

Tackling homelessness

Housing associations and local authorities working in partnership



THE NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOMES AGENCY



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Note on the text

Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Housing Corporation, Communities and Local Government or any other government department or agency.

Glossary

AST: Assured Shorthold Tenancy

CBL: Choice-based lettings

CORE: COntinuous REcording (CORE) data on general needs lets by housing associations and local authorities (www.core.ac.uk)

HA: Housing association

HSSA: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (formerly known as Housing Investment Programme or HIP returns) collected annually by local housing authorities

LHA: Local housing authority

LSVT: Local Stock Voluntary Transfer

“Non-statutorily homeless” households or individuals: Households that were found not homeless, intentionally homeless or which had not been assessed by a local authority and which were not owed the ‘main homelessness duty’ under the homelessness legislation

P1E: Data on acceptances of statutorily homeless households collected by local housing authorities in England on a quarterly basis, which also provide counts of the number of statutorily homeless households in temporary accommodation.

PRS: Private rented sector

RSL: Registered Social Landlord – while this can theoretically include various other forms of agency, the term is overwhelmingly used to refer to housing associations and should be taken as referring to housing associations

SRS: Social rented sector

“Statutorily homeless” households or individuals: Households or individuals accepted as an ‘eligible’ household which is ‘unintentionally’ homeless’ and in ‘priority need’, and therefore owed the ‘main homelessness duty’ under the homelessness legislation

SPCR: Supporting People Client Record system collected by Supporting People service providers

Summary of findings and recommendations

This report describes the results of a study conducted for the Housing Corporation and Communities and Local Government by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York. The objective of the research was to critically examine partnership working between housing associations (HAs) and local housing authorities (LHAs) in delivering local homelessness strategies.

The research examined the following areas of partnership working between HAs and LHAs:

- partnership working in the prevention of homelessness;
- partnership working in the provision of temporary accommodation;
- partnership working in providing settled housing for statutorily homeless households; and
- partnership working in developing and implementing local homelessness strategies.

Prevention

- Housing associations were significant providers of floating support services for homeless people, delivering floating support in 91% of the Supporting People Administrative Areas (SPAAs) in England;
- Housing associations were quite often not involved in the direct provision of housing advice, debt counselling, mediation and some other preventative services, although such services would have often been available to

their tenants through partnership working with other agencies;

- Most LHAs reported that HAs did not have a particularly significant role in homelessness prevention (only 17% rated the HA role in their area as 'quite significant' or 'very significant'). Most HAs reported that they had a significant role in relation to preventing homelessness among their own tenants (70% of HAs), but that they were less likely to have a significant general role (39% of HAs);
- The guidance produced by the Housing Corporation and Communities and Local Government was reported as encouraging preventative work;
- Some areas reported uneven development of preventative services, in particular there was a disproportionate focus on Supporting People funded interventions which left gaps in mainstream service provision;
- Some HAs were described as experiencing a 'cultural lag' in that they were still adapting to prevention and were not wholly orientated towards it;
- Information sharing on the support needs of households was not always viewed as adequate, this was seen as making homelessness prevention more problematic; and
- There were reported to be difficulties in accessing some preventative services in some areas, linked to resource issues.

Temporary accommodation

- Housing association provision of temporary accommodation via Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) or Housing Association Leasing Schemes (HALS) strongly reflected the national use of temporary accommodation. On average, 85% of HA activity took place in London and the South East during 2006-07;
- Management of temporary accommodation through Housing Association Leasing Scheme (HALS) arrangements was almost entirely confined to London (an average of 82% during 2005-06 and 2006-07);
- LSVT HAs more likely to be providing temporary accommodation in their own stock by using Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) than traditional HAs;
- Housing associations were major providers of supported housing for homeless people. This temporary accommodation was mainly used by non-statutorily homeless people, particularly lone homeless people and young people, and was most common within urban areas;
- Many HAs did not have a significant role in providing temporary accommodation. Some had no role at all (36% of HAs that responded to the survey);
- Local Housing Authority criticisms of the role of HAs in providing temporary accommodation very were unusual;
- A shortage of suitable private rented sector stock was identified as an issue that inhibited further development of HALS schemes in some areas;
- In rural areas, the difficulties of moving on households in temporary accommodation sometimes meant that HAs had resorted to converting these temporary accommodation settings into settled housing, either through purchase of property from PRS landlords or by changing an HA let with an Assured Shorthold Tenancy into an Assured Tenancy; and
- Uneven provision of supported housing was sometimes seen as a problem. This was not confined to rural areas but was also reported in cities including London. In part, there were issues in accessing some oversubscribed supported housing. In addition, there were also reported to be problems in commissioning services for some high need groups.

Nominations and provision of settled housing to statutorily homeless households

- Housing association lets to statutorily homeless households were highly concentrated within LSVT areas. Three-quarters of all HA lets to statutorily homeless households took place in LSVT areas and HAs devoted a higher proportion of their general needs lets to statutorily homeless households in LSVT areas (35% of all HA general needs lets compared to 17% in non-LSVT areas);
- The HA sector was itself highly concentrated in LSVT areas. Most of the HA managed social housing stock in England was within these areas (70%);

- Traditional HAs made general needs lets to statutorily homeless households at a lower rate than LSVT HAs (13% of all general needs lets in 2005-06, compared to 19% of all general needs lets made by LSVT HAs);
- The main national data sets do not entirely reconcile with one another, though they do show the same trends. One of the likely explanations for this was that households are being recorded in one data set in one year, but are recorded in another year for another data set;
- Housing associations appeared, from data comparison, to be housing different types of statutorily homeless households at similar rates to which those households were being accepted. This included BME groups;
- There was limited evidence of both beneficial and negative effects from CBL systems, but they were not found to strongly influence the rate at which HAs provided settled housing to statutorily homeless households;
- No specific trends were associated with the small number of LHAs in which homelessness assessment had been contracted out to an HA;
- There was limited evidence of a 'lack of fit' between HA stock and some statutorily homeless households and of under-occupation of HA stock. However, respondents viewed what they regarded as overall shortages of social rented stock provision, relative to housing need, as being more significant;
- Higher levels of homelessness acceptances and relative use of temporary accommodation were found to be associated with relative increases in HA activity in offering general needs lets to statutorily homeless households, but the effects were not particularly pronounced;
- No one factor was found to determine the level of HA activity in providing lets to statutorily homeless households, although LSVT status was a strong predictor, a range of other factors were associated with comparatively high or comparatively low HA activity;
- LSVT LHAs were more likely to report that HAs took their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households (76%) than non-LSVT LHAs (54%). Housing associations were likely to report that they took their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households (89%);
- Respondents from LHAs reported variation in the extent to which HAs were willing to offer general needs lets to statutorily homeless households;
- Statutorily homeless households who were characterised by socioeconomic exclusion were seen by HAs as creating challenges in pursuing 'mixed and sustainable communities' and there were concerns about taking too many such households;
- Housing associations were reluctant to take on vulnerable or chaotic statutorily homeless households without support and care packages in place; and
- There were frequent complaints that LHAs did not provide adequate information on statutorily homeless households from HAs.

Partnership working

- Housing associations were less likely to be centrally involved in the development of local homelessness strategies than current guidance advocates (only 27% of LHAs reported that at least some HAs were 'very involved' in strategic planning);
- There were higher levels of engagement by the HA sector in the development of local homelessness strategies in LSVT areas, but levels were still lower than might have been anticipated (45% of LHAs that were LSVT authorities described HAs as 'centrally involved in homelessness strategies' compared to 21% of non-LSVT authorities);
- Views on the success of partnership working between LHAs and HAs in tackling homelessness were mixed (only 42% of LHAs reported it worked 'very well' or 'quite well' and only 55% of HAs thought it worked 'quite' or 'very' well in their main area of operation);
- Local housing authorities in LSVT areas were more likely to report that partnership was working well (53% reported it worked quite or very well, compared to 31% of non-LSVT LHAs). Housing associations reported that partnership working tended to work best with the LHA that administered their major areas of operation;
- Both HAs and LHAs reported varied success in partnership working between themselves and different LHAs or between themselves and different HAs;
- Personal relationships and trust were seen as key to effective partnership working, as were clearly agreed objectives and clear leadership (91% of LHAs and 88% of HAs);
- There were mixed views on the utility of multi-agency forums that were designed to coordinate strategy. Some respondents reported that these worked well, but some smaller agencies that were not viewed as 'key stakeholders' could feel excluded;
- Logistical problems were reported by LHAs trying to coordinate with many homelessness agencies within their area and by larger HAs trying to coordinate with many LHAs;
- Some HAs reported feeling under pressure to comply with LHA expectations and that this could undermine their autonomy;
- LHAs that did not have specialist HAs providing Supporting People services for homeless people in their area reported that this inhibited effective partnership working in tackling homelessness; and
- There was some evidence that 'uneven' partnership working, which was much more developed with HAs involved in providing Supporting People services than with general needs HAs, was occurring in some LHA areas.

Recommendations

- There are logistical issues in partnership working that are linked to the relative scale and operational area of some organisations in relation to others. There is a case for sub-regional, or city-wide, forums that could include agencies like major HAs that have a

significant role at that level, but which do not have a significant presence in any one LHA area (city-wide forums are only necessary in urban areas administered by more than one LHA¹). Strategic planning could be further enhanced, in areas such as cross-authority commissioning of necessary Supporting People services, through such arrangements. It may make more sense for strategies for tackling homelessness to be planned and executed at sub-regional or regional level, rather than at LHA level, in many instances;

- There is evidence of misunderstanding and miscommunication between LHAs and HAs and there is also some evidence of operational tensions. The problem is by no means a universal one, but varied success in partnership working on an agency-by-agency basis was widely reported. Both sets of agencies have to make allowances for each other's positions. There may be scope for improving training and education in this respect. It is to be noted that the Housing Corporation is already pursuing this agenda with the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation;
- There are tensions between the pursuit of three policy agendas, namely tackling

homelessness, controlling anti-social behaviour and promoting mixed and sustainable communities. It is important not to automatically assume that any and all statutorily homeless households are a) likely to be permanently economically marginalised, and b) likely to exhibit anti-social behaviour. These assumptions are not supported by the research evidence². Certainly these issues exist and for some groups of homeless people more than others, but they will also occur to some degree within any given population that a social landlord houses. One way forward is to recognise the tension where it exists and to avoid unrealistic expectations. For example, LHAs should not expect HAs to take every referral or nomination;

- The tensions between tackling homelessness, controlling anti-social behaviour and pursuing mixed and sustainable communities can also be tackled in other ways. Partnership working with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus can allow social landlords to help to tackle problems like high levels of worklessness among tenants. An attempt to create mixed and sustainable communities purely by using the allocations system merely displaces the problem somewhere else. If HAs start to systematically

¹ This includes several of the major cities and conurbations in England, such as Greater Manchester, the Liverpool/Merseyside Conurbation, the Newcastle/Tyneside Conurbation and the Bournemouth/Poole Conurbation. While London is administered by 33 boroughs (including the City of London), the GLA does have a strategic function in relation to homelessness see: <http://www.london.gov.uk>

² See Pleace, N. et al (2007) Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 Year Olds London: Communities and Local Government.

exclude certain groups, it may well be that they begin to pool in the lower end of the private rented sector, or become more concentrated in the stock of some social landlords than others;

- Data collection and data sharing need to be improved. Subject to the proper data protection controls, i.e. free and informed consent, HAs should always be in a position in which they have the required information to take a judgement about whether they wish to allocate housing and then which housing and other services to allocate to a statutorily homeless household. Equally, allocation decisions by HAs need to be transparent;
- There is evidence that the level of statutory homelessness, within which should be included populations in temporary accommodation who have been found statutorily homeless, varies very considerably across England. Significant drops in homelessness acceptances are also now occurring due to the impact of preventative services. Blanket recommendations as to the proper level of HA general needs lets that should be provided for statutorily homeless households are unhelpful in this context, as this will lead to over-provision in some areas and under-provision in others. Locally negotiated nominations agreements are therefore recommended; and

- An over-emphasis on the Supporting People services in developing and implementing local homelessness strategies should be avoided. Unquestionably, the SP services play an important role in tackling and preventing homelessness but we should be clear about its limitations where tackling homelessness agenda is being addressed in the context of managing sustainable communities. Approaches and services other than SP need to be called upon and included in the strategic delivery at local level. Housing associations should seek to play a central role in setting out those strategies.

1 Background to the research

Introduction

This report describes the results of a study conducted for the Housing Corporation and Communities and Local Government by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York³.

The objective of the research was to examine partnership working between housing associations (HAs) and local housing authorities (LHAs) in delivering local homelessness strategies.

This first chapter of the report reviews the policy context for the research, briefly describing the partnership working between housing associations and local housing authorities in tackling homelessness in respect of LSVT arrangements, prevention, the provision of temporary accommodation and housing association lets to statutorily homeless households. The remainder of this chapter then reports the reasons for the research, before moving on to describe the research methods.

Policy background

Partnership working between housing associations (HAs) and local housing authorities (LHAs) is at the heart of social housing provision in England.

Current Housing Corporation and government guidance emphasises the central importance of partnership working between HAs and LHAs in tackling homelessness:

- “Housing associations are key local partners in the delivery of local homelessness strategies” (page 5 in Tackling Homelessness: The Housing Corporation Strategy, November 2006); and
- “A key objective of homelessness strategies is to bring local agencies together, so that their work can be better coordinated and more effective” (para 5.1.1 in Homeless Strategies a Good Practice Handbook, London: CLG).

Local Stock Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) arrangements can have a fundamental impact on the role of HAs in tackling homelessness. These are briefly explored below.

Voluntary stock transfers and tackling homelessness

By 1 April 2006, stock transfers had taken place in 45% of LHAs⁴. In most instances, this involved the transfer of the entire council stock to a single, specifically created, Local Stock Voluntary

³ See <http://www.york.ac.uk/chp/>

⁴ For the purposes of this report, only LHA areas in which a full or partial stock transfer had taken place at least one year before 1 April 2006 were defined as LSVT areas. One year was allowed in order for the impact of the transfer to show on the statistics for the area.

Transfer HA. In a small number of authorities, stock transfers had been more gradual, with blocks of housing being transferred one after another, sometimes to traditional housing associations and sometimes to new LSVT HAs⁵. Within a full LSVT area, the main resource used for providing settled housing to statutorily homeless households⁶, the social rented sector, is under HA management.

Map 1.1 shows the transfer status of all LHAs in England as at 1 April 2006. A broad tendency for full-LSVT areas to be outside the major cities is evident, as is the relative concentration of full-LSVT in some regions (e.g. areas of the South West).

The 195 non-LSVT areas accounted for just over one half of the LHAs in England (55%). Council housing either remained in LHA control or was managed by Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMOs) in these areas.

Within LSVT areas, HAs are the predominant, indeed often the only, form of social landlord. This means that their role in tackling homelessness, in terms of prevention, provision of temporary accommodation and in the provision, where necessary of settled housing to formerly homeless

households, is fundamental. The LHA can only fulfil the strategic functions it retains in development and pursuit of a local homelessness strategy through close cooperation with the LSVT HA and other HAs within its operational area.

Partnership working in tackling homelessness

Partnership working between HAs and LHAs is essential to tackling homelessness. The key areas are prevention, the provision of temporary accommodation and the provision of settled housing including nominations agreements. Each of these areas is briefly discussed in turn below.

