



Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin

January-June 2020



**Housing
Executive**

Release date: 17 September 2020

Official statistics

This publication has been developed by the Department for Communities (DfC), Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). This bulletin presents a biannual summary of homelessness statistics in Northern Ireland. In this document you will find quick and concise coverage of the most up-to-date statistics available. More in depth statistics and information on methodology can be found in the accompanying tables and documents. These can be accessed [here](#).

Key Points

Homeless presenters

7,911

Homeless presenters

Top 3 reasons for presenting

1. Sharing breakdown/family dispute
2. Accommodation not reasonable
3. Loss of rented accommodation

Homeless acceptances

58%

(4,605)

Of those who presented
were accepted as
statutorily homeless

Temporary accommodation

2,930

Households living in
temporary accommodation¹

Top 3 types of temporary accommodation¹

1. Private single lets
2. Voluntary sector hostels
3. NIHE hostels

1. This figure refers to households placed in temporary accommodation by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as of July 2020.

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The Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin January-June 2020 is the fourth edition in a series of official statistics that has been prepared by Professional Services Unit of the Department for Communities (DfC).

This biannual compendium of statistics contains information on a range of areas relating to homelessness. The report is currently divided into three sections which are: Homeless presenters; Homeless acceptances; and Temporary accommodation. More sections and/or tables may be added in future editions of this publication. All tables are sourced to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) administrative data on homelessness.

Homelessness figures presented in this report can be read in conjunction with those published in the quarterly [Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin](#).

The data submission for quarter April-June 2020 has been subject to considerable variation from previous quarters. This can be directly attributed to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic and a response to lockdown arrangements implemented on 23rd March. Please see background quality document for further information.

Feedback on the bulletin is particularly welcome from users. This will be used to further develop the publication and accompanying tables in line with user requirements. If you would like to participate in our user engagement survey, please do so by following this link: [User engagement survey](#)

Please note that this is a summary document. More detailed data and information on [methodology and data quality](#) is available.

If you think you are homeless and require further advice or support, please contact the Northern Ireland Housing Executive via:

Telephone: 03448 920 900 **Website:** <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/>



What is meant by 'homelessness'?

Becoming homeless can happen to anyone. A person may be homeless if they are:

- staying with friends or family
- staying in a hostel
- staying in a bed and breakfast
- living in very overcrowded conditions
- at risk of violence if they stay in their home
- living in poor conditions that are damaging their health
- living in a house that is unsuitable for them
- rough sleeping

Homelessness is often understood as people living on the streets. However, whilst rough sleepers may represent one element of homelessness, it is a misconception to think that these are the only homeless people who need help. Even those who have a roof over their heads may still be included in the homeless definition.

The Northern Ireland Housing (NI) Order 1988 (as amended) tasks the Northern Ireland Housing Executive with responding to homelessness, and places a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to provide interim and/or permanent accommodation for certain homeless households, dependent upon investigations and assessment of their circumstances.

This report seeks to provide a more thorough understanding of homelessness through statistics, case studies, and factual information.



What about rough sleepers?

Whilst there are no statistics on rough sleepers in this publication at present, the Housing Executive perform annual street counts of rough sleepers in Belfast, Londonderry and any other area where street activity is identified by the Homelessness Local Area Groups. Additional data from the PSNI and others is also analysed following standard practice for establishing the number of rough sleepers across the UK.

The latest results were collected in November 2018 and can be found here:

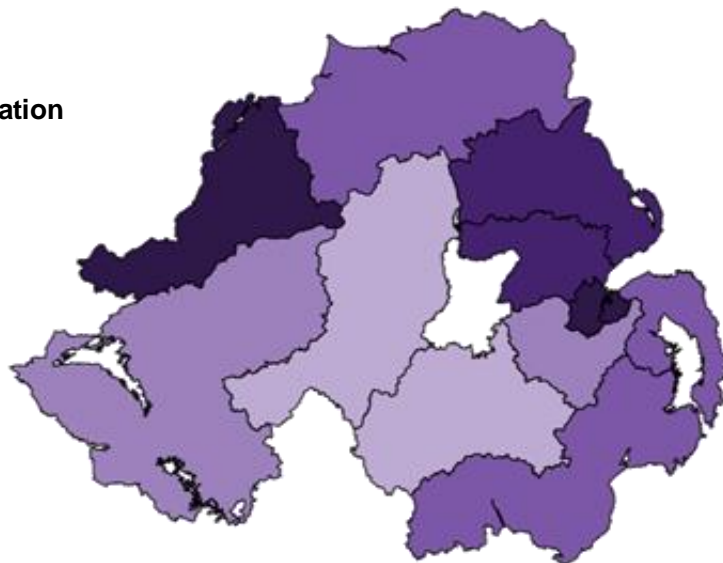
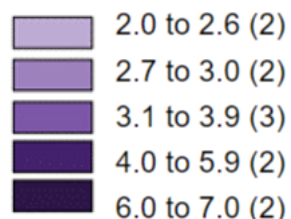
<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/>

Section One: Homeless presenters

This section contains a wide range of information on those who have submitted an application to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Detailed data on: households presenting by reason; by household type; by Local Government District (LGD); by decision; and households rejected by legislative test outcome can be found in the [accompanying tables](#).

