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# Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin

July - December 2023

An **Official Statistics** (<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/types-of-official-statistics/>) publication

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## Key Points

- During the period of July to December 2023, there was a total of 8,183 **homeless presenters**.
- The top three reasons for presenting as homeless were **accommodation not reasonable; sharing breakdown/family dispute; and loss of rented accommodation**.
- 65% (5,316) of those presenting were **accepted as statutorily homeless**.
- As of January 2024, 4,556 households were living in **temporary accommodation**.
- The top three types of temporary accommodation used for placements between July and December 2023 were **hotels/B&Bs; leased properties; and private single lets**.

## About this publication

The Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin January-June 2023 is the tenth 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**. (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>)

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**. (<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/homelessness-user-engagement-survey/>)

Please note that this is a summary document. More detailed data and information on methodology and data quality (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-homelessness-bulletin-july-december-2023>) is available.

If you think you are homeless and require further advice or support, please contact the Northern Ireland Housing Executive via: 03448 920 900 or <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/> (<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/>)

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## Introduction

### 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 or 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, 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 published results were collected in November 2022 and can be found here: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/> (<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/housing-help/homelessness/rough-sleeping>)

## Section One: Homeless presenters

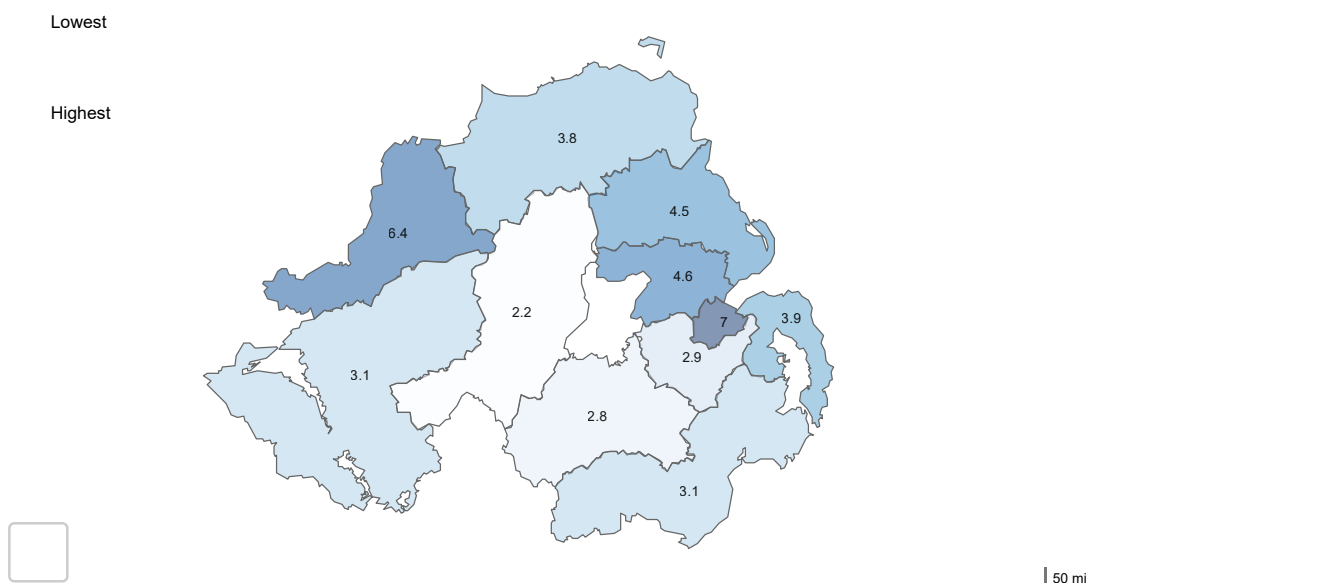
*This section contains a wide range of information on those who have submitted an application to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Detailed data on: households presenting by reason; by household type; by Local Government District (LGD); by decision; and households rejected by legislative test outcome can be found in the accompanying tables (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-homelessness-bulletin-july-december-2023>).*

### Homeless presenters by Local Government District

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 legally homeless.