Prevention

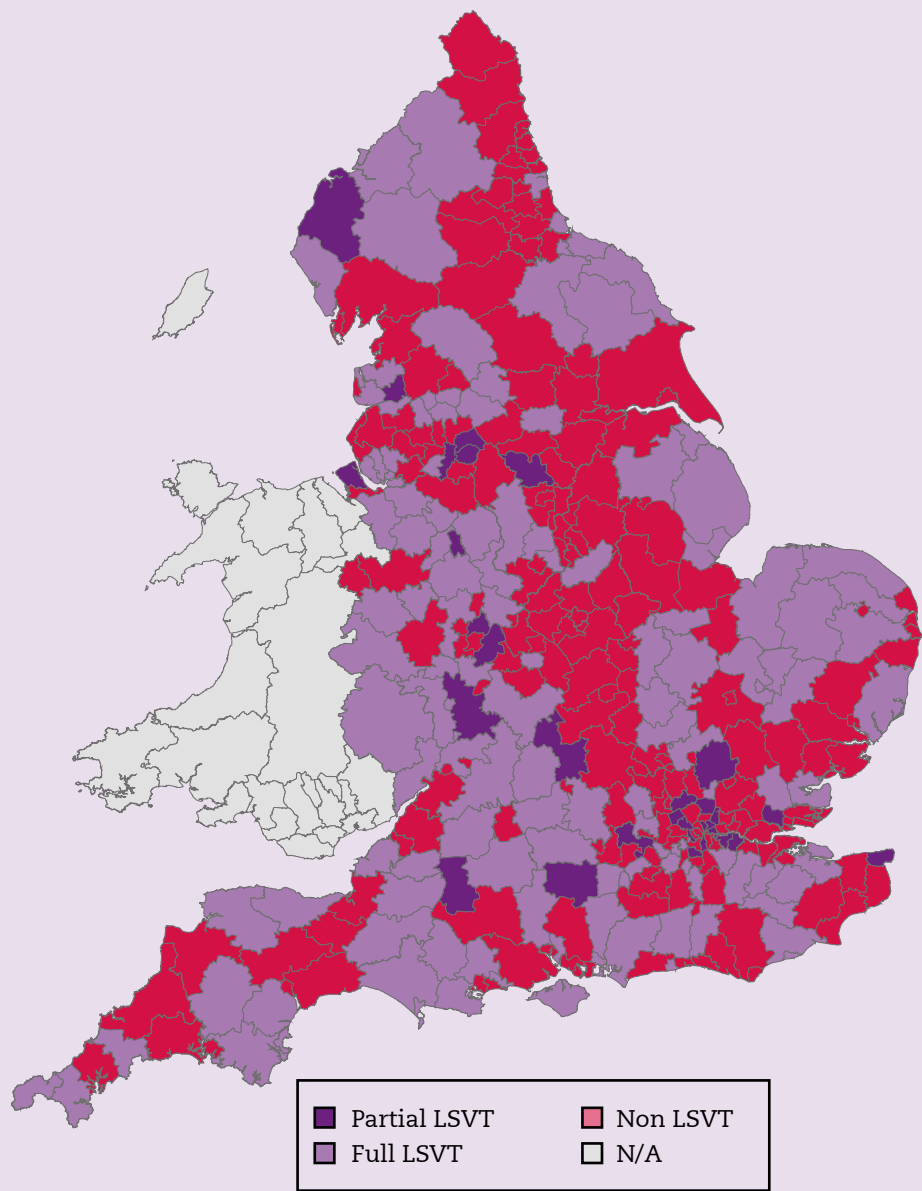
Prevention of homelessness is at the heart of national policy. As homelessness has become better understood, it has been determined that it is far better to avoid the economic and social costs of experiencing homelessness for families, individuals and wider society, where this is possible.

⁵ Mainly in London and other cities.

⁶ A local authority can discharge its duty to a statutorily homeless household through the private rented sector or via that household entering owner occupation, but at the time of writing these routes are only used to provide a small number of statutorily homeless households with settled housing. The great majority of statutorily homeless households enter the social rented sector.

Map 1.1: The transfer status of all LHAs in England as at 1 April 2006 (Source: Communities and Local Government)

Transfer of Local Housing Authorities



As the 2006 Housing Corporation Strategy Tackling Homelessness makes clear, HAs are seen as having a strategic role in homelessness prevention. There is a particular emphasis on HAs ensuring that their potentially vulnerable tenants have access to support and that those among their tenants at risk of arrears are supported to prevent eviction unless strictly necessary. As the strategy notes:

“We expect all associations to make preventing homelessness their corporate priority” (page 13).

Preventative services focused on rough sleeping were central to the 1999 Coming in from the Cold strategy and are central to the 2002 Homelessness Act⁷. Recent good practice guidance⁸ has focused on the prevention of homelessness through:

- a much stronger emphasis on housing advice that is focused on preventing homelessness from occurring wherever possible;
- a range of other support services designed to prevent homelessness among households or individuals at risk of experiencing it, including:
 - rent deposit and related schemes;
 - family mediation (focused on preventing youth homelessness);
 - domestic violence support (focused on removing the need for women to leave their

existing home to escape a violent partner, thus causing them to become homeless);

- preventative services for ex-offenders (who are at deemed to be at heightened risk of homelessness);
- tenancy sustainment services (floating support that is intended for households or individuals at risk of becoming homeless).

The 2002 Act placed prevention at the centre of LHA responses to homelessness. In practice, this means that LHAs are expected to reorient themselves to dealing with homeless via prevention, accepting households as statutorily homeless only when and if necessary.

Recently, there has been a very significant fall in the number of households accepted as statutorily homeless which the Government ascribes to prevention (Table 1.1).

Overall, homelessness acceptances dropped by 43% between 2003 and 2006. Although both the context and the legislation are now different, which must be allowed for, by the end of 2006, homelessness acceptances were approaching levels last seen in the early 1980s⁹.

The prevention of homelessness is closely associated with another key aspect of social

⁷ See Randall, G. and Brown, S. Homeless Strategies: a good practice handbook (February 2002) London: DTLR

⁸ See Pawson, H. et al Homelessness Prevention: a guide to good practice (June 2006) London: Communities and Local Government <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/150973>

⁹ There were 76,860 acceptances in 2006, compared to 78,240 in 1983, source: P1E

Table 1.1: Changes in homelessness acceptances 1996-2006

Calendar Year	Household accepted as homeless	Percentage rise or fall in acceptances compared to previous calendar year
1996	113,590	-3%
1997	102,000	-10%
1998	104,630	+3%
1999	105,370	+1%
2000	111,340	+6%
2001	117,830	+6%
2002	123,840	+5%
2003	135,590	+9%
2004	127,760	-6%
2005	100,170	-22%
2006	76,860	-23%

Source: P1E returns (1996-2006) Figures are for 354 housing authorities.

housing policy in England, the promotion of mixed and sustainable communities. As the Housing Corporation Strategy Tackling Homelessness notes:

“Tackling homelessness is not just about providing accommodation for homeless households accepted by local authorities. It is also about building sustainable, mixed and balanced communities. Balanced communities help promote social cohesion and equality, avoiding concentrations of deprivation and addressing social exclusion and community cohesion” (page 10).

Prevention is therefore linked to the promotion of stable and mixed communities that do not suffer from some of the issues, such as sustained economic exclusion, that are associated with homelessness¹⁰. This applies both in the sense of removing some of the risk factors associated with a first experience of homelessness and with minimising risks of recurrent homeless, for example when providing settled housing to a statutorily homeless household.

The prevention of homelessness is also linked to the management of anti-social behaviour. Anti-

¹⁰ See Pleace, N. et al (2007) Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 Year Olds London: Communities and Local Government.

social behaviour can be a reason for eviction and there is now a new emphasis on ensuring that, where possible, households whose behavioural problems can be managed through proper support are not placed at risk of homelessness and that associated housing management problems are brought under control¹¹. Again, this is linked both to the prevention of a first experience of homelessness and the risk of recurrent homelessness. Through the Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) plan, the Housing Corporation has funded a number of pilot projects, which along with their preventative role, also form part of local strategic responses to anti-social behaviour.

Temporary accommodation

The Housing Corporation Regulatory Code¹² requires that HAs make available a proportion of their housing stock for temporary accommodation for households found statutorily homeless or who are awaiting a decision from an LHA when requested to do so.

Housing associations manage and provide two main types of temporary accommodation in general needs housing (see Chapter 3):

- short stay assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) in HAs own general needs housing; and

- private rented sector general needs housing that HAs manage under Housing Association Leasing Schemes (HALS).

Housing associations tend to be very involved in temporary accommodation provision in some regions of England and much less involved in others (see Chapter 3).

Housing associations were recorded as providing one or more forms of supported housing to homeless households in 99% of Supporting People Administering Authorities (SPAA) in England during 2005-06. Almost all of this supported housing is designed as transitional housing, focused on providing emergency temporary accommodation and then facilitating move-on into settled housing. While some of this supported housing now has a preventative role focused on households at risk of homelessness, it is overwhelmingly used by homeless households and facilitates prevention through aiming to stop recurrent homelessness occurring if possible. Most provision is focused on young homeless people and lone homeless people, there are also specialist projects for homeless people with particular support needs (see Chapter 3).

¹² See: Housing Corporation Regulatory Code

Nominations agreements and tackling homelessness

During 2005-06, 21,470 HA general needs lets were made to statutorily homeless households, 75% of which took place in LSVT areas. This was equivalent to an average of 35% of all HA general needs lets in LSVT areas and 17% of all HA general needs lets in non-LSVT areas. In 2006-07, this figure rose to 23,223 lets (source: CORE statistics, see Chapter 4).

Housing associations are required, under the current Housing Corporation Regulatory Code, where reasonable, to provide a proportion of their stock for LHA nominations, with general guidance that 50% or more of HA true voids should be made available in areas with housing stress¹³. Current guidance notes that it is essential that nominations agreements between LHAs and HAs, covering all aspects of allocations, including profile of HA stock offered and criteria under which nominations can be refused are, in place:

“The need for a nominations agreement applies in all circumstances, including those where LAs and HAs may be collaborating in their allocations

schemes e.g. through a joint choice-based lettings scheme or scheme using a common housing register” (Effective Cooperation in Tackling Homelessness: Nominations Agreements and Exclusions, November 2004, page 10)¹⁴.

It will soon be the case that choice-based lettings (CBL) will be the main mechanism by which social housing is allocated within England. The system was introduced as a pilot scheme in 2001 and is intended to facilitate housing choice for tenants, replacing existing, points-based, allocation systems by 2010. CBL allows housing applicants to view details, make a choice and then ‘bid’ for currently available general needs lets from social landlords operating within a LHA area. The idea is to create a market-like situation. Analogies are often drawn with the CBL process being not unlike seeking owner occupied or private rented sector housing. This ‘consumer-led’ approach is intended to replace a situation in which the only choice was to accept or reject an offered let, with households sometimes only having the option to refuse one offer¹⁵.

As at 1 April 2006, CBL systems were operational in around one third of all LHAs (31%), with the

¹³ 75% of lettings in London, see Housing Corporation Regulatory Circular 02/03 Regulation, February 2003 <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/CIRCULARNominationsJan03.pdf>

¹⁴ See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/137833>

¹⁵ See Pawson, H. et al (2006) Monitoring the Longer-Term Impact of Choice-based Lettings: Research Summary. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/152612>

majority of other LHAs reporting they were planning the introduction of these systems¹⁶. Choice-based lettings systems were most commonly found among the London boroughs and the metropolitan district councils that administered the cities of the Midlands and the North (nearly two-thirds of these authorities), they also existed in around one third of English Unitary authorities. These systems were least common among non-metropolitan district councils (around one in five had CBL). Similar proportions of non-LSVT and LSVT LHAs had introduced CBL.

Overall, 36% of LHAs that responded to the research questionnaire¹⁷ were operating CBL, including the majority of metropolitan districts and London boroughs and just under one half of the English unitary authorities. Among the 148 responding district councils 27% reported operating CBL. Again, CBL was found at approximately equal rates among LSVT and non-LSVT LHAs (38% and 34% respectively).

Almost all these CBL systems covered the entire LHA area, though in a handful of cases they only related to certain areas, properties or applicants¹⁸. In most instances, these systems also covered all HA lettings, including the traditional HAs.

Other examples of partnership working in housing allocation are currently in place. A good example is Common Housing Registers, effectively a shared waiting list, involving groups of social landlords or all the social landlords in a given area. These other examples of partnership working in allocations will soon be eclipsed by CBL systems, however.

The reasons for the research: concerns about partnership working

While the important contribution of the HA sector in providing settled housing to statutorily homeless households is self evident, there have been concerns that the HA contribution was not always consistent. These concerns can be briefly described in four main points:

- some evidence appeared to indicate that HAs activity in providing settled housing to statutorily homeless households was concentrated among HAs involved in LSVT arrangements, most of which had only been created by the process of stock transfer. This was linked to a general concern that ‘traditional’ HAs were less engaged in housing statutorily homeless households than the new LSVT HAs;

¹⁶ Source: HSSA statistics for 2005-06.

¹⁷ See methods section at the end of this chapter.

¹⁸ Less than 3% of LHAs overall and under 10% of LHAs which reported they were running a CBL system.

- variations had been found by research¹⁹ into HA allocations and choice-based lettings (CBL) arrangements. Alongside this research evidence, there were anecdotal reports that HAs were refusing to house some statutorily homeless households or that LHAs were sometimes ‘dumping’ difficult to manage statutorily homeless households on the HA sector;
 - apparent inconsistencies between national level data sets made the exact extent of the role of HAs in providing settled housing to statutorily homeless households unclear (see Chapter 5). This led to some uncertainty among policy makers about HAs activity; and
 - there was a lack of detailed understanding of how partnership working between LHAs and HAs was taking place on the ground.
- The limited amounts of clear information on partnership working made it difficult to judge the veracity of claims and counter claims about the role that HAs were taking in relation to statutorily homeless households.

These concerns led to the commissioning of the present study.

Changes since the research was commissioned

Since the research was commissioned CLG has established the Homelessness Action Team in conjunction with the Housing Corporation. The team undertakes targeted work on strategy and building on the relationships between LHAs and HAs. A team of advisors now exists to help ensure HAs undertake appropriate roles in tackling homelessness, including prevention, temporary accommodation provision and housing need. The team was established following the publication of the Housing Corporation’s Tackling Homelessness strategy which is referred to throughout this report.

About the research

The research was specifically designed to provide information that would enhance partnership working, in support of the objectives of the Housing Corporation Tackling Homelessness Strategy, published in November 2006. The research was intended to provide an evidence base to enhance partnership working.

¹⁹ Pawson, H. and Mullins, D (2003) Changing places: Housing association policy and practice on nominations and lettings Bristol: Policy Press.

The research examined the following areas of partnership working between HAs and LHAs:

- partnership working in the prevention of homelessness;
- partnership working in the provision of temporary accommodation;
- partnership working in providing settled housing for statutorily homeless households; and
- partnership working in developing and implementing local homelessness strategies.

The research methods employed were:

- a statistical analysis of the role of HAs in providing settled housing to statutorily homeless households. This was based largely on analysis of five data sets: the Regulatory and Statistical Returns Survey (RSR), the Continuous Recording System (CORE), local authority P1E (quarterly homelessness) returns, the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) returns submitted by local authorities and the Supporting People Client Record (SPCR) data submitted by Supporting People service providers. This review was focused on 2005-06, though 2006-07 figures have also been provided where available;
- an online survey of HAs focused on partnership working with LHAs. This survey was confined to HAs that had made at least one let to a

homeless household (either statutorily or non-statutorily homeless), and/or which had provided Supporting People services to homeless people, during 2005-06;

- an online survey of local authority homelessness services focused on partnership working with HAs (the survey went to local authority housing strategy officers within the very small number of areas in which HAs are running the homelessness assessment process under contract to a local authority, see Chapter 4); and
- Detailed fieldwork in London, Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Norfolk and Hertfordshire, involving a series of interviews and focus groups with HAs and LAs that dealt with all aspects of partnership working. Fieldwork was also conducted among national or regional level HAs that operated in a great many LHA areas. In total, 22 focus groups and interviews were conducted involving staff from 31 HAs and 16 LHAs.

Statistical analysis

Data for stage 1 were provided by the Housing Corporation, Communities and Local Government and the Centre for Housing Research at St Andrew's University (CORE data)²⁰. CHP aggregated and combined these datasets and all responsibility

²⁰ See <http://www.core.ac.uk/>

for the analysis, including any errors, lies with the authors unless otherwise stated.

Surveys

Owing to data protection concerns, the Housing Corporation and Communities and Local Government undertook distribution of emails asking agencies to participate in the online survey.

One distribution list was based around the list of HAs that had made one or more lets to homeless households and/or provided Supporting People services to homeless people that CHP assembled from the CORE returns from 2005-06. This list originally encompassed some 500 individual HAs, as identified by their Housing Corporation registration numbers. However, when the Corporation reviewed the CHP list, it was found that owing to mergers and umbrella organisations covering many HAs, it was only actually necessary to contact 356 distinct HAs. All 354 local housing authorities in England were contacted, using a Communities and Local Government email database of lead homelessness officers for each authority.

Response rates for these surveys were mixed. Only 144 HAs chose to respond to the online survey (41%), despite three contacts being made with HAs by the Housing Corporation on the researchers' behalf.

A handful HAs that did not have listed email addresses were contacted with paper versions of the questionnaire and those that had any difficulty in using the online system were asked to contact the University. In the event, only one HA reported being unable to use the online system and submitted a paper questionnaire instead. The quite low response rate among HAs made regional analysis difficult, so the results presented in this report mainly focus on the entire dataset.

Overall, 212 local authorities responded to the online questionnaire, a response rate of 60%. However, there was quite low representation of London, with only 12 of the 33 boroughs (equivalent to one third) responding to the survey. Local housing authorities were also contacted three times by Communities and Local Government, acting on behalf of the research team.

Interviews and focus groups

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with representatives from 16 LHAs and 31 HAs. In several instances, more than one member of staff was chosen to represent a given organisation, meaning that the number of interviewees and focus group participants was 56 in total.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted using a semi-structured topic guide. This semi-structured ensures that the discussion does not veer away from relevant subjects, but allows

the respondent or respondents to prioritise and report on issues in their own way. The interviews and focus groups were analysed using standard thematic grid techniques. A list of participating agencies is provided in Appendix One.

The research was conducted from the beginning of October 2006 through to the end of September 2007. Funding for the research was provided by an Innovation and Good Practice Grant from the Housing Corporation and by Communities and Local Government.

This report is divided into five further Chapters and contains one Appendix:

- chapter two explores partnership working between LHAs and HAs in the prevention of homelessness;
- chapter three looks at the role of HAs in the provision of temporary accommodation;
- chapter four is concerned with partnership working between HAs and LHAs in the provision of settled housing to statutorily homeless households;
- chapter five provides an overview of strategic partnership working between LHAs and HAs;
- chapter six contains the conclusions and recommendations of the research; and
- a list of participating organisations is presented in Appendix 1.