Homeless presenters by Local Government District January-June 2020*

Presenters per 1000 population



A homeless 'presenter' is a household that is undergoing a homelessness assessment by the Housing Executive. This assessment consists of four legislative tests (The Northern Ireland Housing Order 1988 (as amended)) which determine whether or not a duty is owed to the household. These include tests for: eligibility; homelessness; priority need and; intentionality (see Glossary for definitions). Even households who currently have somewhere to live that may be unsuitable can apply to be considered homeless.

In January-June 2020, 7,911 households presented as homeless in Northern Ireland. The map above shows how many households presented as homeless per 1,000 population in each Local Government District (LGD). The LGD with the largest number of presenters per 1,000 population was Belfast with 6.8. This was followed by Derry City and Strabane (6.6), Mid & East Antrim (4.6) and Antrim and Newtownabbey (4.6).

* Population statistics taken from the most recent NINIS mid-year estimates. These can be accessed [here](#).

** Scenarios are based on information taken from NIHE homelessness presentation data, but are not based on the circumstances of any one individual.

Scenario 1: Accommodation not Reasonable due to Physical health**

Molly lives in a privately rented upper flat which was suitable for her needs when she took up the tenancy.

She has a number of health conditions which have deteriorated significantly over the last couple of years, presenting her with great difficulty managing the three flights of stairs to her flat. Subsequently, Molly rarely goes out which has resulted in feelings of isolation.

Molly contacted NIHE requesting help and assistance. She reported that she cannot stand for long enough to get properly washed and although the flat has a walk in shower, it is too small to accommodate a shower seat.

At the home visit, the Housing Advisor witnessed the difficulties caused by these medical issues and assessed Molly as per the relevant homelessness legislation.

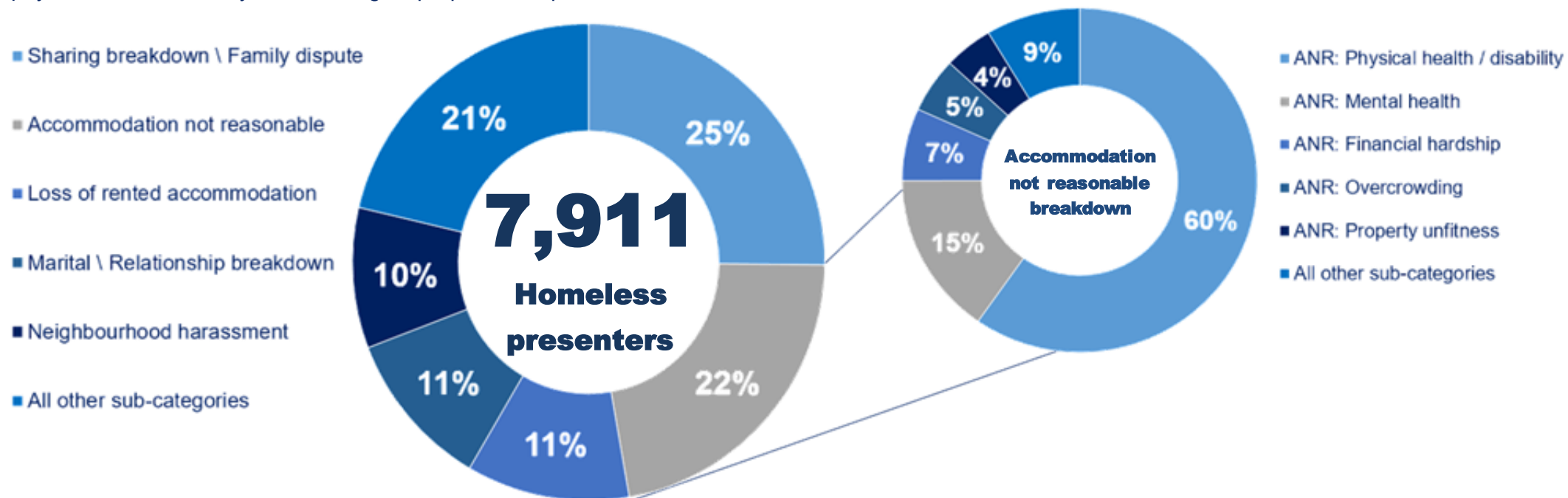
The housing advisor arranged for floating support to help Molly link in with other agencies. A care package was put in place and carers now attend three times a day. Molly has been offered ground floor accommodation in the local area.

Section One: Homeless presenters

When a household presents as homeless, an initial reason for presenting is allocated by a housing advisor from the Housing Executive based on the information provided in the application. During the subsequent investigation of the application a more appropriate reason may be determined. As a result, the household could potentially be accepted as statutorily homeless with a different reason than that which they initially presented with.

Of the 7,911 households who presented as homeless in January-June 2020, the most commonly quoted cause was 'sharing breakdown/family dispute' with 1,922 (25%), followed by accommodation not reasonable with 1,745 (22%), loss of rented accommodation with 884 (11%), and marital/relationship breakdown with 851 (11%). It should be noted that the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in fewer households presenting as homeless when compared to the same period in previous years.