- In July - December 2023, 8,183 households presented as homeless in Northern Ireland. The map below shows how many households presented as homeless per 1,000 population in each Local Government District (LGD). Note: Population statistics are taken from the most recent NISRA mid-year estimates and can be accessed here (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2022-mid-year-population-estimates-northern-ireland>).
- The LGD with the largest number of presenters per 1,000 population was Belfast (7.0), followed by Derry City and Strabane (6.4).

### Homeless presenters by LGD July - December 2023

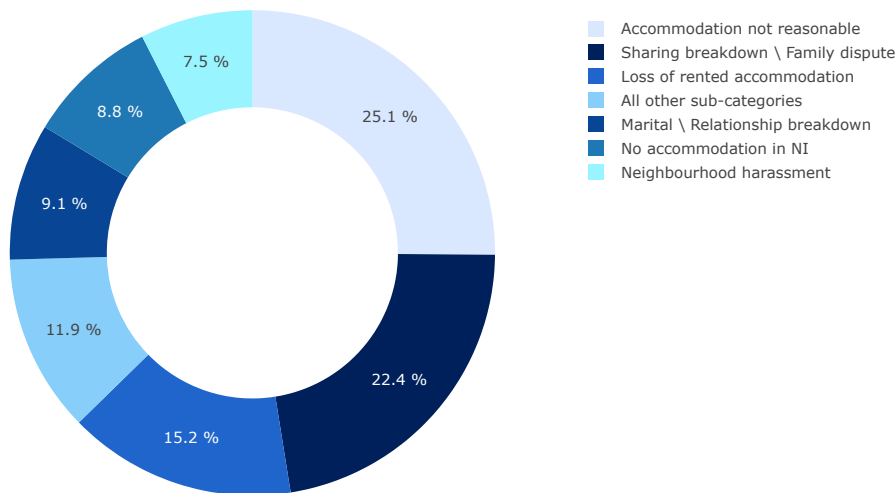


Map based on Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) data and developed by Professional Services Unit, DfC. Copyright: Crown Copyright and database rights MOU209.

## Top reasons for presenting as homeless

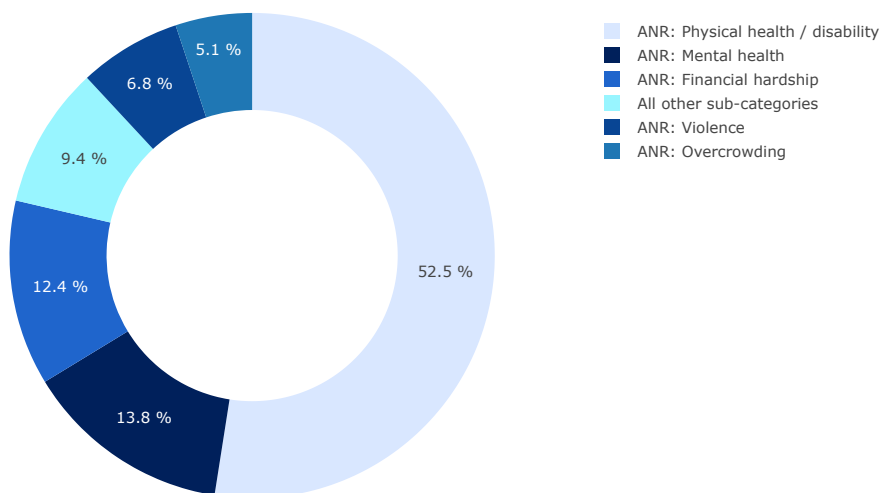
When a household presents as homeless, an initial reason for presenting is allocated by a housing advisor from the Housing Executive based on the information provided in the application. During the subsequent investigation of the application a more appropriate reason may be determined. As a result, the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

### Homeless presenters by reason



- Of the 8,183 households who presented as homeless in July - December 2023, the most commonly quoted cause was accommodation not reasonable with 2,056 (25.1%).
- This was followed by 'sharing breakdown/family dispute' with 1,829 (22.4%), 'loss of rented accommodation' with 1,244 (15.2%), 'marital/relationship breakdown' with 746 (9.1%), 'no accommodation in NI' with 722 (8.8%) and 'neighbourhood harassment' with 614 (7.5%).

### Accommodation not reasonable breakdown



- 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 52.5%.