2 The prevention of homelessness

Introduction

This chapter focuses on partnership working between housing associations (HAs) and local housing authorities (LHAs) in preventing homelessness. The chapter deals in turn with:

- the role of HA in prevention through the provision of Supporting People funded services;
- the survey results on the scale of HA activity in homelessness prevention; and
- the factors that facilitated and inhibited effective partnership working in prevention, drawing on the results of the surveys, interviews and focus groups, including:
 - ‘uneven’ development and provision of preventative services;
 - a ‘cultural lag’ in some organisations;
 - information sharing issues; and
 - access to support services.

The roles of housing associations in homelessness prevention

Supporting People funded services

The Supporting People programme funds preventative services that have two broad

functions. The first function is to prevent homelessness being experienced by ‘at risk’ individuals or households. The second function is to prevent recurrent homelessness among those at heightened risk. Both supported housing services (such as hostels) and floating support services can provide services for ‘at risk’ households who have not yet experienced homelessness.

At the time of writing, supported housing services focused on homelessness were primarily focused on providing temporary accommodation and facilitating resettlement for households and individuals who had already become homeless²¹. Due to their central importance as temporary accommodation for households that are already homeless, these supported services are examined in detail in Chapter 3.

Like supported housing services, floating support is probably still more orientated towards those households who have become homeless than it is towards potentially homeless households²². However, the wholly preventative function of these services, in either stopping homelessness from occurring or from recurring, is self-evident. According to the Supporting People Client Record (SPCR) data²³ for 2005-06:

²¹ See Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2003) *Supporting People: Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Homeless Households*, London : ODPM, Homelessness Directorate.
<http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

²² See preceding footnote.

- housing associations delivered 6,205 episodes²⁴ of floating support to statutorily homeless and non-statutorily homeless people, equivalent to 31% of the floating support services delivered to homeless people in England (i.e. 71% of floating support to homeless people was delivered by charitable and voluntary sector agencies other than HAs);
- 521 service episodes of other forms of floating support, equivalent to 12% of the service episodes delivered to homeless people in England; and
- housing associations were recorded as providing one or more forms of floating support to homeless households in 91% of Supporting People Administrative Areas (SPAAs)²⁵.

The collective activities of HAs as providers of floating support to homeless people were very significant, with some HA activity recorded in nine out of every ten SPAAs. However, this was also an area of service provision where other voluntary sector and charitable sector agencies provided a greater volume of services than the HA sector.

General needs HAs often work in partnership with agencies providing floating support services rather than provide such services directly (see Figure 2.1 below). Much of the floating support that was not directly provided by HAs will have been received by HA tenants.

The bulk of HA floating support services were delivered to lone people aged 16-24 (37%) and aged 25 and above (38%). Another 8% of services were delivered to lone parents aged under 25, with 9% going to lone parents over 25. Just 4% of floating support service delivery was to two parent families, the remaining 4% of services going to various other groups.

It is not possible to differentiate between non-LSVT and LSVT LHAs when using the SPCR data because the information processed at SPAA level. In the more rural areas administered by non-metropolitan district councils, these SPAAs are organised at county council level, meaning that the data within SPCR cover areas that have a mixture of non-LSVT and LSVT LHAs.

²³ There are some limitations to the use of the SPCR data set. The SPCR records service delivery episodes, i.e. service provision by Supporting People funded service providers, to determine how much of a given service they delivered over a financial year., CHP cannot examine these data in a form that would allow differentiation between individuals who experience one service use episode (one stay in a hostel, for example) and those who experience several episodes of service use in the same year (several stays in several hostels). This is because it would be a breach of Data Protection Act for St Andrew's University to release the National Insurance numbers of individuals.

²⁴ See preceding footnote.

²⁵ SPAAs are responsible for commissioning Supporting People services. Responsibility is either within unitary councils (the London boroughs, metropolitan districts, or English unitaries) or is organised at county council level. Individual non-metropolitan district councils, the bulk of LHAs in England, are not SPAAs in their own right.

The provision of floating support services by HAs was, however, evenly divided between the more rural, county-level SPAAs and the various unitary SPAAs. Areas covered by county-level SPAAs accounted for 53% of HA floating support provision for homeless people funded by Supporting People during 2005-06, London boroughs accounted for another 12%, with the remaining 35% in other unitary authorities.

It is important to note that the Supporting People Outcome Framework, which was introduced in May 2007, will provide data that monitors the outcomes for homelessness prevention services.

For more details see:

<http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

Survey results on the scale of preventative service provision by housing associations

Within the LHAs that responded to the survey, housing advice services, rent deposit schemes and debt counselling services were universally available in their area. In addition:

- domestic violence support services were almost universally available (98% of responding LHAs);
- tenancy sustainment (floating support) and family mediation services were very widely available (85% and 83% of LHAs respectively); and
- support for former offenders and specialist mediation services for young people were also widely available (70% of LHAs had both types of service).

Housing associations were reported as being most active in the provision of floating support in the form of tenancy sustainment services (56% of LHAs reported HAs were providing these services in their area). This figure seems quite low when compared to what the SPCR data indicated about high levels of HA activity in the provision of floating support.

However, when LHAs were asked whether HAs were providing a range of Supporting People funded services for homeless people a much higher proportion reported that HAs were active providers of resettlement services (86%), which is more in line with what the SPCR figures on HA provision of floating support show. This indicated that at least some LHAs did not regard all the provision of floating support by HAs in their area as necessarily 'preventative' (other than in the sense that resettlement services are designed to prevent recurrent homelessness).

Local housing authorities were unlikely to report that HAs were directly providing other forms of preventative services. For example, few LHAs reported that HAs were providing debt counselling or family mediation within their area (15% and 7% of LHAs).

Nearly one half of LHAs reported that HAs were not making a strong contribution to homelessness prevention in their area (46% rated their contribution as ‘not very significant’ or ‘very insignificant’, Table 2.2).

Local housing authorities were generally unlikely to rate the contribution of HAs to prevention as ‘very significant’ or as ‘quite significant’. Overall, 17% of LHAs described the contribution of HAs in these terms, with a lower figure in non-LSVT areas (11%) than in LSVT areas (25%) (Table 2.2).

Figure 2.1 shows the self-reported provision of preventative services by HAs in their main area of operation. As can be seen, HAs involved in LSVT arrangements were more likely to be providing housing advice and domestic violence support.

Only around one half of LSVT HAs were directly providing domestic violence support, housing advice, tenancy sustainment and debt counselling (Figure 2.1). It is important to note that HAs could be providing access to various preventative services for their tenants through partnership working with voluntary sector or charitable sector agencies, i.e. their tenants could still potentially have access to preventative services.

Within their main area of operation (defined as the LHA area where they had the greatest housing stock), most HAs reported a significant preventative role with their own tenants. However HAs were less likely to report a general role in

homelessness prevention in their main area of operation:

- 77% of LSVT HAs and 64% of traditional HAs reported that they were making a ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ contribution to preventing homelessness among their own tenants in their main area of operation (70% of all HAs); and
- 45% of LSVT HAs reported a ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ role in general homelessness prevention in their main area of operation, compared to 33% of traditional HAs (39% of all HAs).

Factors influencing prevention

Figure 2.2 shows the factors that LHAs responding to the survey reported as ‘supporting’ HA involvement in prevention. As can be seen, the homelessness strategy, (good) relationships between agencies and guidance from both Communities and Local Government and the Housing Corporation were quite highly rated. However, LHAs were unlikely to report that ‘knowledge of prevention among HAs’ was something that supported their involvement in prevention (18%). Funding levels and structures were also unlikely to be viewed as supportive.

Figure 2.3 shows the factors that HAs reported supported their role in prevention. There were many similarities with the views reported by LHAs. However, HAs were much more likely to report

Table 2.2: The contribution of housing associations to homelessness prevention as reported by local housing authorities

	Non-LSVT	LSVT	All LHAs
Very significant	2%	5%	3%
Quite significant	9%	20%	14%
Neither significant or insignificant	34%	39%	37%
Not very significant	38%	32%	35%
Very insignificant	18%	5%	11%
All	100%	100%	100%
Base	107	103	210

Source: LHA survey Data were missing for two LHAs

Figure 2.1: Self reported provision of preventative services by housing associations in their main area of operation Source: Survey of HAs. Base: 144 HAs (69 LSVT and 75 non-LSVT).

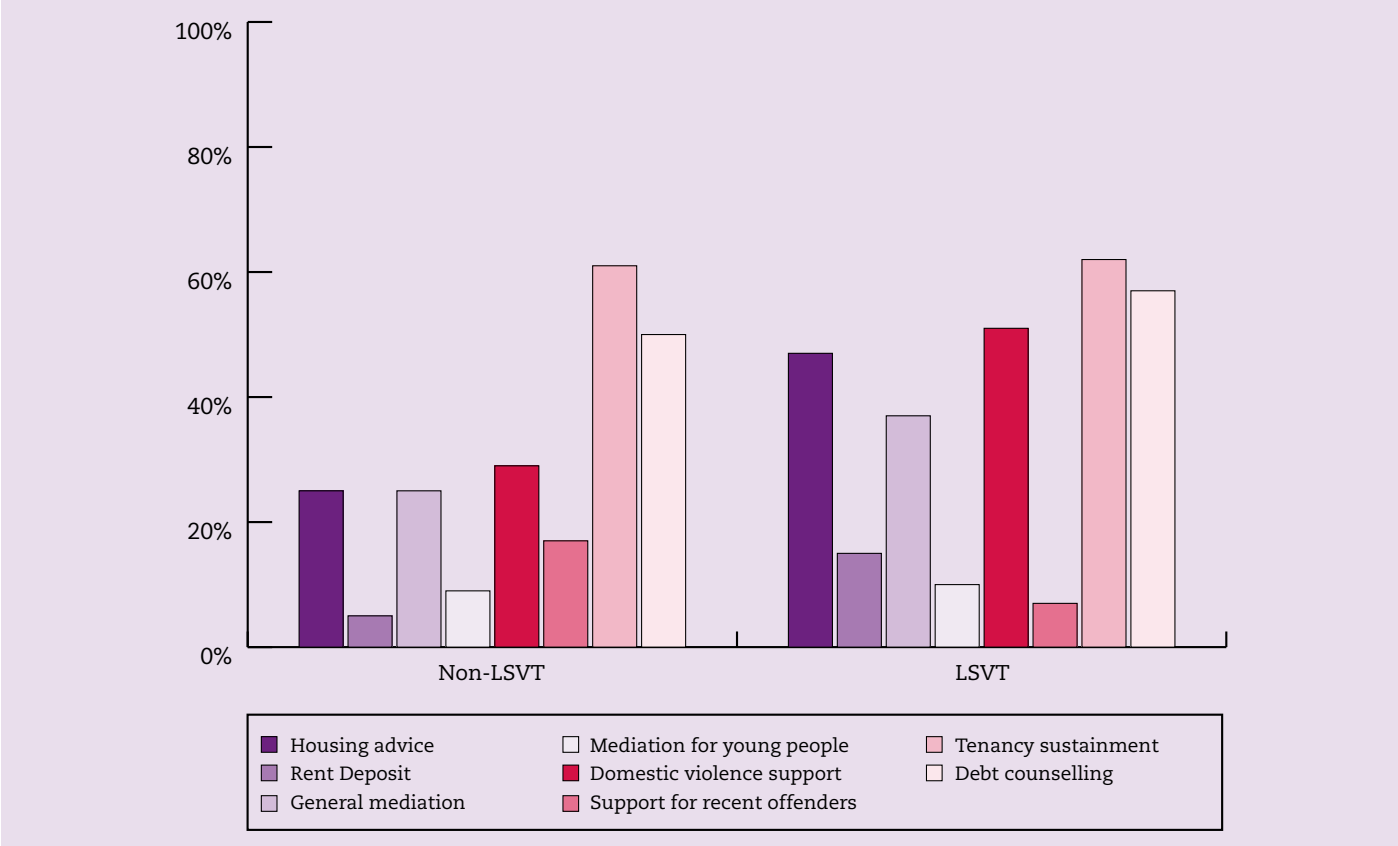
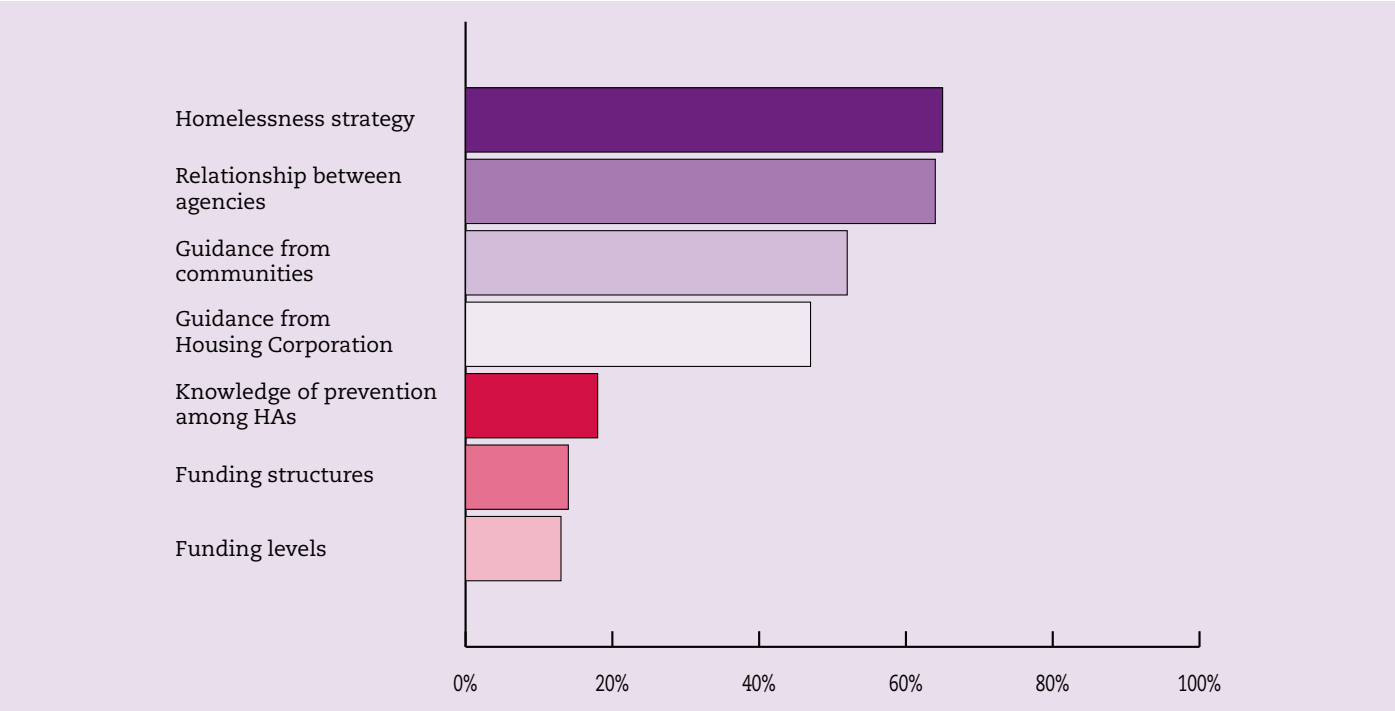


Figure 2.2: Factors supporting housing association involvement in prevention according to local housing authorities Source: Survey of LHAs. Base: 212 LHAs.



that their ‘knowledge of prevention’ supported their involvement than LHAs were.