The category 'accommodation not reasonable' (ANR) does not have a single definition. It is an umbrella category in which there are 7 sub-categories. These are: financial hardship; mental health; overcrowding; physical health/disability; property unfitness; violence; and other. Of the accommodation not reasonable cases, 'physical health/disability' had the largest proportion of presenters with 60%.



Section One: Homeless presenters

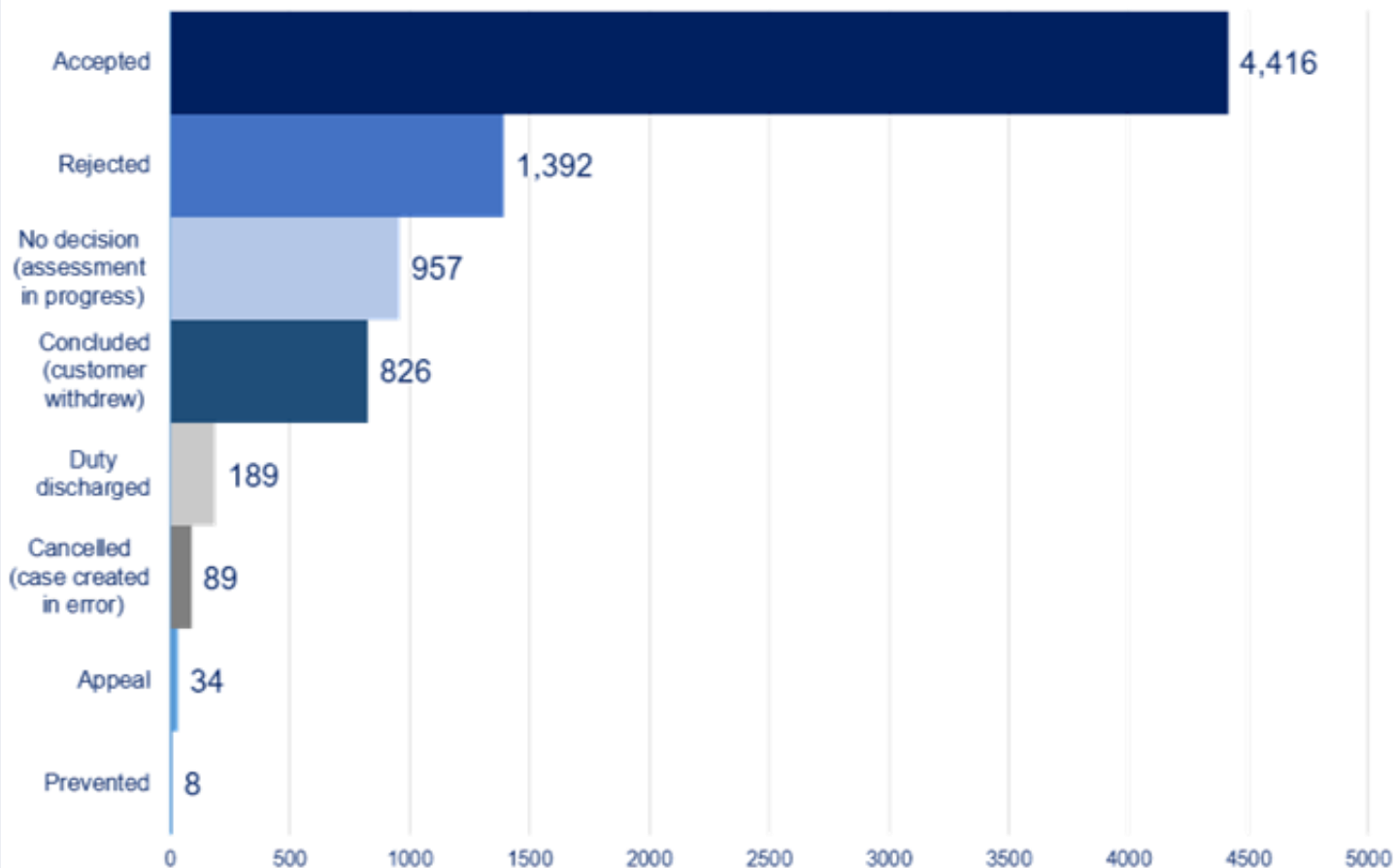
Homeless presenters by decision

When a household presents as homeless to the Housing Executive, four legislative tests are carried out to assess whether or not a duty is owed to the household.

The chart below shows the various outcomes of those who were assessed between January-June 2020.

Definitions for each of these outcomes can be found in the glossary at the back of this document.

Of those applications assessed, 56% were accepted as homeless, 2% were duty discharged within the same period, and 18% were rejected. It should be noted that the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in fewer assessments being completed when compared to the same period in previous years.



What does 'duty discharged' mean?

To become 'duty discharged' an applicant who has been awarded full duty status must either: be rehoused; refuse three reasonable offers of housing; or re-house themselves/no longer require help from the Housing Executive.



Whilst the chart (left) shows 189 cases being duty discharged, this is only referring to those who presented as homeless, were accepted, and subsequently duty discharged, all within this 6 month time period.

It should be noted that other households, accepted as full duty applicants outside of January-June 2020, will also have been duty discharged during the period. For information, the overall number of cases duty discharged between April 2019 and March 2020 was: 7,548.