### Scenario One: No Accommodation in Northern Ireland (Ukraine HFU)

Oksana came to Northern Ireland in July 2022 under the Ukraine settlement scheme. Oksana and her son Nikita have lived with their sponsor Joanna since July 2022. Oksana stated that her sponsor Joanna has asked her to leave the property in 4 weeks. The Housing Advisor discussed a re-match with another family however she does not want to be re-matched and wishes to be on the waiting list. Oksana advised that she is in receipt of Universal Credit and Child Benefit. She would like to remain in the Bangor area as her son is due to start in the local grammar school in September.

*The Housing Solutions & Support Team have assessed Oksana in line with the Housing (N.I.) Order, 1988, as amended. Oksana is from Ukraine and has provided her Residence Permit which confirms that she has leave to remain and is therefore eligible for homeless assistance. Oksana is homeless as the Housing Advisor has confirmed with her sponsor Joanna that she has asked her to leave in the*

next 28 days and therefor Oksana does not have accommodation in NI. Oksana has one dependent child and is in receipt of child benefit. This gives her a priority need in line with the legislative criteria. Based on the facts of this case she was deemed to be unintentionally homeless. Oksana has been awarded Full Duty Applicant status (FDA) and will be offered temporary accommodation when required.

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

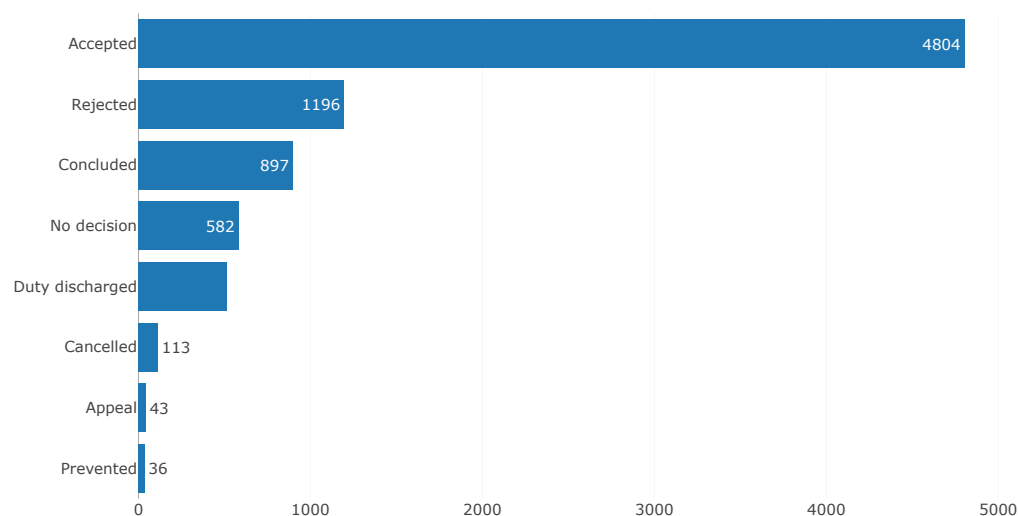
## Homeless presenters by decision

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 July to December 2023. Definitions for each of these outcomes can be found in the glossary at the end of this document. Of those who presented, 65.0% were accepted as homeless (58.7% accepted and 6.3% duty discharged) and 14.6% were rejected.

### What does 'duty discharged' mean?

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

## Homeless presenters by decision



- Whilst the chart above shows 512 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 July - December 2023, will also have been duty discharged during the period. For information, the overall number of cases duty discharged between April 2022 and March 2023 was: 8,421.

### 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.

An ambition of the Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022-27 (<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getattachment/73313718-aa0e-4aae-b122-6573dcab88c7/Ending-Homelessness-Together-Homelessness-Strategy-2022-27.pdf>) 'Ending Homelessness Together', is to 'prioritise homelessness prevention through the provisions of the right support at the right time with an aim to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place'. 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.