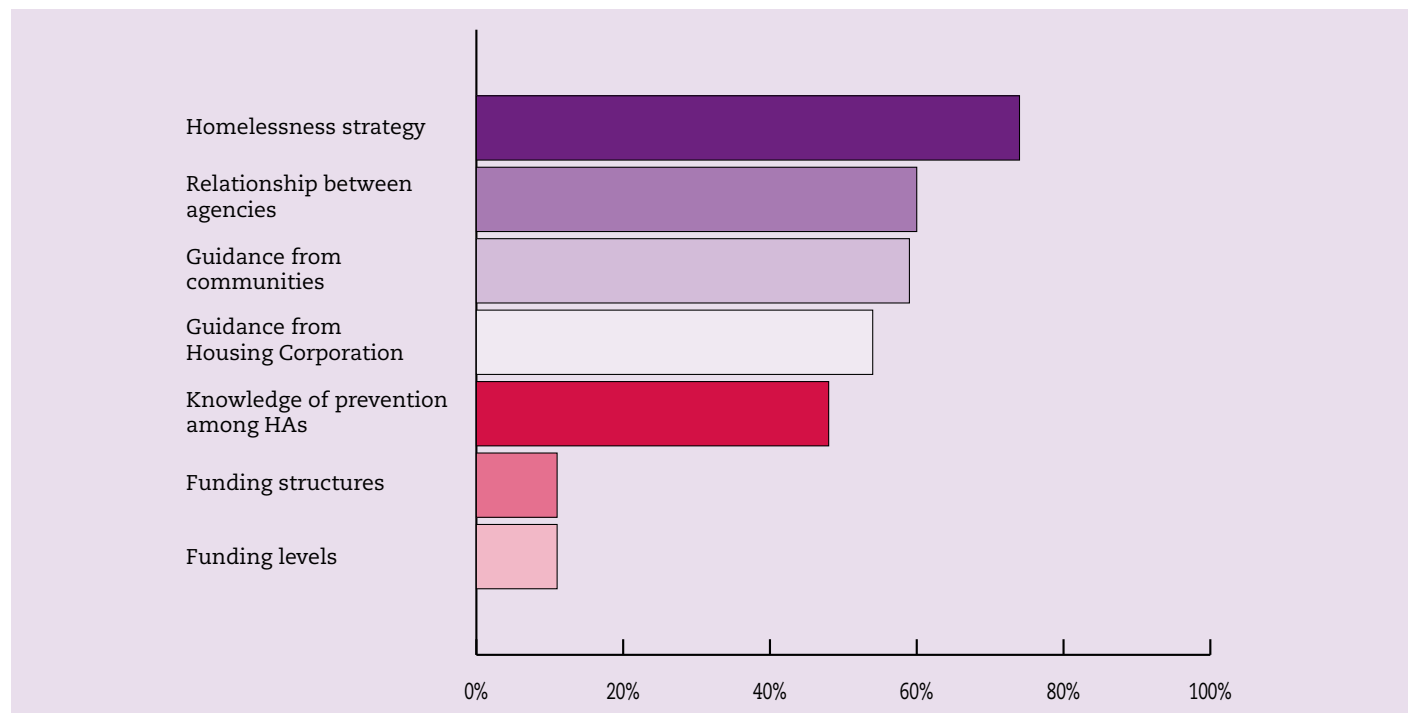
There were no major differences of any size between LSVT HAs and traditional HAs, nor between LSVT and non-LSVT LHAs on these points, although LSVT LHAs tended to be the most positive in their assessment of the support provided by government and Housing Corporation guidance.

Many of the respondents who took part in the focus groups and interviews reported that their organisations had well established and effective preventative services.

Those respondents who were working for LSVT HAs reported high levels of preventative work. In one example, all new tenants were assessed by support workers within a fortnight of taking up residence, including both a floating support worker and a welfare rights/debt advisor. Other HAs representatives also talked of the presence or development of services designed to assess the risk of homelessness among all their new tenants.

Many of the LHA respondents had seen the role of their organisation undergo radical changes since 2002. Homelessness Sections, whose primary role was assessment, had been replaced by Housing Options Teams or Homelessness Prevention

Figure 2.3: Factors supporting housing association involvement in prevention according to housing associations Source: Survey of HAs. Base: 144 HAs.



Teams, whose focus was on prevention. Many of the LHA representatives who took part in the interviews and focus groups were working for LHAs that had seen very considerable reductions in their homelessness acceptances in the last two to three years. In a few instances, LHA representatives were working for LHAs whose acceptances were a fraction of the level that they had been only a few years before.

Both LHA and HA respondents reported that services designed to manage anti-social behaviour, tenants running into rent arrears and what might be broadly termed 'regeneration' services, designed to improve the economic prospects of

groups like young people within social housing, all had beneficial effects. Where community and household stability were promoted, this was seen as aiding prevention. For some of these respondents, homelessness prevention lay within the wider agenda promoting general support for communities within social housing:

"It's come out of homelessness work, but actually this isn't about homelessness any more, its about serving vulnerable communities well."

However, the interviews and focus groups with HA and LHA staff did not always view the development and delivery of preventative

services as entirely unproblematic. A number of issues were identified that limited the success of prevention in their view:

- uneven development and provision of services;
- a 'cultural lag' in some organisations;
- issues in information sharing; and
- issues around access to preventative services.

Uneven development and provision of services

Representatives from general needs HAs in the interviews and focus groups tended to report the same picture of preventative activity reported by HAs responding to the survey, i.e. they were focused on prevention among their own tenants.

“We tend to do it for our own organisation – I mean, a lot of organisations are putting in measures to prevent tenancy failure and to prevent homelessness within their own organisation without looking further afield at working together.”

As would be anticipated, respondents from general needs HAs quite frequently made referrals to external, specialist agencies when they found a tenant was at risk of homelessness. This could include all forms of preventative service.

According to some LHA respondents, the housing association sector role in prevention was often well developed in respect of specialist HAs that focused on Supporting People service provision.

However, in their view, some general needs HAs had made less progress:

“The prevention stuff sits at the moment with the specialist RSLs rather than the general needs, and it tends to be where there is a particularly vulnerable client group... So if there is prevention that needs to be youth focussed, or single homeless or focussed on complex needs, that tends to be where the specialist RSLs are particularly good. If there is something that is prevention duty, general rent areas prevention duty, general anti-social behaviour, if there are such things, that is where you can say there is potential for the general needs housing associations to get involved and we haven't maximised that yet.”

Another way of looking at this was that prevention by the HA sector was viewed by some LHAs as being strongly influenced by Supporting People, i.e. it tended to be focused on known 'at risk' groups, like former offenders or statutorily homeless people with mental health problems, who tended to have pronounced support needs. Generic services, like those that some HA respondents described for their own tenants, that assessed all new and then provided preventative support where needed, were less common. In other words, HA provision of preventative services (and provision of preventative services more generally) had been “biased” towards high needs groups because of the way the Supporting People programme was structured.

In one major city, a distinction was made by the LHA respondents between types of homelessness. For statutorily homeless households that were families, it was felt that very good progress had been made in relation to prevention, but that there were more challenges among lone homeless people who had support needs. Protocols were being developed to help address these issues.

Respondents from HAs in another city picked up on a related point, which was that, in their view, further work needed to be done to develop city-wide preventative services that all social landlords could access. As it stood, individual HAs had services in place, but the preventative work they undertook was focused on their own tenants:

“I think this is one of the lost chances, if you like. SP was a chance to provide generic tenancy support... We still do the best we can but it still is very much in our case, prevention is around preventing in ‘our’ immediate neighbourhoods as opposed to contributing – well in that sense it does contribute to the city wide – but we do tend to concentrate in our particular neighbourhoods.”

Logistical difficulties were again reported as an issue for the LHA covering a large city in what amounted to a fundamental re-orientation towards prevention. In particular, the coordination of several strategies and areas of service commissioning and delivery had been a challenge:

“In terms of the prevention agenda that is so massive, because of the size of the city, actually

getting synergy in join-up and read across between the different strategies is a challenge in itself.”

In another city, LHA respondents were candid in reporting that the preventative agenda had not been introduced as swiftly as had been intended. Structural and administrative changes had caused operational issues and this meant that, until recently, the LHA had not given as clear a lead on prevention as might have been desired.

A ‘cultural lag’ in some organisations

Some HA respondents reported that their associations had taken time to adjust to the focus on prevention. The potential role of HA housing management, as either a direct or indirect cause of homelessness, as well as the use of preventative services, had not been properly understood until quite recently by some HAs:

“I don’t think it has been on most people’s radar at all. If I am being honest... until relatively recently, most housing associations – I don’t think this is intentional or deliberate – have dealt with homelessness through nominations. They will take the local authority homeless nominees, and that is their contribution. I think all of the broader issues came out through the Corporation’s strategy [Tackling Homelessness, 2006], for quite a lot of associations they are a bit of a wake-up call. And certainly when you think that the majority of homelessness comes from social housing itself, you know, that does make you think, what could

we be doing? How could we be identifying what some of the triggers are?”

Within London, a few general needs HAs were seen by some LHA respondents as still being too quick to threaten eviction, when problems like arrears or anti-social behaviour arose, rather than explore other options. In one borough, attempts to improve practice had been undertaken by the use of a shared protocol on prevention, which HAs had been invited to sign up to:

“The point of the protocol really is for us to start to talk to them [HAs] about their role in prevention... and for them not to see themselves just as the people who take the tenants who we make them have... as we have actually used the protocol where we think they have acted inappropriately in certain cases.”

Among a minority of HAs, the use of transfers, to deal with issues such as anti-social behaviour, was also reported. This was a less drastic course than eviction, but the underlying logic, to ‘get rid of’ a problematic household rather than try to manage the problem, was viewed as the same.

Both LHA and HA respondents were making reference to what might be defined as a ‘cultural lag’. In essence, there was a difficulty for some social landlords, not just HAs, in adapting to a new situation in which the response to a ‘problem’ tenant was not to follow the age-old practice of verbal warnings, written warnings and then issue a Notice of Seeking Possession. This was however,

seen as an issue for only a minority of social landlords.

Information sharing

Some HA respondents reported that they did not always get the information they needed to facilitate prevention. It was felt by these respondents that information sharing was not always as well developed as it could be. Information sharing was a particular concern of many HA respondents in relation to housing statutorily homeless households and is explored in detail in Chapter 4.

A few respondents talked of the need for better data sharing on potentially and formerly homeless households to generally facilitate prevention at a strategic level. As one HA respondent working for a large specialist association, put it:

“What you need to do is completely reframe that system so you are using your intelligence more, your data more, your understanding of what people’s pathways should be, and you are actually strategically developing housing pathways for all of your citizens, whether its private sector, public sector...”

Access to support services

Respondents working for LHAs and HAs often reported problems in the availability of preventative services. This could be because some individuals or households referred to these

services were rejected by the providing HAs, though this was as much of an issue in relation to the services provided by other voluntary sector agencies. Alternatively, services could sometimes simply be full. Reductions in Supporting People budgets were fairly frequently mentioned in this context.

One respondent working for a major specialist HA reported that there was still what they termed a 'lack of maturity' in the Supporting People 'market'. Competition for resources, problems with cross-authority commissioning and local politics, particularly around the commissioning of services for politically unpopular groups in some areas, all meant that provision of preventative services could sometimes be patchy or inconsistent.

Other HA providers of supporting people funded services reported that they felt their organisations were operating in an uncertain situation. If an Supporting People Administering Authority changed strategic direction, it could leave an HA providing preventative services facing a situation in which it fairly rapidly lost contracts, which raised questions as to whether an HA would want to run that sort of risk.

"At the moment there is a push to rationalise the number of providers in one area and just have one provider in an area providing a particular kind of

support – it is very worrying and it is very difficult to run a business in that way, having that lack of certainty going forward as to whether you can carry on providing a service."

A few LHA respondents reported problems arising because some lone statutorily homeless people (in particular) would refuse to engage with tenancy sustainment services. Lone statutorily homeless people could not be compelled to engage with these services, which meant success with these such groups could be limited.

On a related point, some LHA respondents reported that Supported People services that engaged with individuals or households who exhibited challenging behaviour, or who presented a significant risk, could be difficult to commission, and therefore to find. Interestingly, respondents working for London boroughs, within a city where Supporting People services are provided with a variety and density unmatched elsewhere, were among those identifying this difficulty. Such questions are part of a wider debate about the appropriateness of using Supporting People services (which by definition are 'low intensity' services) for homeless people who might represent a significant risk to others or present with challenging behaviour, which falls outside the direct scope of this research²⁶.

²⁶ See Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2003) *Supporting People: Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Homeless Households*, London : ODPM, Homelessness Directorate.
<http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

Key findings

- Housing associations were significant providers of floating support services for homeless people, delivering floating support in 91% of the Supporting People Administrative Areas (SPAAs) in England;
- Housing associations were quite often not involved in the direct provision of housing advice, debt counselling, mediation and some other preventative services, although such services would have often been available to their tenants through partnership working with other agencies;
- Most LHAs reported that HAs did not have a particularly significant role in homelessness prevention (only 17% rated the HA role in their area as 'quite significant' or 'very significant'). Most HAs reported that they had a significant role in relation to preventing homelessness among their own tenants (70% of HAs), but that they were less likely to have a significant general role (39% of HAs);
- Relationships between agencies were seen as most important in promoting partnership working on homelessness prevention;
- The guidance produced by the Housing Corporation and Communities and Local Government was reported as encouraging preventative work;
- Some areas reported uneven development of preventative services, in particular there was a disproportionate focus on Supporting People funded interventions which left gaps in mainstream service provision;
- Some HAs were described as experiencing a 'cultural lag' in that they were still adapting to prevention and were not wholly orientated towards it;
- Information sharing on the support needs of households was not always viewed as adequate, this was seen as making homelessness prevention more problematic; and
- There were reported to be difficulties in accessing some preventative services in some areas, linked to resource issues.

3 Temporary accommodation

Introduction

This chapter explores the roles of housing associations (HAs) in providing temporary accommodation. It examines:

- general patterns of temporary accommodation use in England;
- housing association provision of temporary accommodation, including:
 - general needs housing; and
 - supported housing;
- the survey responses of HAs and LHAs about the roles of HAs in temporary accommodation provision;
- the factors that influenced temporary accommodation provision by HAs, including:
 - the limited role of many HAs;
 - the use of the private rented sector;
 - finding settled housing; and
 - uneven or inaccessible supported housing provision.

General patterns of temporary accommodation use

Declines in temporary accommodation use

Before examining the role of HAs in temporary accommodation provision, it is very important to understand the context in which that role was taking place. This first section of Chapter 3 briefly reviews general patterns of temporary accommodation use in England.

A quarterly count of the homeless households in temporary accommodation is completed for each LHA in England as part of its P1E returns²⁷. This count records those households that have been found statutorily homeless which are awaiting settled accommodation (the majority of temporary accommodation use) and those households who are either awaiting a homelessness assessment decision from an LHA, or who have been found intentionally homeless²⁸.

During 2005-06, an average²⁹ of 11,479 households were awaiting a decision in temporary accommodation, or had been found intentionally

²⁷ See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/>

²⁸ When a household is found intentionally homeless (i.e. they caused homelessness through deliberate action or inaction), the housing authority has a duty to provide advice and assistance to help prevent homelessness. When the applicant has a priority need for accommodation, the authority is obliged to provide temporary accommodation for such a period as will allow an intentionally homeless applicant to secure accommodation. See paragraph 11.4 Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

²⁹ The average across the four quarterly counts conducted during 2005-06. Figures are based on grossed P1E statistics, i.e. they include estimates for non-responding LHAs.

homeless, the largest groups of which were in London (55%) and the South East (10%). In 2006-07, the average was 12,679 households, the bulk again being in London (61%) with a relative concentration in the South East (8%)³⁰.

An average of 87,796 households that had been found statutorily homeless were awaiting settled housing in temporary accommodation during the course of 2005-06, with the average figure for 2006-07 being 78,228.

Table 3.1 summarises the typical (average) use of temporary accommodation by local housing authorities in England during the period 1997-2007. There have been quite steep declines in the level of temporary accommodation use for households found statutorily homeless since 2005. These changes are linked both to the use of preventative services which are reducing acceptances (see Chapter 3) and to the Communities and Local Government targets to reduce temporary accommodation use by half by 2010.

Table 3.1: Changes in average temporary accommodation use for households that had been found statutorily homeless for calendar years 1997 to 2007 (England)

Calendar Year	Household accepted as homeless	Percentage rise or fall in acceptances compared to previous calendar year
1997	43,783	-
1998	50,803	+16%
1999	59,660	+17%
2000	69,408	+16%
2001	76,608	+10%
2002	83,003	+8%
2003	92,490	+11%
2004	99,885	+8%
2005	100,448	+1%
2006	93,220	-7%
2007*	86,010	-8%

SSource: P1E returns for second quarter of 2007.* Average based on first two quarters of 2007 (for which statistics were available at the time of writing).

³⁰ Households awaiting a decision should normally expect to wait no more than 33 working days after a LHA has accepted a duty to make enquiries under Section 184 of the 2002 Act. See paragraph 6.16 Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode>

The regional concentration of temporary accommodation use

Temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households is very concentrated in London and there is also relatively high use in the South East.

During 2005-06, an average of 65% of temporary accommodation use in England was within London, within another 12% in the South East. The rest of England collectively accounting for 23% of average temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households. During 2006-07, 70% of average temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households was in London and another 11% in the South East. The remainder of England, on average, only accounted for 19%³¹.

On average, there was more temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households in non-LSVT LHAs than in LSVT LHAs. During 2005-06 and 2006-07 an average of 63% of temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households was in non-LSVT areas. These differences were largely explained by the number of London boroughs that were non-LSVT authorities during these periods. As noted in Chapter 1, 45% (159 out of 354 LHAs) were LSVT authorities.

The majority of temporary accommodation used for statutorily homeless households during 2006-07 was self-contained general needs housing.

Housing association provision of temporary accommodation

General needs housing used as temporary accommodation

Housing associations managed and provided two main types of temporary accommodation in general needs housing:

- short stay assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) in HAs' own general needs housing; and
- private rented sector general needs housing that HAs manage under Housing Association Leasing Schemes (HALS).

Nationally, HALS arrangements and HA provided ASTs in their own stock were providing an average of 13% of the households that awaiting a decision, or who were intentionally homeless, with temporary accommodation during both 2005-06 and 2006-07. Most of these households were in HALS arrangements (9%) with a smaller group being AST HA lets (4%).

³¹ Source: P1E statistics. Figures as based on grossed returns that include estimates for non-responding authorities.