Section One: Homeless presenters



What happens to those who are rejected?

A rejected case is where a household has failed to meet one or more of the statutory tests for homelessness. For these clients certain duties around providing advice and assistance still remain. The Homeless Persons' Advice and Assistance Regulations (NI) 2011 (the Regulations) requires the Housing Executive to provide homeless people with the following:

- Housing advice;
- Advice on social issues;
- Financial advice;
- Advice on legal procedures and services.

The advice and assistance referred to in the regulations must be provided to any homeless applicant whether they are “eligible persons” or not. This advice is a duty that is owed to anyone who might seek advice and assistance regardless of eligibility or homeless status. The aim of this duty is to prevent homelessness.

How is homelessness being prevented?

'Homelessness prevention' means providing people with help and support to address their housing and other needs, to avoid homelessness. Homelessness prevention can best be achieved by intervention at the earliest possible stage.

[The Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2017-22](#) notes that “for many people, becoming homeless is not the beginning of their problems; it comes at the end of a long line of crises”. This means that by the time a household presents to the Housing Executive as homeless, many opportunities may have been missed to prevent the homelessness occurring. In recognition of this, the Housing Executive and the Department for Communities fund and/or support a range of organisations that provide advice and assistance to households approaching crisis before homelessness occurs. These include:



- Housing Rights Service
- Community Housing Advice Partnership (CHAP)
- Housing Advice Prisons Service
- Housing Advice NI
- Beyond the Gate Service

It is difficult to provide accurate figures for homelessness prevention given the methods used to record it and the fact that responsibility is shared across several different DfC and NIHE funded organisations. The 'prevented' category in the “Homeless presenters by decision” chart found on the previous page does not fully reflect all the work being done to ensure that as many potential homeless cases are prevented as possible. Later editions of this publication will aim to provide better quantification of prevented cases, when data is made available.

Section Two: Homeless acceptances

This section contains a wide range of information on those who have been accepted as 'statutorily homeless' by the Housing Executive. Detailed data on: acceptances by reason; by household type; by Local Government District (LGD); by priority need; by outcome; and children in households accepted as homeless, can be found in the [accompanying tables](#).



What is a 'Full Duty Applicant'?

In order to be "accepted" as statutorily homeless a household must meet the four tests of: eligibility; homelessness; priority need; and intentionality.

Any household that meets these four tests will be accepted as a "Full Duty Applicant" (FDA) and will be owed a full housing duty. The full housing duty includes ensuring that accommodation is made available for the household as well as the provision of temporary accommodation where necessary and assistance with the protection of the household's belongings.

For more definitions, see the glossary at the back of this document.

Who was accepted as statutorily homeless?

Of the 7,911 homeless presenters between January-June 2020, 58% (4,605) were granted Full Duty Applicant status and accepted as statutorily homeless, and 4% of these (189) were discharged within the same time frame. This means that the applicant has either (a) been rehoused, (b) rejected three reasonable offers, or (c) has rehoused themselves/no longer needs assistance. (See page 5 for more information)

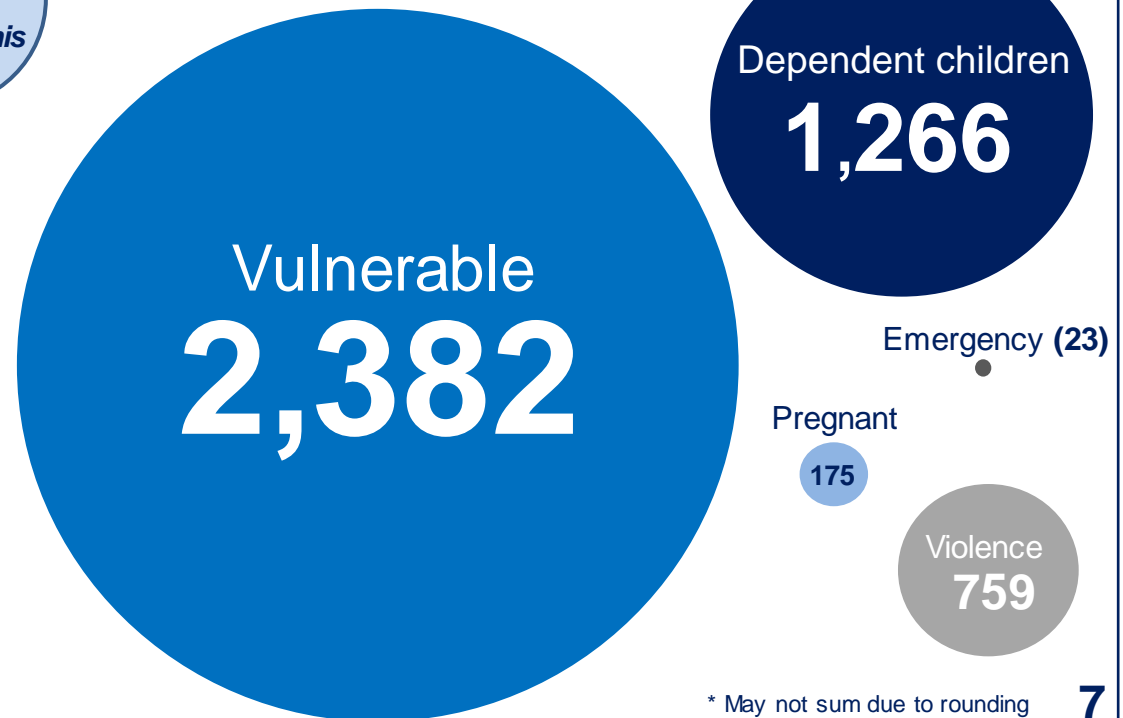
The top three reasons for being accepted as homeless were: accommodation not reasonable (1,328, 29%), sharing breakdown/family dispute (967, 21%) and; domestic violence (522, 11%).