## 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; and children in households accepted as homeless, can be found in the accompanying tables (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-homelessness-bulletin-july-december-2023>).*

### 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?

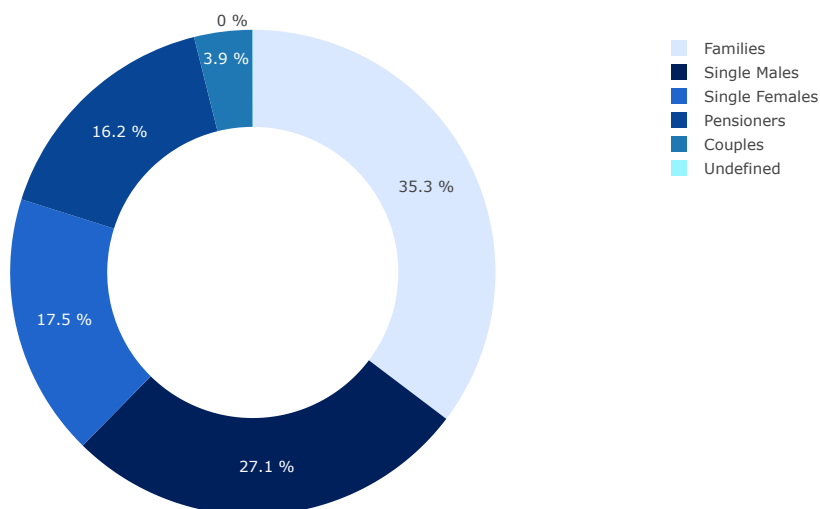
- Of the 8,183 homeless presenters between July to December 2023, 65.0% (5,316) were granted Full Duty Applicant Status and accepted as statutorily homeless, and 9.6% of these (512) were duty discharged within the same time frame.
- The top three reasons for being accepted as homeless were: accommodation not reasonable (1,638, 30.8%), sharing breakdown/family dispute (981, 18.5%), and loss of rented accommodation (791, 14.9%).

### Statutorily homeless by priority need test outcome

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

- The most frequent outcome of the priority need test of those accepted was to be categorised as 'vulnerable' with 53.8% (2,860). 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" (1,447, 27.2%); experiencing "violence" (813, 15.3%); "pregnant" (163, 3.1%); or classed as emergency (33, <1%). *Note: figures may not sum due to rounding.*

### Households accepted as homeless by household type



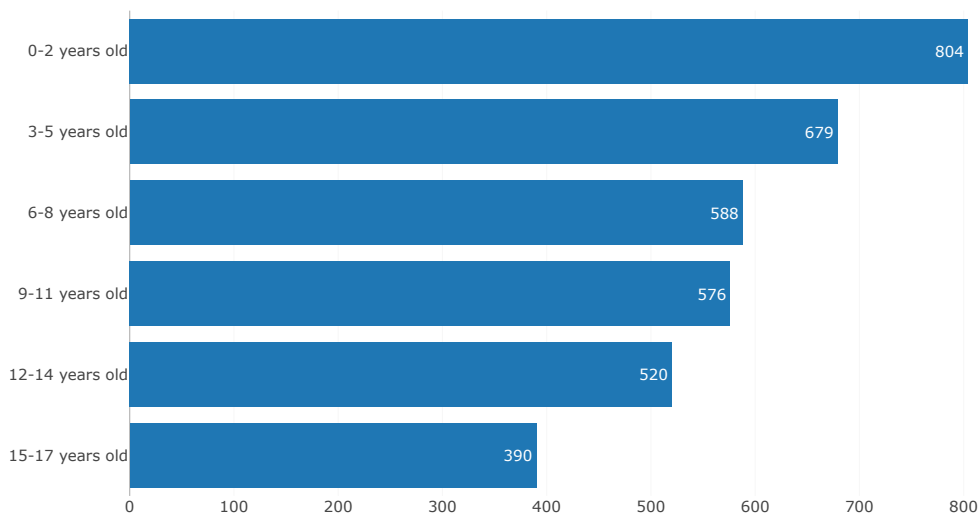
Note: Families do not necessarily include children under the age of 18. Families may, for example, include parents and children who are over the age of 18 or adult siblings/other relatives living together.

- Of the 5,316 households who were accepted as statutorily homeless, over a third were families (1,877). This was followed by single males (1,438), single females (931), pensioner households (863), and couples (206).
- 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 (1,137 and 597 respectively).

