



Prevention or cure?

A year on since the Homeless Reduction Act in England

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Together
we will end
homelessness



Homelessness is not inevitable, in most cases it is preventable and in every case it can be ended

Homelessness Reduction Act

We and others campaigned for a new duty to prevent homelessness in England

Introduced in April 2018 the new legislation includes:

- A prevention duty at 56 days for all eligible households regardless of priority need, intentionality or local connection
- A relief duty for any eligible person who is homeless to take 'reasonable steps to secure accommodation'
- Introduction of Personalised Housing Plans
- Duty to refer on public bodies (October 2018)

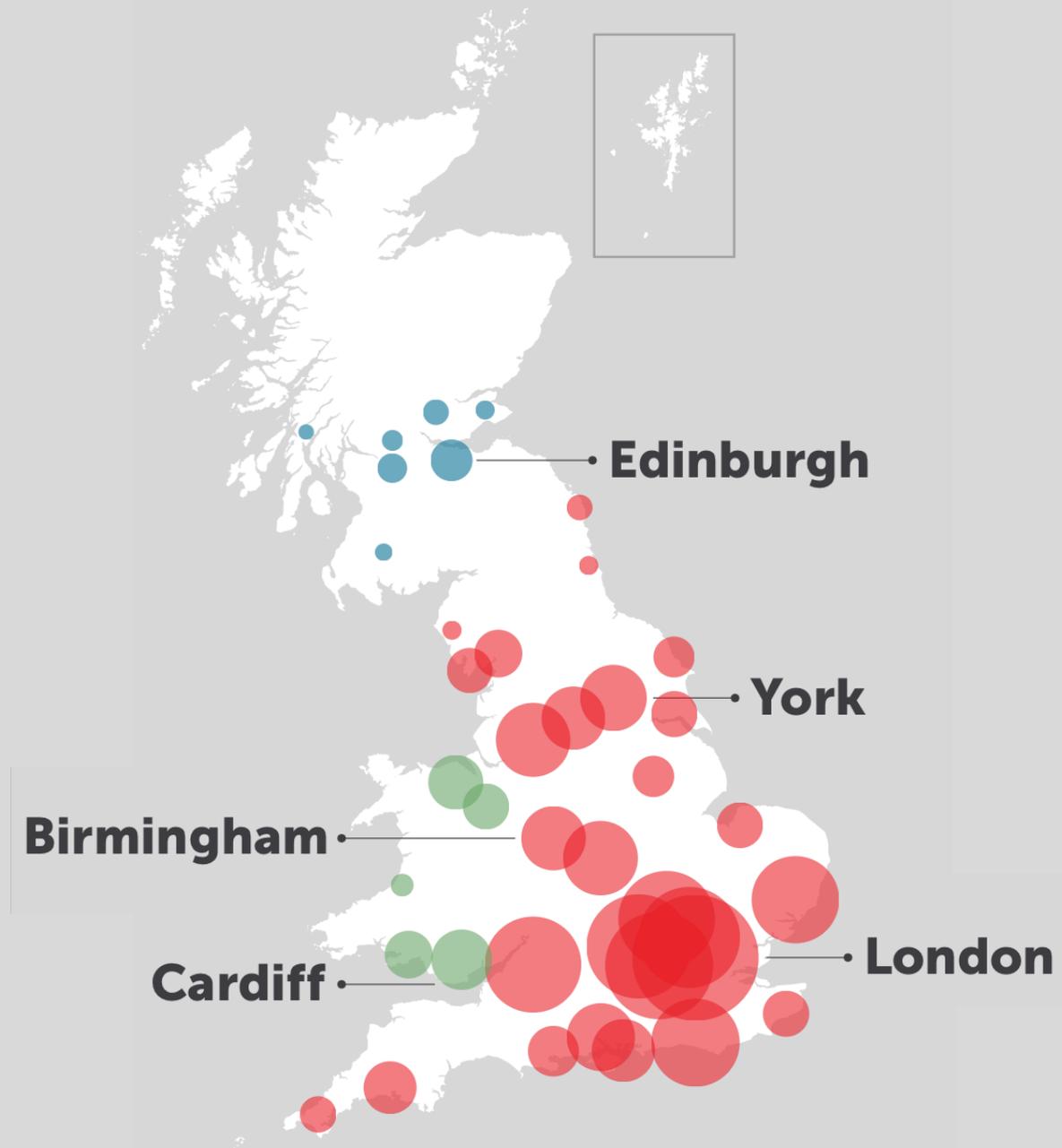


Affordability and welfare

Under the current LHA freeze large proportions of GB are not accessible at the 30th percentile of rents