Statutorily homeless by priority need test outcome

The 'priority need test' shows that for some reason, the household would struggle to cope as homeless more than others.

The most frequent outcome of the priority need test of those accepted was to be categorised as 'vulnerable' with 52% (2,382). Households can be classed as 'vulnerable' for a multitude of reasons including, but not exclusively: old age; illness; mental health problems; or physical disabilities.

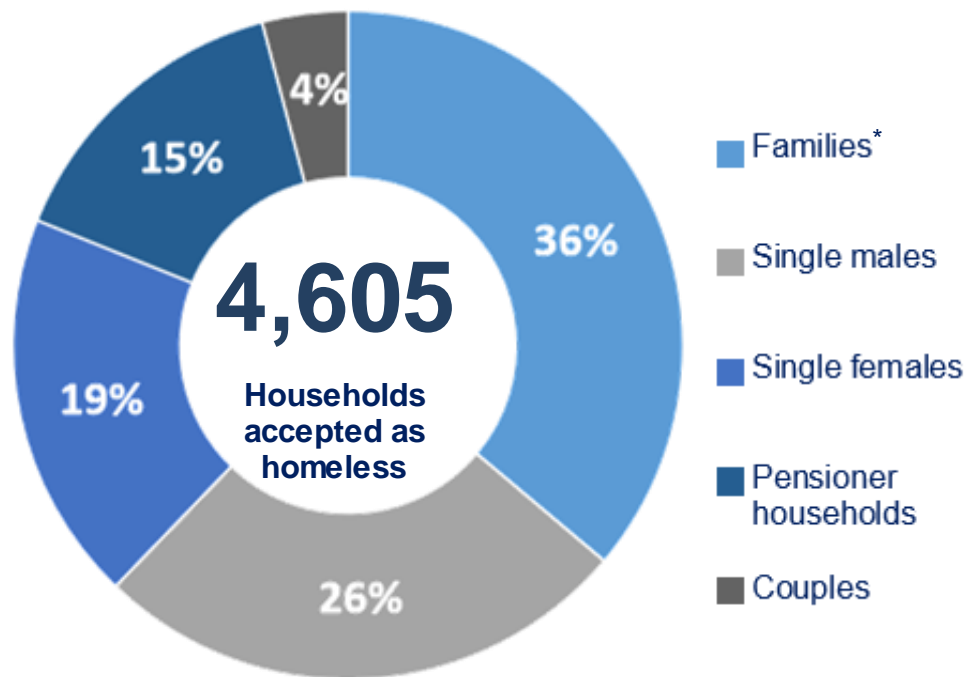
Other outcomes include those classified by the test as: having "dependent children" (1,266, 27%); experiencing "violence" (759, 16%); "pregnant" (175, 4%); or classed as emergency (23, <1%)*.



* May not sum due to rounding

Section Two: Homeless acceptances

Households accepted as homeless, by household type



Of the 4,605 households who were accepted as statutorily homeless, approximately a third were families (1,664). This was followed by single males (1,200), single females (870), pensioner households (680) and couples (190).

Of all single males and females who were accepted as statutorily homeless, those who fell into the 26-59 age group made up the largest proportion (903 and 488 respectively).

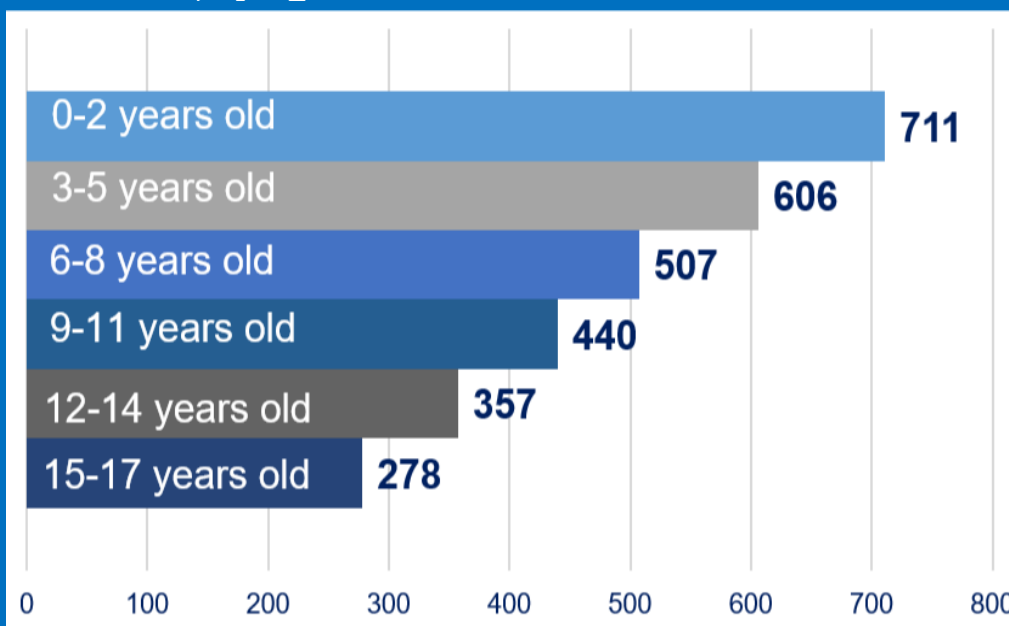
It is important to monitor the prevalence of household type in regards to homelessness to both inform housing need, and the development of the housing strategy.