The most common form of HA temporary accommodation provision for statutorily homeless households³² was via HALS arrangements with private sector landlords:

- during 2005-06, an average of 20,969 units of temporary accommodation were being provided by HAs via HALS arrangements, equivalent to 24% of average temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households in England³³ (Table 3.2); and
- in 2006-07, this average figure provided via HALS arrangements fell to 18,163 units,

equivalent to 23% of average temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households for England³⁴ (Table 3.2).

As can be seen in Table 3.2, the provision of temporary accommodation through assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) in HAs’ own stock to statutorily homeless households was less common. This accounted for 6% of average total temporary accommodation provision to statutorily homeless households throughout England in 2005-06 and 2006-07.

Table 3.2 Average housing association provision and management of temporary general needs housing for households found statutorily homeless in 2005-06 and 2006-07 (England)

Temporary accommodation type	Average provided (across 4 quarters)	As percentage of average temporary accommodation provision for statutorily homeless households
2005-06		
HALS arrangements	20,969	24%
ASTs in HA stock	5,624	6%
Total	26,593	30%
2006-07		
HALS arrangements	18,163	23%
ASTs in HA stock	4,877	6%
Total	23,040	29%

Source: Grossed P1E returns for 2005-06 and 2006-07 (includes estimates for non-responding authorities).

³² households or individuals accepted as an ‘eligible’ household which is ‘unintentionally’ homeless’ and in ‘priority need’, and therefore owed the ‘main homelessness duty’ under the homelessness legislation.

³³ Excludes homeless at home arrangements. Figures are based on grossed P1E returns that include estimates for non-responding authorities.

³⁴ Excludes homeless at home arrangements.

In LSVT areas, an average of 12% of temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households was being provided via HA ASTs during 2005-06 and 2006-07. The figure for non-LSVT areas, as would be expected, was rather lower at 3% of average temporary accommodation use³⁵. Proportionately, HALS provision was also greater in LSVT areas, representing an average of 28% of temporary accommodation provision to statutorily homeless households in 2005-06 and 29% on 2006-07 (compared to 21% and 20% of provision in non-LSVT areas).

Housing association activity was very highly concentrated in London and relatively concentrated in the South East.

In percentage terms, 70% of all average HA activity in providing temporary general needs housing to statutorily homeless households was in London (in both 2005-06 and 2006-07). The South East accounted for a further 15% of average activity in both 2005-06 and 2006-07.

The provision of HALS temporary accommodation was almost entirely restricted to London and

the South East with an average of 82% of HALS provision occurring in London during 2005-06 and 2006-07. A further 11% of average HALS provision was in the South East during 2005-06 (rising to 12% in 2006-07). Average HALS activity in the rest of England accounted for only 7% of national provision in 2005-06 and 6% in 2006-07³⁶.

Housing association supported housing used as temporary accommodation

During the last 20 years or so, the traditional hostels and night-shelters for homeless people, which often effectively just 'warehoused' homeless populations³⁷, have become much less common. Almost all supported housing provision for homeless people is now intended to function as transitional accommodation, that deals first with an immediate lack of housing by providing temporary accommodation, then helps its service users secure and sustain a settled home³⁸.

According to the Supporting People Client Record (SPCR) data³⁹ for 2005-06, HAs provided (for

³⁵ Figures were again broadly consistent over 2005-06 and 2006-07 (percentages are rounded). Based on grossed P1E returns that include estimates for non-responding authorities.

³⁶ Source: P1E statistics. Based on grossed returns for 2005-06 and 2006-07 which include estimates for non-responding authorities.

³⁷ See Dant, T. and Deacon, A. (1989) *Hostels to Homes? The Re-housing of Single Homeless People* Aldershot: Avebury.

³⁸ There are examples of supported housing schemes that are intended to provide long-stay/permanent accommodation for vulnerable or frail homeless people but these are very unusual.

both non-statutorily and statutorily homeless individuals and households):

- 28,401⁴⁰ stays (of any length) in supported housing by homeless individuals and families, equivalent to 57% of all the SP funded stays in supported housing by homeless people in England (i.e. the other 43% of stays were provided by organisations other than HAs);
- 5,340 stays for homeless individuals in direct access accommodation, equivalent to 18% of all stays in direct access provision funded by Supporting People in England;
- 1,649 for homeless individuals in foyers, equivalent to 56% of stays in foyers made by homeless individuals⁴¹ in England;
- 1,199 stays by homeless women (including women with children) escaping violence in women's refuges, equivalent to 18% of the stays in SP funded refuges made by homeless households in England; and
- housing associations were recorded as providing one or more forms of supported housing to homeless households in 99% of Supporting People Administering Authorities (SPAA).

Table 3.3 shows that the bulk of HA provision of supported housing was to homeless individuals and households who were non-statutorily homeless (61% overall). However, Table 3.3 also indicates a quite strong representation of statutorily homeless households making stays in refuges and within supported housing provided by HAs.

Just 9% of the stays made by homeless households in supported accommodation were recorded as being made by households that contained a dependent child or children (7% by lone parents and 2% by partners with children). Nine out of ten stays made by families were in supported housing.

As is shown in Table 3.4, 50% of stays in HA provided supported accommodation were made by lone young people aged 16-24, with the next largest group being the 39% of stays made by lone persons aged over 25. Stays by lone young people and lone people aged over 25 were more likely to involve non-statutorily homeless people.

London accounted for 16% of recorded stays in HA provided supported housing by households

³⁹ There are some limitations to the use of the SPCR data set. The SPCR records service delivery episodes, i.e. service provision by Supporting People funded service providers, to determine how much of a given service they delivered over a financial year. For data protection reasons, CHP cannot examine these data in a form that would allow differentiation between individuals who experience one service use episode (one stay in a hostel, for example) and those who experience several episodes of service use in the same year (several stays in several hostels). This is because it would be a breach of Data Protection Act for St Andrew's University to release the National Insurance numbers of individuals.

⁴⁰ Includes 49 stays in supported housing for teenage parents made by homeless people.

⁴¹ Far more stays were made in foyers, these figures just refer to households classified as homeless within SPCR.

Table 3.3 Housing association provision of stays in supported housing by recorded status of household receiving stay (England)

	Recorded as statutorily homeless household	Recorded as other homeless*	All	Base number of stays
Supported housing	41%	59%	100%	28,401
Direct access	23%	77%	100%	5,340
Foyers	27%	73%	100%	1,649
Refugees	74%	26%	100%	1,199
All	39%	61%	100%	36,589

Source: Grossed P1E returns for 2005-06 and 2006-07 (includes estimates for non-responding authorities).

Table 3.4 Stays in supported housing made by households recorded as statutorily and non-statutorily homeless (England)

	Recorded as statutorily homeless household	Recorded as other homeless*	All	Total stays
Young person 16-24	39%	61%	100%	18,345 (50%)
Lone parent 16-24	66%	34%	100%	1,233 (3%)
Lone person 25+	31%	69%	100%	14,190 (39%)
Lone parent 25+	63%	37%	100%	1,558 (4%)
Couple with children	71%	29%	100%	589 (2%)
Other	65%	35%	100%	447 (1%)
All	39%	61%	100%	36,362** (100%)

Source: SPCR data for 2005-06. * Households in a homeless client group that were not recorded as statutorily homeless. ** Data were missing for 227 stays.

recorded as statutorily or as non-statutorily homeless, with the metropolitan districts accounting for 30% and the English Unitary authorities 24% of stays. Collectively, the unitary authorities including the London boroughs saw 69% of the stays made by homeless households in HA provided supported housing, contrasting with the 31% of stays that took place in the generally more rural SPAAAs that were based on county areas⁴² (Table 3.5).

Housing association provided supported housing therefore tended to be focused on more urban areas. In addition it was focused more on lone homeless households, including young people and on groups defined as homeless, but not recorded as being statutorily homeless. To a considerable extent, these patterns of provision reflect long

established patterns of provision within this sector.

The survey responses

The LHAs that responded to the survey almost all reported that HAs were active managers and/or providers of temporary accommodation in their area (89%). Figure 3.2 shows the range of temporary accommodation that HAs were providing in the LHAs which responded to the survey.

Housing association provision of temporary accommodation broadly reflected the patterns shown in the P1E data and the higher availability

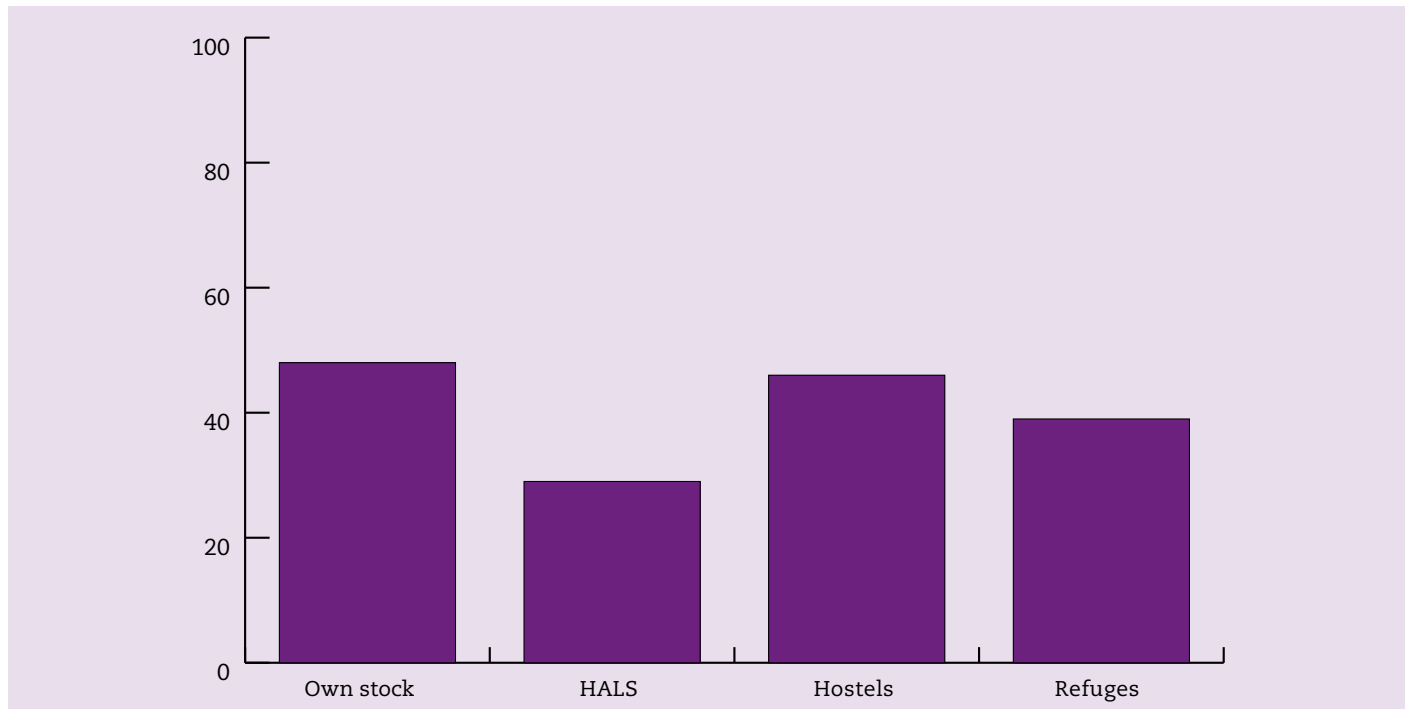
Table 3.5 Housing association provision of stays to homeless households in supported housing by type of Supporting People Administering Authority 2005-06 (England)

	Supported housing stays	Direct access stays	Foyer status	Refuge stays	All stays
London borough	18%	5%	15%	8%	16%
Metropolitan District	30%	27%	20%	41%	30%
English Unitary	20%	46%	30%	8%	24%
County Council*	31%	23%	36%	42%	31%
All	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base (stays)	28,401	5,340	1,649	1,199	36,589

Source: SPCR data for 2005-06. * SPAA was organised at equivalent of county level.

⁴² It is not possible to differentiate between non-LSVT and LSVT areas because SPAAAs often cover a mixture of non-LSVT and LSVT areas.

Figure 3.1: Types of temporary accommodation being provided by housing associations within local housing authorities that responded to the survey. Source: LHA survey. Base: 212 LHAs. “Hostels” also includes other forms of supported housing.



of some forms of supported housing and hostel provision in urban areas:

- all of the responding London boroughs reported HA management of temporary accommodation via HALS arrangements⁴³;
- HALS temporary accommodation provision was also reported by 35% of responding authorities in the South East, the average across all other responding authorities being just 22%;
- 60% of LSVT LHAs reported that HAs provided temporary accommodation via assured shorthold lets in their own stock, the figure for non-LSVT LHAs was 35%;
- 40% of rural LHAs reported HA provision of temporary accommodation in hostels, compared to 51% of urban authorities⁴⁴; and
- 25% of rural LHAs reported HA provision of temporary accommodation in refuges, compared to 53% of urban authorities.

⁴³ One third of boroughs responded. See Chapter 1.

⁴⁴ As categorised by DEFRA See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm>

Just 11% of responding HAs were involved in HALS arrangements and, as would be expected, all of these were associations with a presence in London. Just over one third of HAs reported providing temporary accommodation through hostels (36%) and 35% provided ASTs in their own stock.

As would be expected, a quite high proportion (53%) of LSVT HAs were providing ASTs as temporary accommodation within their own stock. This was much less common among traditional HAs (18%).

Thirty-six per cent of responding HAs were not providing any temporary accommodation. Again, as would be anticipated, these were more likely to be traditional HAs (47%) than LSVT HAs (24%).

It might seem surprising that 24% of LSVT HAs were not providing temporary accommodation. However, there could be quite legitimate reasons as to why this was the case. In some areas, particularly within the Midlands and the North, temporary accommodation use for statutorily homeless households is very low⁴⁵.

The HA survey responses also showed that various innovative or unusual forms of temporary accommodation provision and management were being undertaken by HAs. Only a very small

number of HAs were involved in each of the following activities:

- leaseback arrangements, whereby the LHA 'leased' back former council housing stock back from an LSVT HA for use as temporary accommodation, with the LHA allocating homeless households to this temporary accommodation, which the HA still managed;
- subcontracted HA management of PRS housing that had been secured by an LHA via Private Sector Leasing (PSL) arrangements as temporary accommodation;

Factors influencing housing association provision of temporary accommodation

The limited role of many housing associations

Many of the LHA respondents talked about HAs having a relatively restricted role in temporary accommodation provision or management within their area. Beyond the respondents from London boroughs, there was almost no mention of HA involvement in HALS arrangements.

Some of the areas in which fieldwork took place had relatively little need for temporary accommodation. In one rural LHA, the local

⁴⁵ Recent research found that, in 2005, 21% of statutorily homeless families did not experience stays in temporary accommodation but were instead placed straight into settled housing. While this almost never occurred in London, it was more common in the Midlands and the North. See Pleace, N. et al (2007) Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 Year Olds London: Communities and Local Government.

LSVT HA had initially made 20 units available for temporary accommodation, only to find that the demand was much lower than that.

Use of the private rented sector

In areas where the use of temporary accommodation was high, LHA respondents reported insufficient access to suitable general needs housing in the private rented sector, particularly larger houses for families. This inhibited the development or furtherance of HALS arrangements as well as Private Sector Leasing (PSL) by the LHA itself.

High housing market stress was reported as giving the PRS access to a large pool of employed households as potential tenants, a market they were often keen to pursue in preference to providing temporary accommodation to statutorily homeless households. A few LHA respondents wanted HALS schemes within their area, but saw housing market conditions as a barrier to this happening.

Respondents working for the London boroughs all reported constraints on the supply of suitable available PRS stock as a key problem in temporary accommodation provision. A few respondents also reported that, because of the particular stress in the London housing market and the nature of some statutorily homeless households, it was a daunting prospect to some HAs to even consider the management of PRS stock as temporary accommodation:

“It is quite a risky area. A lot of HAs don’t see it as their core business if you like. It is not something they have to do and so... not many do provide it. It is something their [management] board just doesn’t want them to do.”

A few respondents from the London boroughs reported that they tried to deal with PRS landlords directly because HALS provision was relatively expensive. In one borough, the £320 per week cost of a family sized house rose by another £60 per week if it was provided through HALS arrangements.

Finding settled housing

Access to settled housing for statutorily homeless households placed in general needs temporary accommodation could be problematic. Households could face sustained waits in temporary accommodation in London and some rural areas. This could mean that supposedly ‘temporary’ accommodation became quasi-permanent, with households staying in it for years.

In some rural areas, moving on from temporary accommodation into suitable settled housing was reported as being problematic. In a few cases, both HAs and LHAs described the conversion of what had been assured shorthold tenancies in HA stock into assured tenancies, so what had been a household’s temporary accommodation instead became their settled housing. In addition, HAs reported the purchase of PRS landlord properties that had been used as temporary accommodation

under HALS arrangements and their conversion into assured tenancies that the HA owned and managed.

Uneven or inaccessible supported housing provision

Respondents in a few LHAs talked about lone people who were statutorily homeless falling between gaps in temporary accommodation provision. Often these individuals had support needs, but the supported housing services that there were in an area were focused on non-statutorily homeless households.