### Children from homeless households

- The households accepted as statutorily homeless between July to December 2023 included a total of 3,557 children. Please note, however, this does not mean that there were 3,557 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 (22.6%), followed by 3-5 (19.1%), 6-8 (16.5%), 9-11 (16.2%), 12-14 (14.6%), and finally 15-17 (11.0%).

### Children from households accepted as statutorily homeless by age



## Section Three: Temporary accommodation

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 (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-homelessness-bulletin-july-december-2023>).

### 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:

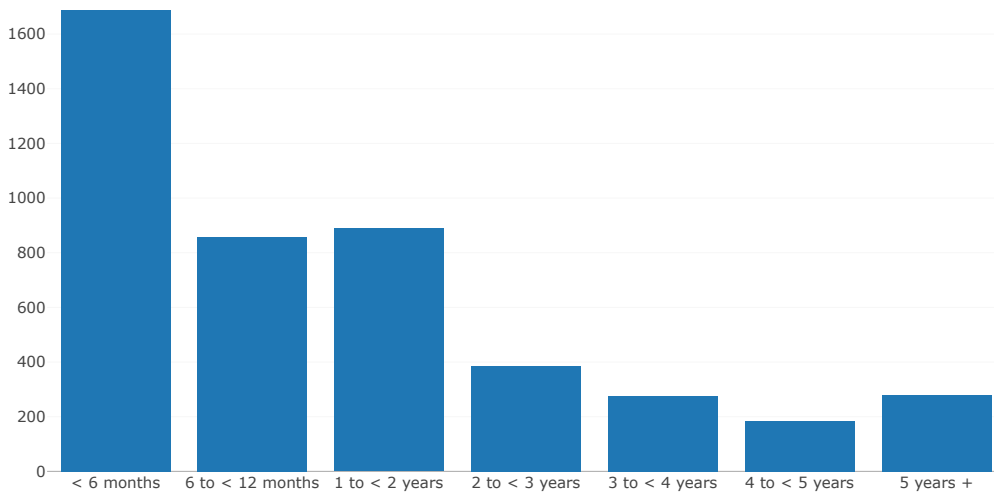
- Private single lets
- Voluntary sector hostels
- NIHE hostels
- Hotel/BnB
- Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency Accommodation (DIME)

For definitions of each of these types of accommodation, please see the glossary.

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.

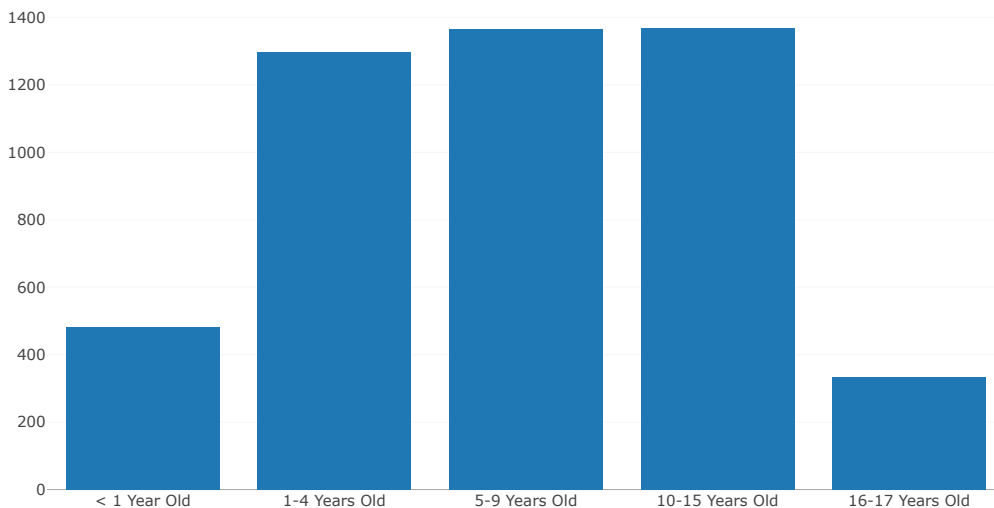
### Households in temporary accommodation by banded length of stay (as of 11 January 2024)

The below chart refers to households in temporary accommodation at the given point in time as opposed to placements.



At 11 January 2024, there were 4,556 households in temporary accommodation, the majority of which (55.8%) had been living there for less than 12 months. However, 6.1% of these had been living in temporary accommodation for 5 or more years.