This is not a London only problem anymore

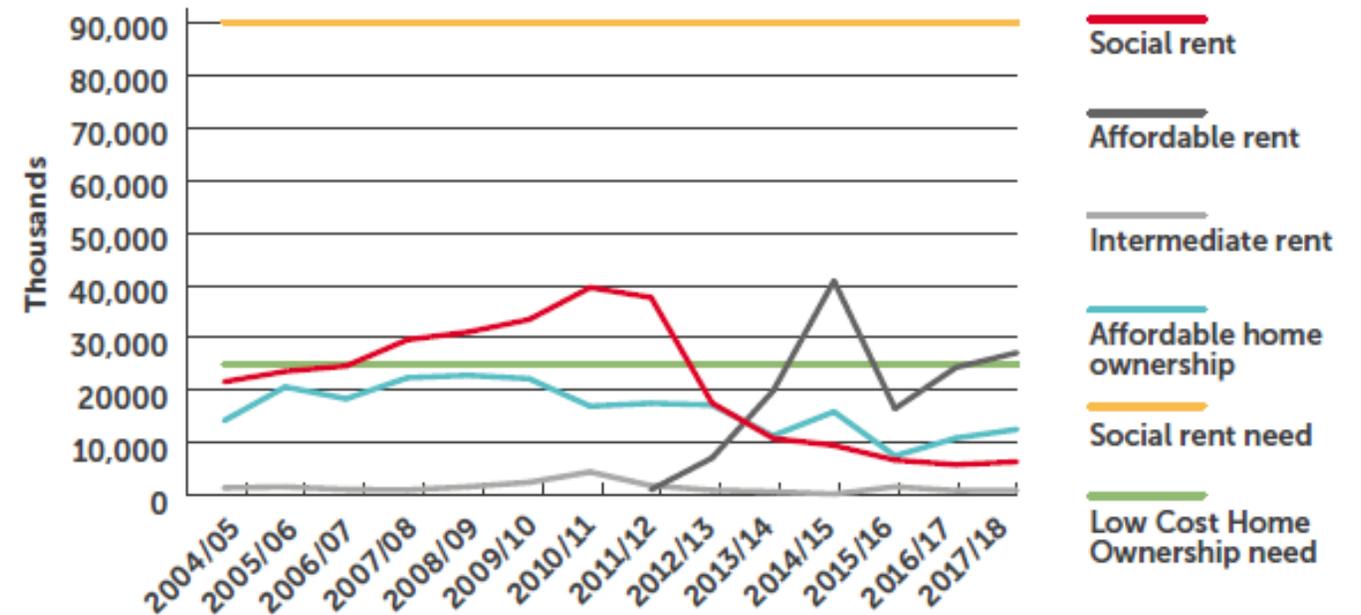
94 per cent of areas across Great Britain, 1 in 5 or less privately rented homes were affordable within Local Housing Allowance rates to single people, couples, or families with one or two children.



Affordable housing supply

- Marked fall in new social sector dwellings after 2011/12 replaced with a focus on 'affordable rent'
- Provision significantly lower than the 90,000 homes needed a year for the next 15 years

Figure 2.10 Affordable Housing supply and need estimates



Source: MHCLG Affordable Housing Statistics, Table 1000; Bramley, G (2018) *Housing supply requirements across GB: for low-income households and homeless people*, Crisis and National Housing Federation

Prevention Typology

- **Universal prevention** - preventing or minimising homelessness risks across the population at large
- **Targeted prevention** – upstream prevention focussed on high risk groups, such as vulnerable young people, and risky transitions, such as leaving local authority care, prison or mental health in-patient treatment
- **Crisis prevention** – preventing homelessness likely to occur within 56 days, in line with legislation across Great Britain on ‘threatened with homelessness’
- **Emergency prevention** – support for those at immediate risk of homelessness, especially sleeping rough | **Recovery prevention** – prevention of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping

(Fitzpatrick, Mackie and Wood 2019)