Children from homeless households

The households accepted as statutorily homeless between January June 2020 included a total of 2,899 children. Please note, however, this does not mean that there were 2,899 households with children, as one household can have multiple children.

As can be seen from the chart below, the largest proportion of these children were aged 0-2 (25%), followed by 3-5 (21%), 6-8 (17%), 9-11 (15%), 12-14 (12%), and finally 15-17 (10%).

Children from households accepted as statutorily homeless, by age



* Families do not necessarily include children under the age of 18. Families may, for example, include parents and children who are over the age of 18 or adult siblings/other relatives living together.

Section Three: Temporary accommodation

Scenario 2: Single Male Presentation*

Tyrone is a single male who was sharing a home with his sister until she asked him to leave following a breakdown in sharing arrangements. Tyrone presented to the Housing Executive for assistance and advised of poor mental health and addiction issues.

As part of the homelessness assessment, the Housing Advisor contacted Tyrone's sister and attempted to sustain the sharing arrangement. A positive FDA decision was made with Tyrone accepted as a Full Duty Applicant and he received a referral to Floating Support.

Due to his vulnerabilities, Tyrone did not feel comfortable moving outside his local area and subsequently availed of accommodation with a family member until a permanent solution was identified.

After a sharing breakdown within this arrangement, Tyrone was then placed in temporary accommodation by the Housing Executive.

Tyrone had no belongings so a starter pack was authorised in lieu of a permanent tenancy. He is also next in line for the offer of a permanent tenancy.

This section contains a wide range of information on placements in temporary accommodation. Detailed data on: placements in temporary accommodation by household type and by accommodation type; children in temporary accommodation; and current placements by banded length of stay, can be found in the [accompanying tables](#).

What is 'temporary accommodation'?

The Housing Executive has two main accommodation duties: the interim duty to accommodate; and the full housing duty. The first dictates that if a client is homeless and has a priority need, they can be accommodated pending the full investigation of their circumstances. The latter applies to clients who meet the four statutory homelessness tests (as described in previous chapters).

Temporary accommodation can be utilised to address both of these duties. That is, a client could be placed here during their investigation or after becoming a full duty applicant whilst waiting for a permanent offer of rehousing.

The types of temporary accommodation used by the Housing Executive are:

- Private single lets
- Voluntary sector hostels
- NIHE hostels
- Hotel/B'n'B
- Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency Accommodation (DIME)

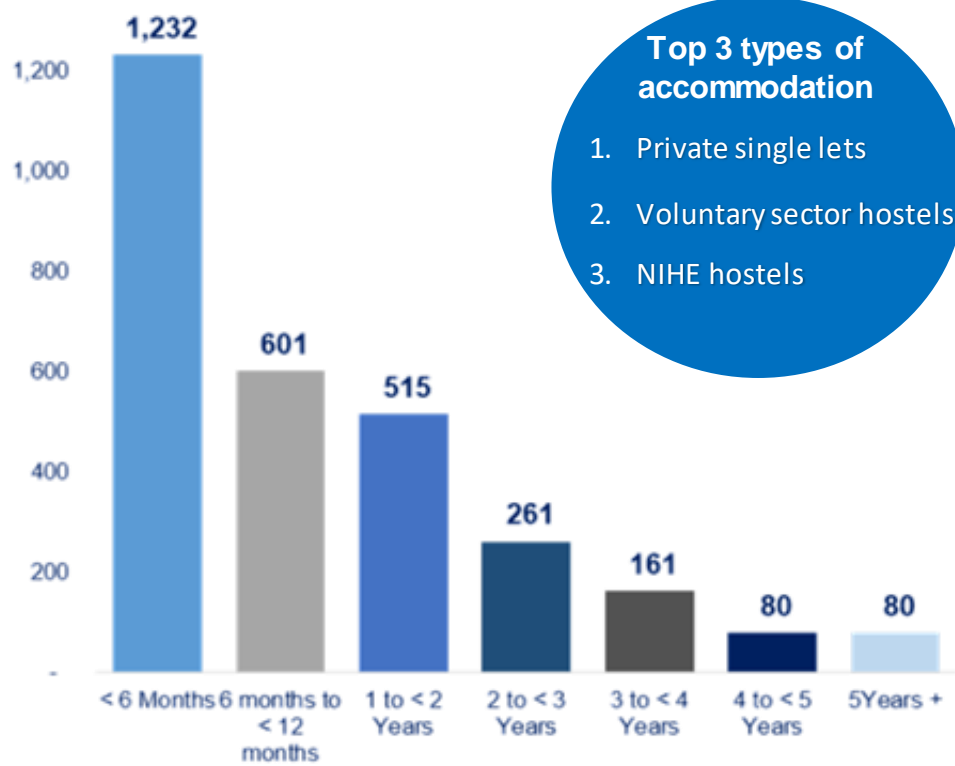
For definitions of each of these types of accommodation, please see the glossary at the back of this document.

