. Where double reporting was suspected local authorities were approached to explain their mechanism for reporting these cases so that the duplicates could be omitted from either the P1E or H-CLIC return. However, the likelihood of this occurring was low because temporary accommodation placement data is usually linked to a payments database and records are kept up to date by the local authority to ensure any payments to accommodation providers are stopped when placements end. Any local authority that submitted data across two systems were checked for the placement dates in H-CLIC and overall totals versus the previous quarter, when only P1E was reported.

All submissions are reviewed, and where large changes have occurred between quarters local authorities were approached for an explanation. If no explanation of the change could be provided this data was rejected and imputed figures were used instead for the England total. These local authorities can be identified in the live tables because they are highlighted yellow and their imputed figures are not published – to ensure these are not misused.

As part of the QA process local authorities were asked to verify their households in temporary accommodation. There were a number of inconsistencies identified in the way local authorities reported these. Some local authorities omitted anyone in temporary accommodation whose main duty had been discharged and other local authorities did not, and the method varies by local authority.

Revisions policy

Scheduled revisions

There are no scheduled revisions to the statutory homelessness release. However, it should be noted that data in each new release and latest quarter is provisional and subject to revision in future quarters. Local authorities may add new homelessness duty cases late or revise previous data submissions where mistakes have been spotted. These changes will not be marked with an R in the local authority dataset because these are likely to be extensive across all local authorities. However, the time series dataset will be marked with a P for the latest quarter and an R, where applicable, for previous quarters where changes have been made.

Revisions to the previous quarter will be made routinely with each new quarterly release. Where revisions to earlier quarters for the current financial year are made, these will be incorporated into the dataset at the end of the financial year.

Non-Scheduled Revisions

Where local authorities spot a mistake in their own data that change affects the national story, such as changing a national trend or total by 3% or more or reversing it, these changes will be incorporated into the live tables and published statistics release as soon as possible. These changes will not be preannounced on the release calendar. Users will be informed of the change by a change to the title of the document, adding a '(revised)' suffix both on the webpage and in the document itself. An explanation of the changes will be included in the updated publication and local authority level changes will be marked with an 'R'. Smaller changes at the local authority level are routinely expected as part of the previous quarter revisions in future publications. Where a local authority notes a minor correction to their data, these will be updated in the next release along with the other routine amendments.

If MHCLG spot a mistake in the numbers or trends referred to in this release or live tables, these will be updated as soon as possible. Users will be informed of the change by a change to the title of the document, adding a '(revised)' suffix both on the webpage and in the document itself. An explanation of the changes will be included in the updated publication and local authority level changes will be marked with an 'R'.