Homelessness prevention in the UK

Policy briefing

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Heriot-Watt University), Dr. Peter Mackie (Cardiff University)
and Dr. Jenny Wood (Heriot-Watt University)



Summary

There has been marked innovation and policy mobility¹ on homelessness prevention since devolution. Using a five-category prevention typology (Universal, Targeted, Crisis, Emergency, Recovery) reveals how early developments in Scotland focused on Emergency Prevention - ensuring that all homeless people have an enforceable right to temporary accommodation. However, most effort has recently been expended on Crisis Prevention, whereby people at risk of homelessness within 56 days are assisted to remain or secure alternative accommodation. Legislative developments in Crisis Prevention in Wales and England have proved effective, albeit there is sometimes a gap between Intentions of the law and current practice. Progress on Targeted Prevention with high-risk groups, such as those leaving prison, has been slower to develop across the UK. General homelessness risks have increased as a result of welfare reform and housing market pressures, undermining Universal Prevention. Single people sleeping rough or at risk often remain poorly protected, but there are promising policy Initiatives underway, especially on Recovery Prevention.

¹ See also Soaitis, A.M. (2018) Mapping the literature of 'policy transfer' and housing. CaCHE, Glasgow

Research overview

- Three year study in six local authority case study areas representing a mix of socio-economic and housing market areas across England
- Mixed method approach:
 - Face to face survey (600/year)
 - In-depth interviews (60/year)
 - Local authority stakeholder interviews and focus groups
- Baseline carried out April – November 2018 – findings based on this
- Currently in 2nd wave fieldwork