Whilst not all clients require placement in temporary accommodation (they may prefer to stay with friend or family or make their own arrangements), for those who do Housing Executive staff will endeavour to place them in the most appropriate accommodation for their needs. Within the portfolio there will be places available for clients with high, medium, low and no support needs. For example, there are hostels that can deal with clients dealing with addiction who may not be immediately ready to take up and sustain a tenancy. In these circumstances, staff will seek a placement in an appropriate hostel that will have on-site support workers who will support the client to become "tenancy ready". This will improve their chances of maintaining a long term tenancy when one is offered. Many clients find the support provided from their assigned temporary accommodation invaluable.

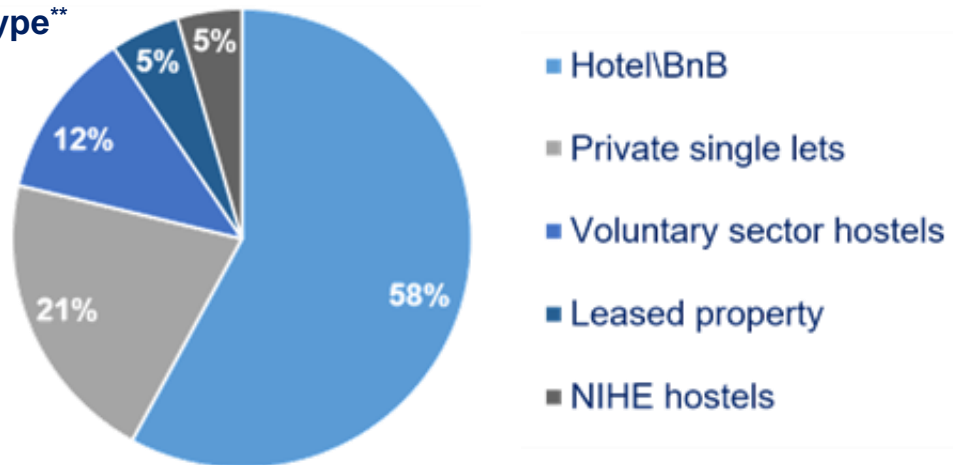
*Scenarios are based on information taken from NIHE homelessness presentation data, but are not based on the circumstances of any one individual.

Section Three: Temporary accommodation

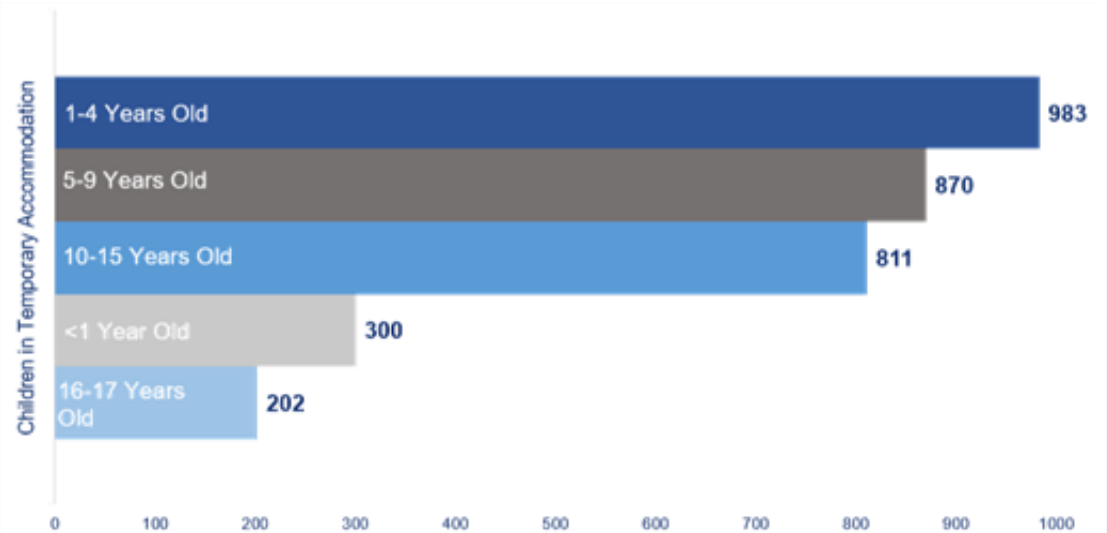
Households in temporary accommodation by banded length of stay (as of 6 July 2020)*



Placements in temporary accommodation by accommodation type**



Children in temporary accommodation, by age (as of 6 July 2020)



At 6 July 2020 there were 2,930 households in temporary accommodation, the majority of which (63%) had been living there for less than 12 months. However, 3% of these had been living in temporary accommodation for 5 or more years.