“We have an odd situation in [city] really where the singles stuff has always been provided by RSLs and the voluntary sector, the families stuff has always traditionally been provided by the City, but we haven’t mirrored that with the statutory/non-statutory very well... the voluntary sector see themselves doing non-priority singles, we see ourselves as doing statutory families, and the group that nobody quite takes responsibility for is statutory singles.”

Difficulties in placing some statutorily homeless households in supported housing were sometimes reported by LHAs in relation to specialist HAs. There were occasions, according to these respondents, when specialist HAs would refuse to take some more chaotic or challenging individuals. When they were refused access to specialist provision it was reported as difficult for LHAs to place these households elsewhere. This was also

an issue in relation to supported housing provided by the voluntary and charitable sector, not just the supported housing provided by HAs.

The other, obvious, difficulty that could arise was when supported housing services were full. This could be because they ‘silted up’ due to difficulties in moving on existing residents into general needs housing. This difficulty had also been reported in relation to general needs housing being used as temporary accommodation.

There was some discussion of altering CBL systems to ‘weight’ those leaving supported housing to speed up the process of providing them with settled housing, although this had not yet been done. Some general needs HAs had reached agreements with providers of supported housing to take specific numbers of households each year, specifically to help reduce silting up.

In London, however, a few respondents reported that HAs managing supported housing increasingly had to ‘manage expectations’ among the residents of that accommodation. The boroughs were increasingly looking to former residents of supported housing finding their own housing solutions within the PRS because of the demand on social rented stock.

One major HA provider of hostels for homeless people reported that formerly regional or sub-regional resources, for example, hostels within a conurbation administered by several authorities, had seen their use become restricted. Under

Supporting People contracts an SPAA would sometimes confine such a hostel's activities just to its own area. This meant neighbouring authorities either had to develop their own resources or that access to specific forms of supported housing was lost in some areas. This could also have implications for scheme viability.

A few respondents from specialist HAs that were focused on the provision of supported housing spoke about the difficulties in developing, locating and operating highly specialised services. In some circumstances, the need for a specialist resource, say for statutorily homeless households or potentially homeless households who were ex-offenders with support needs, would be insufficient to justify a resource at the level of an individual non-metropolitan district LHA. However, there would be an argument for such a resource at say County, or possibly, regional level.

Seeking cross-authority planning and commissioning of such specialist services could be difficult, as individual LHAs would tend to be focused only on local needs. There was also an element of the local political acceptability of certain kinds of projects, with some rural local authorities not wanting to have a regional supported housing service, for groups like former offenders, within their boundaries.

Key findings

- Housing association provision of temporary accommodation via Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) or Housing Association Leasing Schemes (HALS) strongly reflected the national use of temporary accommodation. On average, 85% of HA activity took place in London and the South East during 2006-07;
- Management of temporary accommodation through Housing Association Leasing Scheme (HALS) arrangements was almost entirely confined to London (an average of 82% during 2005-06 and 2006-07);
- LSVT HAs more likely to be providing temporary accommodation in their own stock by using Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) than traditional HAs;
- Housing associations were major providers of supported housing for homeless people. This temporary accommodation was mainly used by non-statutorily homeless people, particularly lone homeless people and young people, and was most common within urban areas;
- Many HAs did not have a significant role in providing temporary accommodation. Some had no role at all (36% of HAs that responded to the survey);
- Local Housing Authority criticisms of the role of HAs in providing temporary accommodation very were unusual;
- A shortage of suitable private rented sector stock was identified as an issue that inhibited further development of HALS schemes in some areas;

- In rural areas, the difficulties of moving on households in temporary accommodation sometimes meant that HAs had resorted to converting these temporary accommodation settings into settled housing, either through purchase of property from PRS landlords or by changing an HA let with an Assured Shorthold Tenancy into an Assured Tenancy; and
- Uneven provision of supported housing was sometimes seen as a problem. This was not confined to rural areas but was also reported in cities including London. In part, there were issues in accessing some oversubscribed supported housing. In addition, there were also reported to be problems in commissioning services for some high need groups.

4 Housing association provision of settled housing to statutorily homeless households

Introduction

Chapter 4 explores the role of housing associations (HAs) in the provision of general needs lets to statutorily homeless households. This chapter explores:

- the broad concentration of HA lets to statutorily homeless households within LSVT areas;
- the reasons why LSVT status alone did not always explain relative HA activity in making lets to statutorily homeless households, examining the roles of:
 - choice-based lettings;
 - the contracting out of homelessness assessment to HAs;
 - levels and availability of suitable HA housing stock;
 - the overall levels of homelessness acceptances;
 - levels of temporary accommodation use;
 - housing association lets to non-statutorily homeless households;
 - levels of HA and social rented sector lets relative to levels of statutory homelessness;
- views on whether or not HAs took their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households; and

- the extent to which nominations and referrals that were turned down by HAs and the reasons why this occurred.

The broad concentration of housing association lets to statutorily homeless households in LSVT areas

Housing association provision of general needs lets to statutorily homeless households was explored using three data sets:

- the COntinuous REcording (CORE) data on general needs lets by HAs during 2005-06 and 2006-07;
- the 2005-06 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) data collected by LHAs; and
- the 2005-06 and 2006-07 quarterly statistical returns on homelessness made by LHAs (the P1E returns).

CORE is used to collect data on all new registered housing association lettings and sales in England. The data include demographic details on each household given a new HA let. During 2005-06 and 2006-07, CORE defined a "statutorily homeless households as being statutorily homeless and owed a main homelessness duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996"⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ The guidance for completing the 2005-06 CORE returns noted that "Only households for whom the local authority has accepted a main homelessness duty under the 1996 Housing Act should be classified within this category" see: <http://www.core.ac.uk/>

The P1E returns provide a quarterly count of the homelessness assessment decisions taken by LHAs. These summary data do not provide a discrete record on each household and record relatively little data on the housing outcomes for statutorily homeless households⁴⁷.

The HSSA returns include information on statutory nominations to HAs made by LHAs. These data used to be known as the HIP or ‘Housing Investment Programme’ Returns.

Some information from other datasets was also employed. The annual Regulatory and Statistical Return (RSR) on HAs provided data on local authority nominations refused by HAs and on HA stock size during 2005-06⁴⁸. Internal data from

Communities and Local Government provided the researchers with lists of LSVT areas and LSVT HAs.

CORE statistics

According to CORE statistics, the average LHA saw 61 HA general needs lets to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06. This average fell to 27 lets in non-LSVT areas and rose to 101 lets within LSVT areas (Table 4.1).

Of the 21,470 HA general needs lets made to statutorily homeless households in 2005-06, 75% took place in LSVT LHAs (Table 4.1).

All aspects of HA activity were concentrated in LSVT areas. According to the RSR returns for

Table 4.1: Total, average and median housing association general needs lets going to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06 according to CORE general needs returns for 2005-06 (England)

Transfer status of LHA	Total HA lets to statutorily homeless households	As % of all HA lets to statutorily homeless households	Average HA lets to statutorily homeless households	Median HA lets to statutorily homeless households	Number of LHAs (Base)
Non-LSVT	5,368	25%	27	16	195
LSVT*	16,102	75%	101	79	159
All LHA areas	21,470	100%	61	38	354

Source: CORE returns 2005-06. * Full or partial LSVT.

⁴⁷ See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.rsrsurvey.co.uk/>

2005-06, some 70% of HA housing was in LSVT areas, while CORE reported that 69% of all the 128,239 HA general needs lets made by HAs in 2005-06 were within LSVT areas.

Disproportionate HA activity around providing settled housing to statutorily homelessness households in LSVT areas would therefore seem entirely predictable. Housing association lets to statutorily homeless households occurred most frequently in those areas in which HAs were concentrated.

Another way of considering the role of HAs in providing settled housing to statutorily homeless households is to examine the proportion (percentage) of their general needs lets that they allocated to statutorily homeless households. This allows an examination of the relative commitment of HAs to statutory homelessness. A lower proportion of all HA general needs lets went to statutorily homeless households in non-LSVT areas:

- on average, 17% of all general needs lets by HAs went to statutorily homeless households in non-LSVT areas (median 13%); and
- on average, 35% of HA lets in LSVT areas went to statutorily homeless households (median 28%).

As Table 4.2 shows, while LSVT status was very important to whether a greater or lower proportion of HA lets would go to statutorily homeless households, there was some variation. Relative

HA activity did not always simply reflect their concentration in LSVT areas:

- 41% of LSVT areas saw 30% or more of HA lets going to statutorily homeless households, but so too did 20% of non-LSVT areas (Table 4.2); and
- LSVT areas were not exempt from being among those in which under 20% of HA general needs lets went to statutorily homeless households (28% were in this group) (Table 4.2).

This variation was not explained by the small number of LSVT areas in which only partial stock transfers have occurred (i.e. where a local authority is still a social landlord-). Map 4.1 shows the proportion of all HA general needs lets that were going to statutorily homeless households for each local housing authority in England.

Housing association activity in making lets to statutorily homeless households was again concentrated in LSVT areas during 2006-07 (Table 4.3). As in 2005-06, LSVT status was strongly related to relative HA activity in making general needs lets to statutorily homeless households.

CORE recorded lets to statutorily homeless households made by different types of housing associations

Using a combination of CORE and RSR data (see Chapter 1) it is possible to derive a broad classification of the HAs that were making lets to

Table 4.2: Proportion of all housing association general needs lets going to statutorily homeless households (banded) by transfer status of local housing authorities (England)

Proportion of all HA general needs lets going to statutorily homeless households	Non LSVT areas	LSVT areas*	All areas
Less than 10%	14%	3%	9%
10-19%	37%	25%	32%
20-29%	29%	31%	30%
30-39%	15%	20%	18%
40-49%	4%	15%	9%
50%+	1%	6%	3%
All	100%	100%	100%
Base (LHAs)	195	59	354

Source: CORE returns 2005-06. * Full or partial LSVT.

Table 4.3: Total, average and median housing association general needs lets going to statutorily homeless households during 2006-07 according to CORE general needs returns for 2006-07 (England)

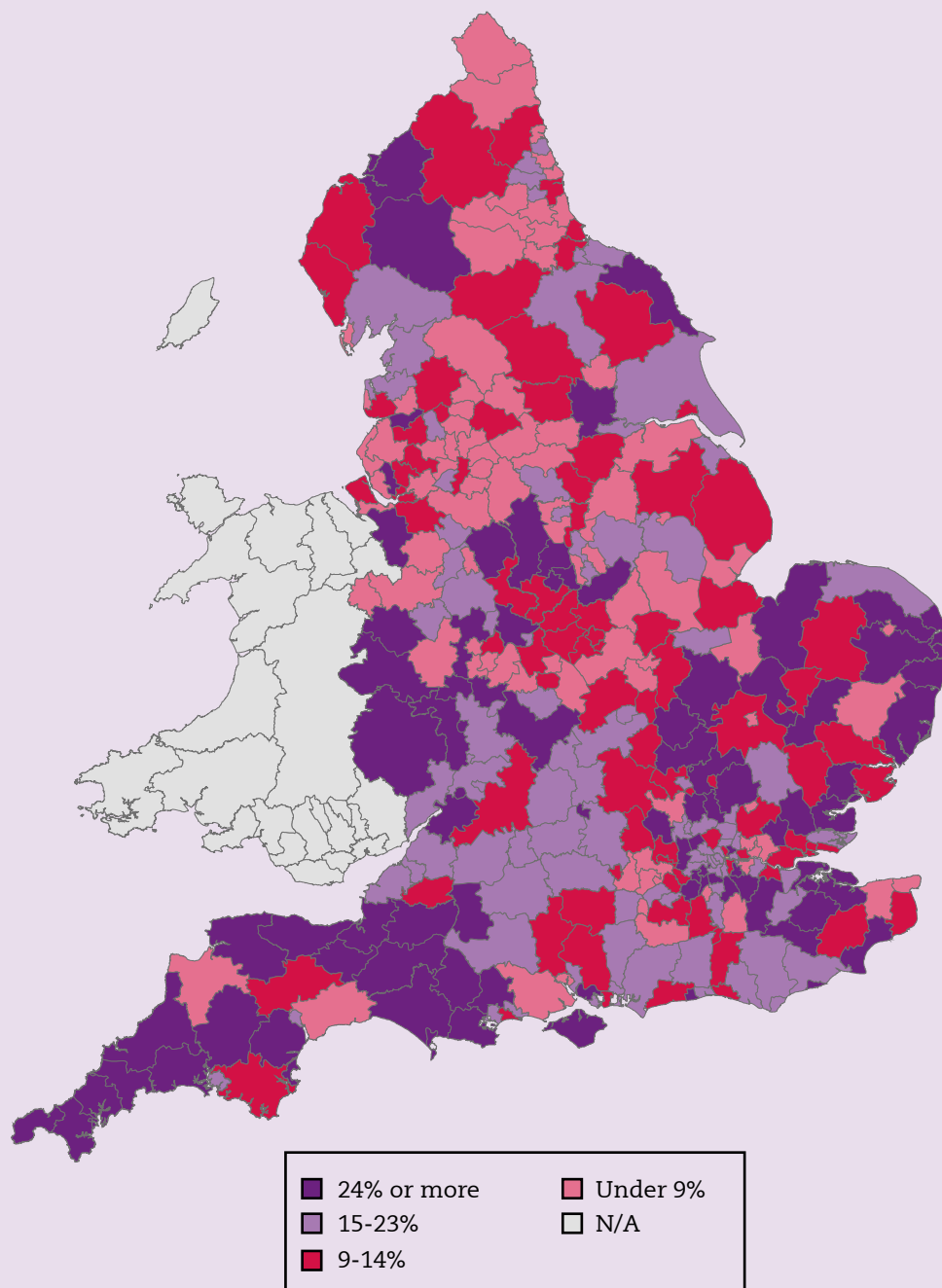
Transfer status of LHA	Total lets HA to statutorily homeless households	Average HA lets to statutorily homeless households	Median HA lets to statutorily homeless households	Number of LHAs (Base)
Non-LSVT	6,359	33	21	195
LSVT*	16,864	106	86	159
All LHA areas	23,223	66	42	354

Source: CORE returns 2006-07. Figures are rounded. * Full or partial LSVT⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ This table is comparable with Table 4.1 and uses the same selection criteria for LSVT authorities (i.e. that they had to extant for one year before being recorded as an LSVT area as at 1st April 2006).

Map 4.1: Proportion of all HA general needs lets that went to statutorily homeless households in all LHAs in England

CORE report lets to statutorily homeless households as a proportion of all CORE recorded general needs lets



Source CORE returns 2005/06

statutorily homeless households during 2005-06 (Table 4.4).

Traditional HAs were in one of three broad groups. The first was small traditional associations working within one LHA area (small was defined as under 1,500 units in management⁵⁰). The second group was small associations working in two or more LHA areas and the third group were larger traditional HAs (with 1,500 units or more in management) working in two or more LHA areas (Table 4.4).

LSVT associations had mainly been created by a stock transfer. These generally much larger

associations were divided into those working in one LHA area and those working in two or more areas (Table 4.4). A handful of traditional HAs have also become involved in LSVT arrangements and were consequently classified as members of these groups.

The classifications shown in Table 4.4 are approximate. Mergers, conglomerations, affiliations and re-branding are common events within the sector. For the purposes of this report, an HA was treated as being a distinct entity if its lets were recorded separately within CORE during 2005-06 (i.e. the HA had its own Housing Corporation registration)⁵¹.

Table 4.4: Broad classification of the HAs making lets to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06

Type of HA	Total units* managed	Average units managed	Total Lets in 2005-06	Average lets in 2005-06	Number of HAs	As % of all HAs
LSVT HA	519,376	5,707	39,226	431	91	18%
LSVT HA (1 LHA)	447,572	4,345	33,177	322	103	20%
Large traditional	473,660	4,306	41,858	381	110	22%
Small traditional	473,660	643	7,173	65	111	22%
Small traditional (1 LHA)	56,722	630	5,362	60	90	18%
All (base)	1,568,755	3,106	126,796	251	505	100%

Sources: CORE (2005-06). RSR (2005-06) * Total social rented units in management, including supported housing. Small HAs were defined as having under 1,500 units in management .

⁵⁰ An HA with 1,500 units in management is quite a large HA, but the HAs that made lets to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06 tended to be larger associations.

⁵¹ In practice, these 505 HAs were collectively part of some 356 merged HAs, umbrella organisations and other conglomerates. When these HAs were surveyed by the research team, the Housing Corporation produced a list of relevant agency contacts that showed that many HAs were part of wider groups or merged organisations (see Chapter 1). In some instances, mergers had taken place during the course of 2005/06, in others, while an HA was part of a larger group, its returns submitted as if it were still an independent organisation. When the research was being undertaken, it became apparent that many of the LSVT RSLs that had been formed when stock transfers had taken place had changed their structure, name and/or merged with other HAs, since the LSVT that initially created them.

LSVT HAs devoted a higher proportion of their lets to statutorily homeless households than other types of HA (Table 4.5). However, the differences between these HAs and traditional HAs were not particularly marked. Housing associations were typically only making quite a low proportion of their lets to statutorily homeless households.