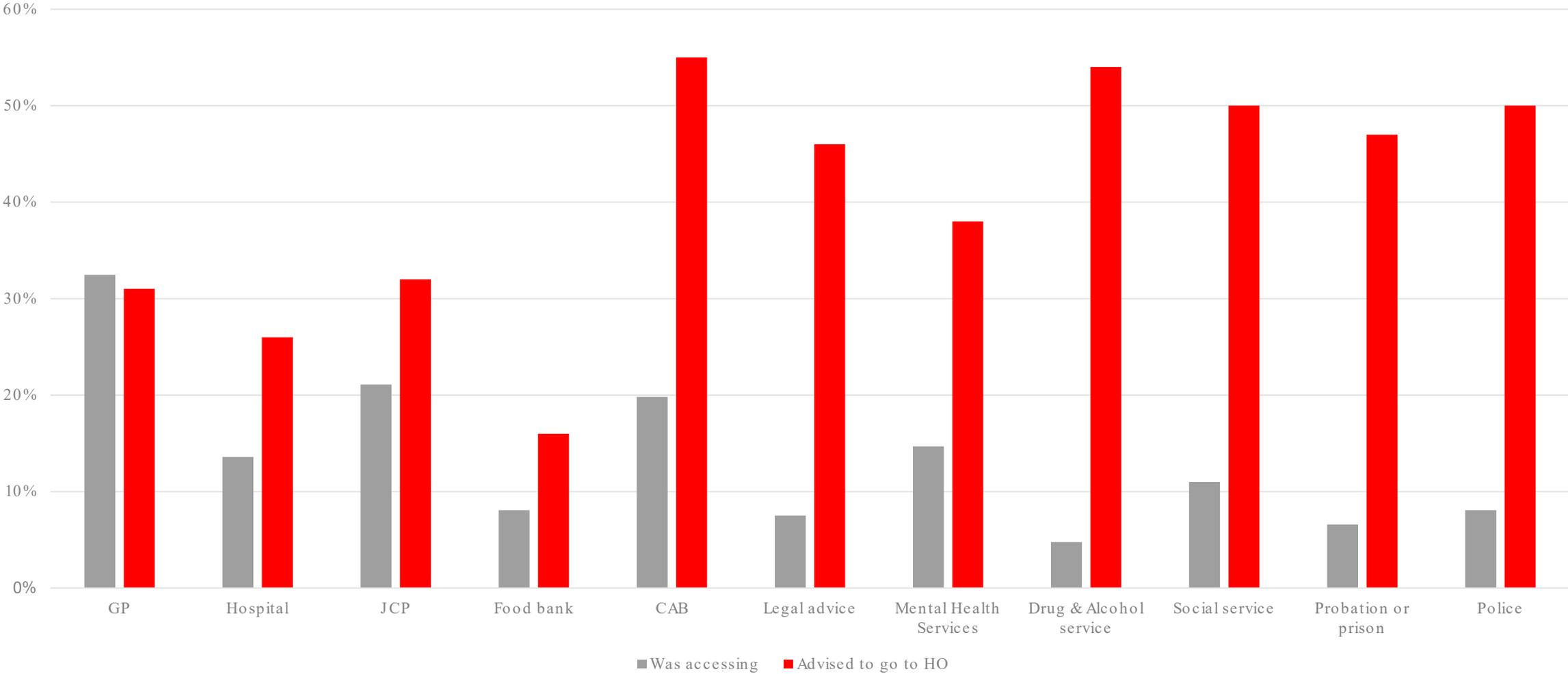
Awareness of HRA

- The HRA has substantially increased the number of people eligible for support from Housing Options through the new prevention and relief duties. Only 3% reported getting no support
- Only 14% (78) of respondents reporting that they were aware of the introduction of the HRA.
- Of those who were aware of the change in legislation 46% (36) said that it had encouraged them to attend Housing Options, this translates to only 7% of the overall total.
- 20% of respondents were aware of what support was available from Housing Options prior to attending

Duty to Refer

- 65% of respondents were engaged with at least one other service at the time they presented to Housing Options
- Nearly a third of respondents had seen their GP but only 31% were advised to seek housing support
- Overall those services most likely to be working with individuals with high support needs e.g. probation services were more likely to refer than those offering universal services e.g. GPs

Duty to Refer



Personal Housing Plans and support offered

- Only 51% of respondents reported that they left the assessment feeling positive about their options.
- Significant variation across LA areas ranging from 25% to 65%
- Only 37% were actively aware that they had received a PHP
- There was mixed opinion on the value of the PHPs from LAs depending on whether they were perceived as a support plan or as an administrative process.

Personal Housing Plans and support offered

- Findings suggest a lack of creativity within PHPs with a reliance on standard approaches that would have been utilised prior to the HRA.
- Interventions offered with PHPs are heavily focussed around advice and information to access the private rented sector despite the lack of affordable properties in the area for those accessing support.
- 56% of respondents said their PHPs had information on accessing the private rented sector. The most common form of intervention offered.

Personal Housing Plans and support offered

“And it doesn’t tackle the big elephant in the room, which is that – not that there’s a shortage of housing, it’s that there is a shortage of affordable housing. If property were affordable, then we wouldn’t be here.” (Team leader - local authority B)