Within these 2,930 households, there were 3,166 children living in temporary accommodation.

Between January-June 2020, there were 4,002 placements to temporary accommodation. Of these, 58% were to hotels or B'n'Bs (2,319), 21% were to private single lets (832), and 12% were to voluntary sector hostels (474).

It should be noted that due to the impact of COVID-19 higher numbers of households were placed in temporary accommodation when compared with the same period in previous years.

* Chart refers to households in temporary accommodation at the given point in time as opposed to placements.

** Chart presents the overall number of **placements** to temporary accommodation. These are not distinct households as one household can have several placements in a short timeframe.

Glossary

Accepted (as a decision)

Applicant has been accepted as statutorily homeless and awarded Full Duty Applicant status

Appeal (as a decision)

Applicant has sought a review of their homelessness decision

Cancelled (as a decision)

A homelessness application was registered in error by the Housing Executive

Concluded (as a decision)

Applicant has withdrawn their homelessness application, or has not made contact with the Housing Executive within a specified period

Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency Accommodation (DIME) (as temporary accommodation)

This accommodation is for clients with extremely high support needs

Duty discharged (as a decision)

Applicant has been awarded full duty status and subsequently (a) the applicant has been re-housed in the social or private sector, (b) the applicant has been presented with three reasonable offers of accommodation which are all refused, or (c) the applicant re-houses him/herself and is no longer interested

Full Duty Applicant (FDA)

In order to be “accepted” as statutorily homeless a household must meet the four tests of: eligibility; homelessness; priority need; and intentionality.

Any household that meets these four tests will be accepted as a “Full Duty Applicant” (FDA) and will be owed a full housing duty. The full housing duty includes ensuring that accommodation is made available for the household as well as the provision of temporary accommodation where necessary and assistance with the protection of the household’s belongings

Homeless presenter

A homelessness ‘presenter’ is a household that has applied to undergo a homelessness assessment by the Housing Executive.

Hotel/B’n’B (as temporary accommodation)

Hotel or B’n’B accommodation is only used in exceptional circumstances and for as short a duration as possible.

NIHE hostels (as temporary accommodation)

NIHE hostels are self-contained units of accommodation suitable for households with low support needs or for households with higher support needs with the addition of floating support.

Legislative test (homelessness tests)

When a household applies to become statutory homeless, they will undergo four legislative tests as per Northern Ireland the Housing (NI) Order 1998 (as amended). They are as follows:

1. **Eligibility test** – this test will assess if you are ineligible due to not having the right to reside in the UK or due to unacceptable behaviour;
2. **Homelessness test** – this test will investigate whether or not you can reasonably continue to live in your home;
3. **Priority need test** – this test will investigate if there is a reason that the presenter would struggle to cope as a homeless person more than others.
4. **Intentionality test** – this test will look to see if the applicant intentionally did something, or failed to do something that resulted in their homelessness.

Glossary

No decision (as a decision)

Homelessness application is still being processed.

Prevented (as a decision)

Homelessness has been prevented by an action or intervention by the Housing Executive, another agency, or the applicant themselves.

Private single lets (as temporary accommodation)

A single let is a private dwelling which is made available on a temporary basis to a homeless household while they are waiting for permanent rehousing. These dwellings are normally in the private rented sector.

Rejected (as a decision)

Applicant does not meet the statutory homelessness criteria.

Voluntary sector hostels (as temporary accommodation)

Voluntary sector hostels are funded by Supporting People. They are mainly self-contained units of accommodation such as grouped houses/flats. Voluntary sector hostels provide accommodation based support for vulnerable households. Some will also have communal areas where households can come together to take part in activities, socialise or avail of facilities such as computers or communal cooking/eating areas. The support provided in these hostels is designed to assist vulnerable households to become tenancy ready to enable them to sustain a permanent tenancy when they are allocated one. Some clients may opt to defer permanent allocations until they feel they have the necessary skills to maintain their tenancy. Crash beds are available for overnight accommodation for emergency placements (e.g., rough sleepers).

1. Symbols and conventions

The following symbols are used throughout the publication:

- * Suppressed due to statistical disclosure control

2. Changes for this release

In September 2020, the experimental statistics banner was removed and replaced with official statistics designation.

3. Changes from previous release

In March 2020, in order to improve the timeliness of the publication, biannual reporting periods have been adjusted to run from January-June and July-December from the third edition of the NI Homelessness Bulletin onwards; representing calendar rather than financial year. Figures for April-June 2019 fell outside the reporting period for the 3rd edition of the bulletin, but have been published in the accompanying tables in order to complete the time series.

4. User engagement

User feedback is welcome so we would like to encourage your participation in our user engagement survey, and thank you in advance:

[User engagement survey](#)

5. Official Statistics

It is the Department for Communities' responsibility to maintain compliance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics. For enquiries about Official Statistics, including production or achieving the standards set out by the Code of Practice for Statistics you can contact the authority enquiries team by email: (authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk), by phone 0845 604 1857 (Calls cost 5p per minute in addition to your phone company's access charge) or by post: UK Statistics Authority, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ.

This report can be found on:

www.communities-ni.gov.uk