**Children in temporary accommodation, by age (as of 11 January 2024)**



Within the 4,556 households living in temporary accommodation, there were 4,844 children.

**Scenario Two: Release from prison**

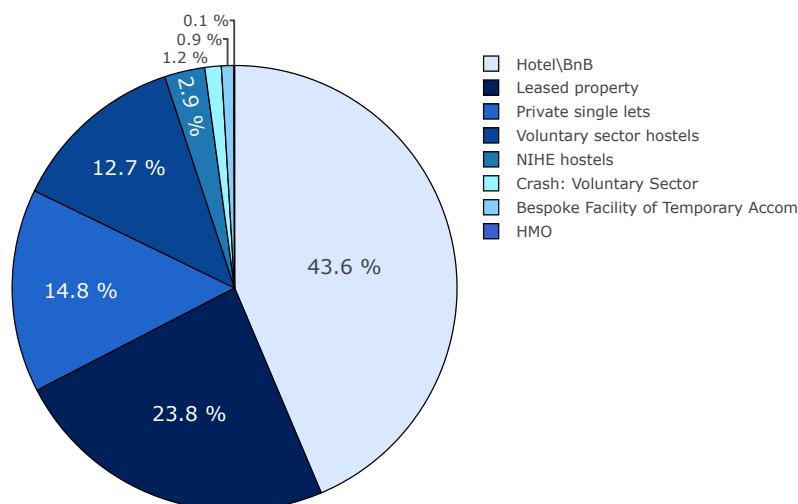
Gary has presented as homeless with his support worker from NIACRO following his release from prison. He was in prison for 3 years and 3 months for armed robbery. He is currently in a probation hostel but is finding it is having a negative effect on his mental health and he wants his own tenancy. Gary has a Community Psychiatric Nurse who he sees weekly and gets an anti-psychotic injection at his GP surgery every 2 weeks to treat his psychosis. He would like housed in Comber or Killyleagh to be close to his family and children.

*The Housing Solutions & Support Team have assessed Gary in line with the Housing (N.I.) Order, 1988, as amended. Gary is from Northern Ireland and although Gary has a criminal conviction for armed burglary he has served his sentence and is actively engaging with probation and support from NIACRO to prevent reoffending. Gary has been deemed eligible for homeless assistance. Gary is homeless as the Housing Advisor has confirmed with probation that Gary has been released from prison and is currently residing in a probation hostel. Gary is a vulnerable person due to his mental health. This gives him a priority need in line with the legislative criteria and based on the facts of this case he was deemed to be unintentionally homeless. Gary has been awarded Full Duty Applicant status (FDA) and he is currently in temporary accommodation that meets his needs.*

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

**Placements in temporary accommodation by accommodation type**

The below 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 time frame.



Between July to December 2023, there were 5,595 placements to temporary accommodation. Of these, 43.6% were to hotels or B'nBs (2,441), 23.8% were to leased property (1,330), and 14.8% were to private single lets (828).

## 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 two reasonable offers of accommodation which are both 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/BnB (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.

**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).

## Notes

### 1. Symbols and conventions

The following symbols are used throughout the publication: \* Suppressed due to statistical disclosure control.

### 2. Changes for this release

- Figures from January 2021 - June 2023 have been removed from Table 2.6 due to a coding issue which meant a larger than normal number of cases were incorrectly included in the 'On waiting list category'. The figures cannot be provided in this instance, however, we are working alongside NIHE to ensure the figures are reinstated for the next release of data.
- The format of the bulletin has changed from PDF to HTML format.

### 3. Changes from previous release

- In September 2020, the experimental statistics banner was removed and replaced with official statistics designation.
- 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 (<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/homelessness-user-engagement-survey/>)

### 5. Official Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. Contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards - email: [psu@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:psu@communities-ni.gov.uk) (mailto:psu@communities-ni.gov.uk). Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) (mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

### 6. Revisions policy

The statistics contained within the publication and supplementary tables are subject to revision in future releases. This is to account for retrospective actions on the Housing Management System (HMS). These revisions are performed in accordance with T3.9 of the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics. Figures from January-December 2023 presented in this bulletin may be revised from previous releases.