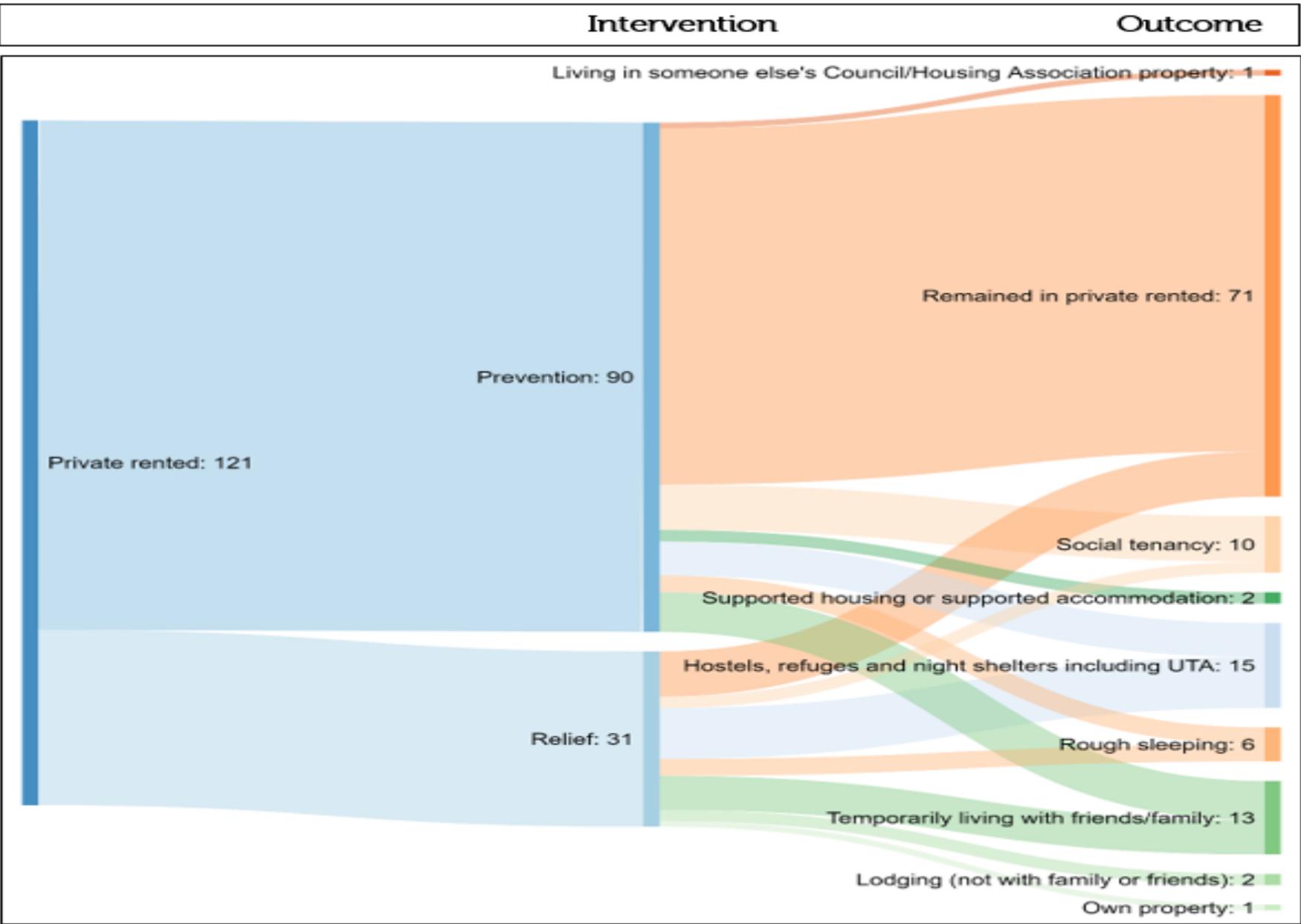
- Local authorities acknowledged the challenges that lack of affordable housing created. Specific problems highlighted related to:
 - The freeze on LHA rates
 - Concerns that Universal Credit was further reducing the number of private rented properties that were accessible.

Affordable housing

- This is reflected in housing outcomes with only 17% of respondents reporting that the support they had received from Housing Options had helped to resolve their current housing issue
- The single relief cohort received the most inconsistent housing outcomes: 51% of rough sleepers remained either rough sleeping, sleeping in cars tents or public transport, or sofa surfing.
- Access to social housing remains a key challenge across all the local authority areas.

“now the way that...the housing register, has been organised is that if people are either prevention or relief duty then they are band 3 or 4 and that means that they’ll be waiting three years or four years or something to be re-housed.” (Local authority A – Housing Officer)

Prevention versus relief outcomes



Embracing the Act

- There are concerns that the intention behind the HRA and the requisite culture change needed to deliver this has not been implemented as anticipated.
- In some LAs the research has observed a very literal interpretation of the HRA
- Where the HRA is being delivered in the spirit it was intended seeing much more positive outcomes:
 - Average of 51% stated that their experience with the LA had met their expectations.
 - Huge variation between LAs with different approaches from 82% in one LA to 36% in another

Conclusion

- There is positive signs of good prevention practice emerging from the HRA –still mainly crisis and emergency prevention activity
- The HRA has opened up access particularly amongst single homeless
- Creativity and a willingness to move beyond traditional approaches are seeing success against trying to interpret the HRA on to previous processes
- The intensive case management nature of the HRA needs to be acknowledged and resourced appropriately
- The importance of the Duty to Refer is evident and this needs to be extended to a wider range of services with a **duty to prevent homelessness** should be placed on all public bodies – opportunities to influence in Scotland

Conclusion

- However lack of affordable housing remains a significant structural barrier to preventing homelessness resulting in an overreliance on the private rented sector
- There needs to be an investment in social housing and a national target for building homes at social rent levels
- Alongside a realignment of LHA rates back to the 30th percentile
#CovertheCost
- Not tackling the structural barriers risks undermining the potential of the HRA

In 21st century Britain, everybody should have a place to live.

It doesn't need to be like this.

We know we can end homelessness.

EVERYBODY IN

How to end homelessness in Great Britain