Alongside indicating greater activity by LSVT HAs, the CORE data also showed considerable range within types of HA. Traditional HA lets to statutorily homeless households ranged from 1% to 42% of total general needs lets, while for LSVT HAs, the range was 3% to 56% of total general needs lets.

The HSSA statistics

Table 4.6 examines the HSSA returns for 2005-06. These returns record when a statutorily homeless household is nominated or referred to an HA by an LHA and the household then accepts that nomination.

There are two aspects of Table 4.6 that warrant attention:

- the concentration of HA activity with LSVT areas is almost identical to that shown in the CORE figures, with 74% of HA activity within these areas; and
- the CORE total was 14% lower than the HSSA total for England⁵² (tables 4.1 and 4.6).

Table 4.5: Housing association lets to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06

Type of HA	Total lets to statutorily homeless households	Average Lets to statutorily homeless households	Average % of all lets	Median % of all lets	HAs
LSVT HA	7,773	85	23%	20%	91
LSVT HA (1 LHA)	6,663	65	24%	23%	103
Large traditional	5,714	52	16%	13%	110
Small traditional	952	9	16%	11%	111
Small traditional (1 LHA)	618	7	17%	11%	90
All (base)	21,720	43	19%	16%	505

Sources: CORE (2005-06). RSR (2005-06) Small HAs were defined as having under 1,500 units in management (including supported housing).

⁵² 21,470 general needs lets to statutorily homeless households are recorded in CORE, 3,491 less than the nominations of statutorily homeless households reported as being taken up in HSSA

Table 4.6: Total, average and median LHA nominations to HAs taken up by statutorily homeless households in 2005-06 according to HSSA returns

Transfer status of LHA	Total nominations to HAs taken up by statutorily homeless households	As % of all nominations to HAs taken up by statutorily homeless households	Average nominations taken up	Median nominations taken up	Number of LHAs
Non-LSVT	6,590	26%	34	19	195
LSVT*	18,371	74%	116	99	159
All LHA areas	24,961	100%	71	43	354

Source: HSSA Returns 2005-06. Figures are rounded. * Full or partial LSVT.

Map 4.2 shows the local authority nominations to HAs taken up by statutorily homeless households as a proportion of all the lets/nominations recorded in the HSSA returns for statutorily homeless households, by LHA area.

It was generally the case that LSVT areas saw proportionately greater HA activity and non-LSVT areas saw lower HA activity, but just like the CORE data suggested, HSSA also showed that LSVT status did not wholly explain relative HA activity.

Why HSSA and CORE showed the same patterns but recorded different totals

In overall terms, the CORE total was 14% lower than the HSSA total for England. Across 343 LHAs in England for which both data sets were available, the 2005-06 HSSA recorded an average of 71 statutorily homeless households taking up

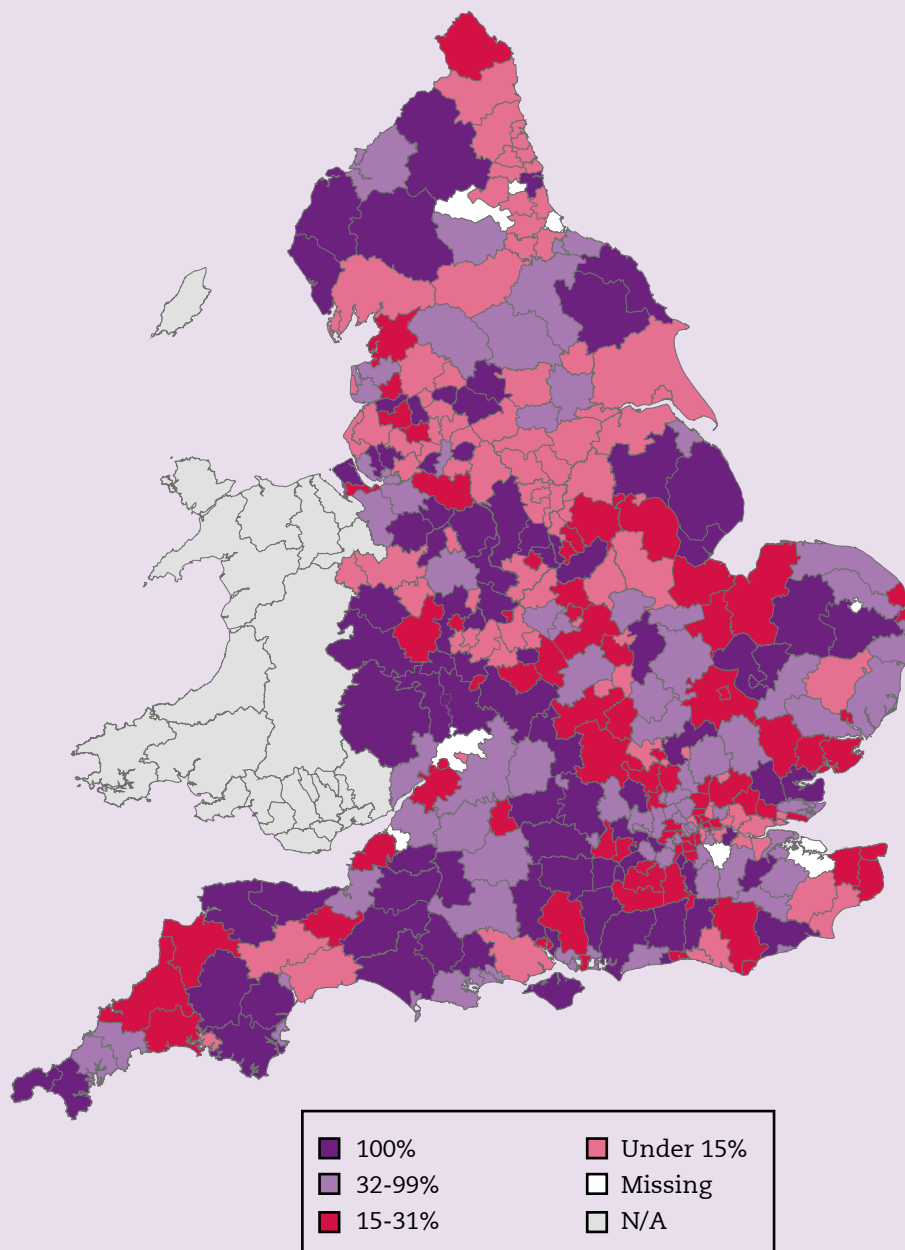
nominations to HAs, while CORE recorded an average of 61 being housed by HAs.

Direct comparison between CORE and HSSA data is not possible. HSSA records LHA nominations to HAs taken up (i.e. offers of housing that have been accepted) by statutorily homeless households rather than the actual HA lets to statutorily homeless households that are recorded in CORE.

Only a minority of areas had a difference of more than 20 statutorily homeless households between HSSA and CORE (Figure 4.1). In 26% of LHA areas, CORE recorded at least 21 households fewer than the HSSA statistic on nominations taken up within the same LHA. In a further 27% of LHAs, the CORE statistic was between four and 20 households less than the HSSA statistic (Figure 4.1).

Map 4.2: Percentage of all HSSA recorded lets/nominations* taken up by statutorily homeless households accounted for by local authority nominations to housing associations

Housing association lets to statutorily homeless households as a % of all lets to statutorily homeless households



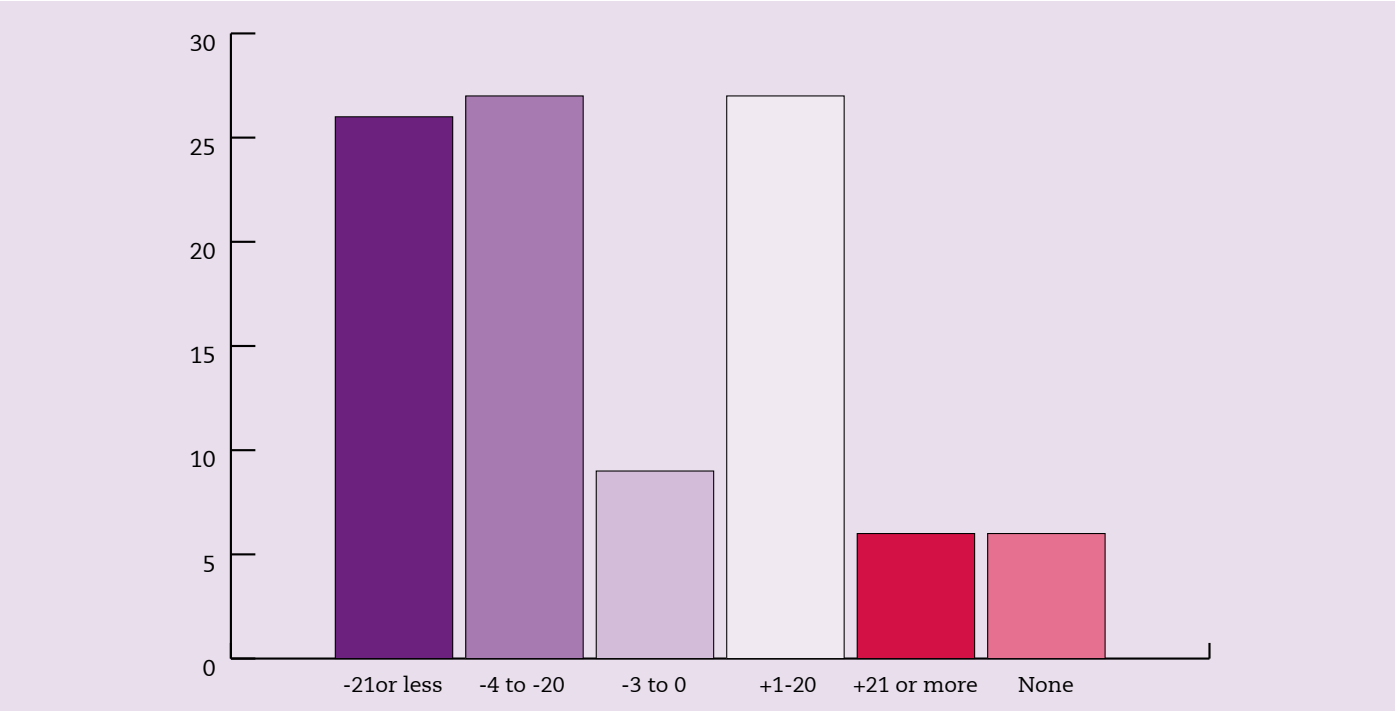
Source HSSA returns 2005/06

* Includes local authority lets (including introductory tenancies), HA lets, PRS lets and homeless households in priority need placed in other non-local authority settled accommodation not provided by HAs (RSLs) or the private rented sector. In a few instances this may have included owner occupation and low cost home ownership.

Detailed discussions with the CORE collection team at the Centre For Housing Research, University of St Andrews⁵³ were coupled with data analysis to determine the likely reasons for these differences. This work concluded that errors in one or both data sets were very unlikely to be the cause of discrepancies⁵⁴. Other factors that may have explained the differences may have included the following:

- it appeared to be the case that households were recorded as accepting a nomination in HSSA one year, but might not have that nomination recorded as a let in CORE until the following year, particularly in areas with higher temporary accommodation use. London accounted for 43% of the shortfall between HSSA and CORE;

Figure 4.1: Differences between CORE record of general needs lets to statutorily homeless households and HSSA statistic on statutorily homeless households taking up local authority nominations to HA tenancies, by percentage of LHAs



Source: CORE 2005-06 P1E 2005-06. Base: 337 LHAs (data were not available for 17 authorities).

⁵³ <http://www.core.ac.uk/>

⁵⁴ Both the HSSA and CORE data sets are subject to extensive error checking procedures.

- the shortfall between CORE and HSSA was not explained by statutorily homeless households taking up nominations to HA dwellings outside an LHA's area. The HSSA statistics for 2005-06 only recorded 186 statutorily homeless households that had accepted a local authority nomination to a HA dwelling outside that local authority's area;
- some households may effectively withdraw their applications before they are housed by HAs (e.g. if an offered tenancy is viewed as unacceptable) and thus appear in HSSA data but not in CORE; and
- some households drop out of the homelessness system between LHA nomination and being offered an HA tenancy, again they would thereby appear in the HSSA data but not in CORE.
- nationally, within non-LSVT areas, CORE recorded HA general needs lets to statutorily homeless households were equivalent to 10% of acceptances (55% of authorities, 195 LHAs, were non-LSVT); and
- overall, total HA lets to statutorily homeless households were equivalent to 23% of acceptances during 2005-06.

In 2006-07, these figures rose, though this was linked more to the fall in acceptances (see Chapter 3) than to the small rise in total HA activity (see Table 4.3). Nationally, in non-LSVT areas, HAs lets to statutorily homeless households rose to an the equivalent of 15% of acceptances. Within LSVT areas, CORE recorded HA general needs lets were equivalent to 53% of acceptances. Across England, HA general needs lets to statutorily homeless households were equivalent to 32% of acceptances during 2006-07.

The P1E statistics

When P1E⁵⁵ and CORE statistics for 2005-06 were compared it was found that:

- nationally, within LSVT areas, CORE recorded HA general needs lets to statutorily homeless households were equivalent to 41% of homelessness acceptances (45% of LHAs, 159 authorities, were LSVT);

Contrasting CORE with this third data source showed the same broad patterns as were found within the CORE and HSSA statistics.

There were no great differences existed between the statutorily homeless households that HAs housed and the LHAs accepted as homeless⁵⁶ (Table 4.7). Housing associations tended to house households containing children at a slightly lower rate than they were accepted as homeless. They

⁵⁵ Based on grossed data that included estimates for non-responding authorities.

⁵⁶ Both data sets record more detail on household and applicant characteristics, but these data cannot be compared directly because differing categories are used.

also housed BME groups and households headed by someone aged 16-24 at slightly lower rates than they were accepted. No association was found between the LSVT status of authorities and the proportion of different types of statutorily homeless households given general needs lets by HAs.

Why there were differences between CORE and P1E data

CORE provides basic demographic details on each household given a new HA let. The P1E returns are confined to summary data on the decisions taken under the homelessness legislation and the

numbers and broad types of households that are found statutorily homeless by LHAs.

In non-LSVT areas, P1E would obviously never be equivalent to the general needs lets made to statutorily homeless households by HAs. This is because an LHA or an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) is an active social landlord in these areas.

CORE may record HA general needs lets to statutorily homeless households who may have been accepted some time before. To give a theoretical example, a family is accepted in 2003-04 in a London, waits several years in

Table 4.7: Households accepted as homeless in 2005-06 and 2006-07 compared to CORE recorded statutorily homeless households receiving housing association general needs lets (England)

	P1E 2005-06	CORE 2005-06	P1E 2006-07	CORE 2006-07
Household containing children*	65%	55%	67%	54%
Other	35%	45%	33%	46%
White applicant/tenant	74%	83%	74%	84%
Black applicant/tenant	11%	8%	10%	7%
Asian applicant/tenant	6%	4%	6%	4%
Other origin	5%	5%	5%	5%
Not stated/recorded	5%	-	5%	-
Applicant/tenant 16-24	39%	35%	41%	35%
Base (acceptances/lets)	93,980	21,470	73,360	23,223

Source: P1E Returns for 2005-06 and 2006-07 and CORE returns for 2005-06 and 2006-07. * including pregnant women with no other children.

temporary accommodation (not an unlikely contingency⁵⁷), and is then given a general needs let by an HA in 2006-07. P1E records the family in 2003-04 while CORE records that same household finally receiving an HA let in 2006-07. During 2005-06, CORE reported that there only 26 HAs, among the 500 plus that made any lets to statutorily homeless households, which did not report that at least some of those households had last lived in temporary accommodation.

The LSVT status of the local housing authorities and housing associations that responded to the survey

The 212 LHAs that responded to the survey of LHAs⁵⁸ were fairly evenly divided between non-LSVT and LSVT authorities (45% were non-LSVT and 55% were LSVT⁵⁹). District councils, metropolitan districts and the English unitary authorities were also quite well represented⁶⁰. However, only one third of London boroughs responded to the questionnaire, most of which were non-LSVT areas (ten out of 12 responding boroughs). The responding LHAs were not evenly

divided among the regions of England. However, there was quite strong representation of LHAs in the North, East of England and the South West (Table 4.8).

The 144 HAs that responded to the survey⁶¹ were divided between LSVT HAs (39%), a small number (8%) that were involved in LSVT arrangements but which had not been created by an LSVT, and traditional HAs (53%).

As is shown in Table 4.9, there was a relatively strong representation of LSVT HAs that operated in just one LHA area. Those HAs operating over six or more areas tended to be traditional HAs and were less likely to be involved in LSVT arrangements.

Exploring why LSVT status did not wholly explain relative levels of housing association lets to statutorily homeless households

The LSVT status of authorities generally indicated whether or not HA lets to statutorily homeless households would be proportionately higher or lower. However, there were LSVT authorities in which proportionate HA activity was much lower than elsewhere and non-LSVT authorities in

⁵⁷ Pleace, N. et al (2007) Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 Year Olds London: Communities and Local Government.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 1.

⁵⁹ Almost all these LHAs were full transfer authorities, but very small number of responding LHAs were partial transfer areas (i.e. the LHA retained management of some housing stock).

⁶⁰ There were 144 responding non-metropolitan district councils, 23 responding metropolitan district councils and 28 responding English unitary authorities.

⁶¹ See Chapter 1

Table 4.8: Region and transfer status of responding LHAs

Region	Non LSVT areas	LSVT areas*	Number of LHAs	As % of all responding LHAs
North East	73%	27%	15	7%
North West	35%	66%	29	14%
Yorkshire and the Humber	62%	39%	13	6%
East Midlands	71%	29%	24	11%
West Midlands	42%	58%	19	9%
East of England	59%	41%	27	13%
London	83%	17%	12	6%
South East	41%	59%	46	22%
South West	52%	48%	27	13%
All	53%	47%	212	100%
Base	109	103	212	-

Source: LHA survey.

Table 4.8: Region and transfer status of responding LHAs

Number of LHA areas operated in	Not involved in LSVT	Involved in LSVT	Number of HAs	As % of all responding LHAs
One only	26%	74%	39	27%
2-5 areas	45%	55%	40	27%
6-10 areas	74%	26%	23	16%
More than 10 areas	74%	26%	42	29%
All	53%	47%	144	100%

Source: HA survey. Base: 144 responding HAs, 69 HAs were involved in LSVT arrangements and 75 were traditional HAs.

which proportionate HA activity was much higher than elsewhere. A number of factors could have explained these apparent anomalies:

- the presence or absence of CBL systems;
- the contracting out of homelessness assessment to HAs;
- levels and availability of HA stock;
- the overall level of homelessness acceptances;
- the levels of temporary accommodation use;
- lets to non-statutorily homeless households by HAs; and
- levels of homelessness relative to HA and social rented lets.

Choice-based lettings

There was no statistical evidence from CORE that CBL altered the proportionate role of HAs (an average of 17% of HA general needs lets went to statutorily homeless households in non-CBL areas, compared to 16% in CBL areas⁶²). Again, relative and overall HA activity generally increased in LSVT areas, either with or without CBL, while it was generally lower in non-LSVT areas, both with and without CBL.

Overall, 36% of LHAs that responded to the survey had CBL (see Chapter 1). One quarter of these LHAs reserved some available general needs lets⁶³ for statutorily homeless households (25%). However,

most reported that available general needs lets were reserved for groups other than statutorily homeless households (66%). One half of LHAs with CBL reported that their systems assigned high priority to statutorily homeless households on a time-limited basis (50%). The most typical periods allotted were between three and four months.

Choice-based lettings systems were not widely regarded as either improving or worsening the situation of statutorily homeless households:

- only 25% of LHAs with CBL ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that CBL allowed statutorily homeless households to be housed more quickly;
- only 24% of LHAs with CBL ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that CBL facilitated statutorily homeless households being housed in more popular areas;
- 31% of LHAs with CBL ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ that CBL allowed statutorily homeless households to be housed more quickly;
- 22% of LHAs with CBL ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ that CBL facilitated statutorily homeless households being housed in more popular areas; and
- quite high proportions of LHAs reported that CBL made ‘no difference’ to the speed with which statutorily homeless households were housed (28%) nor to whether or not they were housed in more popular areas (34%).

⁶² The median figures were, respectively, 15% of HA general needs lets and 14% of HA general needs lets. Figures for 2005-06.

⁶³ Sometimes referred to as ‘giving a preference for’.

This mixed picture was reiterated in HA survey responses. Housing associations were generally more likely to be involved in CBL arrangements than were the LHAs. While only 27% were involved in CBL in their main area of operation, another 39% were involved in one or more CBL systems within other local authority areas, meaning that 66% overall were involved in CBL in at least one area.

Like the LHAs, HAs involved in CBL were divided by those reporting it allowed statutorily homeless households to be housed more quickly (30%), those that reported it had no effect (44%) and those that disagreed that CBL made the housing of statutorily homeless households more rapid (26%). Overall, 41% of HAs involved in CBL reported that it facilitated statutorily homeless households being housed in more popular areas, though another 30% reported it ‘made no difference’, while 29% did not report that CBL made this more likely.

The respondents from the London boroughs reported a lack of bids from statutorily homeless households in CBL systems. One reason was the accessibility of the CBL systems to some statutorily homeless households, which applied if a household did not understand the process⁶⁴. Another reason was that some households were sometimes quite happy with their temporary accommodation and had limited incentives to bid:

“We also find that our homeless applicants aren’t always bidding, as they are in very nice temporary accommodation they are happy to just sit there... This means that we have to put a lot of bidding support in, although we do reserve the right to make direct offers, and we did for a while last year but members [councillors] don’t like it... We are hoping that this is a temporary blip... Overall, though, CBL has to be a good thing and the RSLs are on board... and void turnaround time seems to have been reduced.”

Choice-based lettings were generally seen as improving outcomes for statutorily homeless households in London, but at cost of resources being needing to support some households through the process. Some other respondents also reported that CBL as increasing equity and outcomes for statutorily homeless households.

Outside London, there were also concerns that vacancies restricted to statutorily homeless households were sometimes not attracting any bids. Some respondents reported they had to re-advertise available lets that had not attracted any bids when they were confined to ‘high need’ applicants. This was seen as slowing down allocations and creating issues around void levels for some HAs. In two areas, more active support of statutorily homeless households, including case management by specially designated staff, was being employed to ensure bids were received:

⁶⁴ In London, there was sometimes an issue because a household did not have English as a first language, as well as some households with support needs requiring assistance to navigate the CBL system.

“You have to work with them so that they know what they have to do.”

Debates were sometimes reported about the, weighting, or degree of priority over other households, that statutorily homeless households had. LHA respondents reported that there were arguments for and against increasing the ‘bands’ or groups that statutorily homeless households should be placed within. Some respondents also reported that they were still fine tuning their CBL systems to produce the most desirable outcomes and that this might mean that they would alter the status of statutorily homeless households.

In one LHA, the impending introduction of CBL was seen as being likely to raise numbers in temporary accommodation, a function of what were perceived as longer and more complex administrative processes than had been the case with a nominations system. Within the London boroughs, CBL was viewed as the cause of a short-term rise in temporary accommodation use:

“Yes, in the short-term... we reviewed our lettings policy at the same time as we introduced CBL and de-prioritised homeless households... That was a deliberate policy decision as homeless households used to be super-priority and would whistle in and out of TA, which we realised gave them perverse incentive to go down the homelessness route, [so] we increased priority for other forms of acute need

such as overcrowding, medical needs etc... In the short term this has resulted in people spending a lot longer in TA... That is a problem with our TA targets.”

A particular concern was reported by one national level HA that operated over more than 200 LHA areas. This HA reported that it had real concerns about the cost and time it was taking to fill voids under CBL systems. The differences between CBL systems was also seen as making things complex for this HA. In areas in which it had a limited presence, this HA was contemplating moving its entire stock to 100% LHA nominations.

A few HA respondents also viewed CBL as a challenging new aspect of managing the socioeconomic balance within their housing (see below).

In several areas CBL was still in the process of being introduced, so LHAs were unable to comment on its operational realities.

In overall terms, the evidence on CBL suggested mixed impacts. In many areas, it was not seen as making any difference to HA activity or to the experiences of statutorily homeless households, in smaller numbers of areas it was seen as improving or worsening the situation of statutorily homeless households.

Contracting out homelessness assessments to HAs

In total, 10% of responding LHAs reported that the LSVT HA, or another HA, carried out homelessness assessments in their area. However, another 9% of LHAs reported that their homelessness service had been contracted out at some point in the past, but that they had taken it back in house. The remaining 74% of authorities had not contracted out their homelessness services.

The evidence from the research was that contracting out of homelessness services had started to happen on quite a large scale, but that LHAs had begun to pull out of these arrangements and not to make new ones. The reasons for this appeared to stem from a lack of control over the homelessness assessment process, for which LHAs remained legally accountable. The loss of direct control over assessment procedures would, in particular, also make it potentially more difficult to pursue the preventative agenda (see Chapter 2).

No differences in HA activity in making lets to statutorily homeless households were found to be associated with whether or not an LHA had contracted out its homelessness assessment services. However, it should be noted that just one case study area and one case study HA involved in contracting out homelessness assessments were included in the interviews and focus groups.

Levels and availability of suitable housing association stock

It was not possible to control for a 'lack of fit' between the types of housing HAs had and the needs of statutorily homeless households using available national level data sets. This meant that this issue could not be explored by this method.

Individual housing associations and individual LHA areas had levels of unfit HA stock that were very low (usually under 1%). No relationship between levels of unfit HA stock and HA lets to statutorily homeless households could be found.

A few LHA respondents who participated in focus groups or interviews did however identify a 'lack of fit' between some statutorily homeless households and the range of vacancies that HAs had available. In one area, partnership was generally viewed as good and the HA sector was seen as providing what could reasonably be expected. However, it was reported that HAs were unable to offer stock that was suitable for some statutorily homeless households. This was seen as a result of the nature of statutory homelessness in the area and the nature of HA stock, rather than HAs deliberately offering only that housing which was unlikely to be suitable as a way of avoiding housing statutorily homeless households.

General constraints in the availability of all social rented stock in relation to housing need were identified by LHA respondents. In one city, the clearance of difficult-to-let estates, and their

replacement with smaller number of mixed tenure units, was seen as constricting supply. In some rural areas, the social rented sector was seen as being generally too small to cope with housing need and homelessness.

Respondents working for HAs that operated across many different LHA areas, but which often had low numbers of flats or houses within any one area, sometimes spoke of the difficulty in managing LHA expectations of 100% nominations rights to this housing. Negotiations to only allow nominations to some available lets could sometimes be protracted and difficult (see Chapter 2). Other HA respondents working for similar associations were attracted by the prospect of not having to provide uneconomic allocations services for small amounts of housing and actively pursued 100% nominations rights for LHAs where they had only small amounts of stock⁶⁵.

In two areas LHA respondents reported that the HAs were 'businesses' that 'could only build small properties' because that was what was affordable to them. This situation was described as leading the LHA to look increasingly to the PRS as a means by which to discharge its responsibilities. This was not a widespread finding however.

A few LHA respondents reported that under-occupation of HA stock was constricting supply. It was thought that more work was needed to free up

this stock (for example offering sheltered housing to older people on their own who were under-occupying a large house). This issue was confined to rural areas.

Some HA respondents reported in their interviews and the focus groups in which they participated that they sometimes had very little stock to offer. These were associations with low turnover in limited stock, including a number of HAs that operated over a great many LHA areas but which had only restricted stock within most of those LHAs areas. These respondents reported that they might be sometimes seen as 'unco-operative', but the reality was that they had low turnover and few lets to offer.

Although not indicated by statistical evidence, there was qualitative evidence that availability of HA lets was sometimes influencing the proportion of lets that HAs could make to statutorily homeless households. While an issue, availability of suitable stock did not entirely explain the variation in HA activity within LSVT areas and within non-LSVT areas.

The overall level of homelessness acceptances

Figure 4.2 divides local authorities into quartiles according to their level of acceptances. The

⁶⁵ See also: Pawson, H. and Mullins, D. (2003) *Changing Places: Housing Association Policy and Practice on Nominations and Lettings* Bristol: Policy Press.

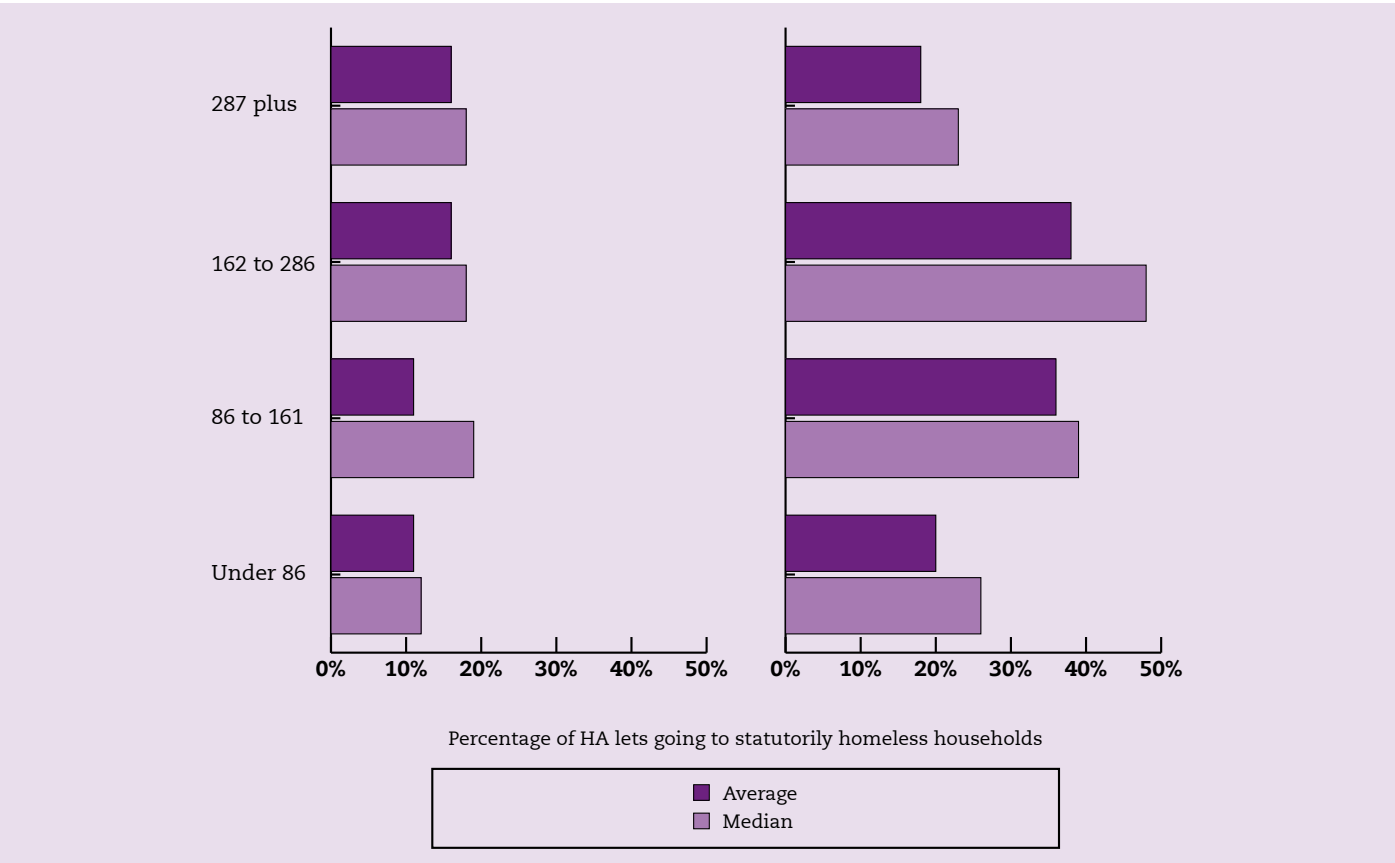
average and median proportion of HA general needs lets is shown for each quartile and, as can be seen, this was consistently higher in LSVT areas than in non-LSVT areas⁶⁶.

Proportionate HA activity fell back in the quartile of local authority areas with the highest level of homelessness acceptances (287 or more) [Figure 4.2]. However, HAs actually made more lets to statutorily homeless households in these areas

than they did in authorities in the third quartile (162-286 acceptances):

- in the quartile of LHAs in which homelessness acceptances were highest (287 or more), HAs made 8,832 lets to statutorily homeless households, which represented 14% of the 62,933 general needs lets they made in total; and

Figure 4.2: Average and median percentage of general needs housing association lets given to statutorily homeless households by quartiles of homelessness acceptances during 2005-06.



Source: CORE 2005-06 and P1E 2005-06. P1E data are grossed figures which include estimates for non-responding authorities. Base: 354 authorities (159 LSVT and 195 Non-LSVT as at 1st April 2006).

⁶⁶ The lowest quartile included LHAs in which 80 or fewer households were found statutorily homeless, the highest was LHAs with 275 or more households found statutorily homeless according (2005-06 P1E returns).

- 5,902 lets were made to statutorily homeless households in areas with acceptances in the 162-286 range, which represented 21% of the 28,187 general needs HA lets made.

Differences in HA activity within LSVT and within non-LSVT areas were not strongly associated with levels of homelessness acceptances. However, regression analysis (see below) did indicate that proportionately higher HA activity was associated with authorities being in the highest quartile of acceptances during 2005-06.

Levels of temporary accommodation use

No association was found between overall numbers of households in temporary accommodation who had been found statutorily homeless (see Chapter 4) and proportionate levels of HA activity in making lets to statutorily homeless households.

The Centre for Housing Policy has developed a simple indicator of relative temporary accommodation stress called the 'temporary accommodation ratio'⁶⁷. Determining the ratio for an LHA simply involves dividing the average number of statutorily homeless households in temporary accommodation at any point in a given year by the annual homelessness acceptances for

the same year. The data are derived from the P1E Returns.

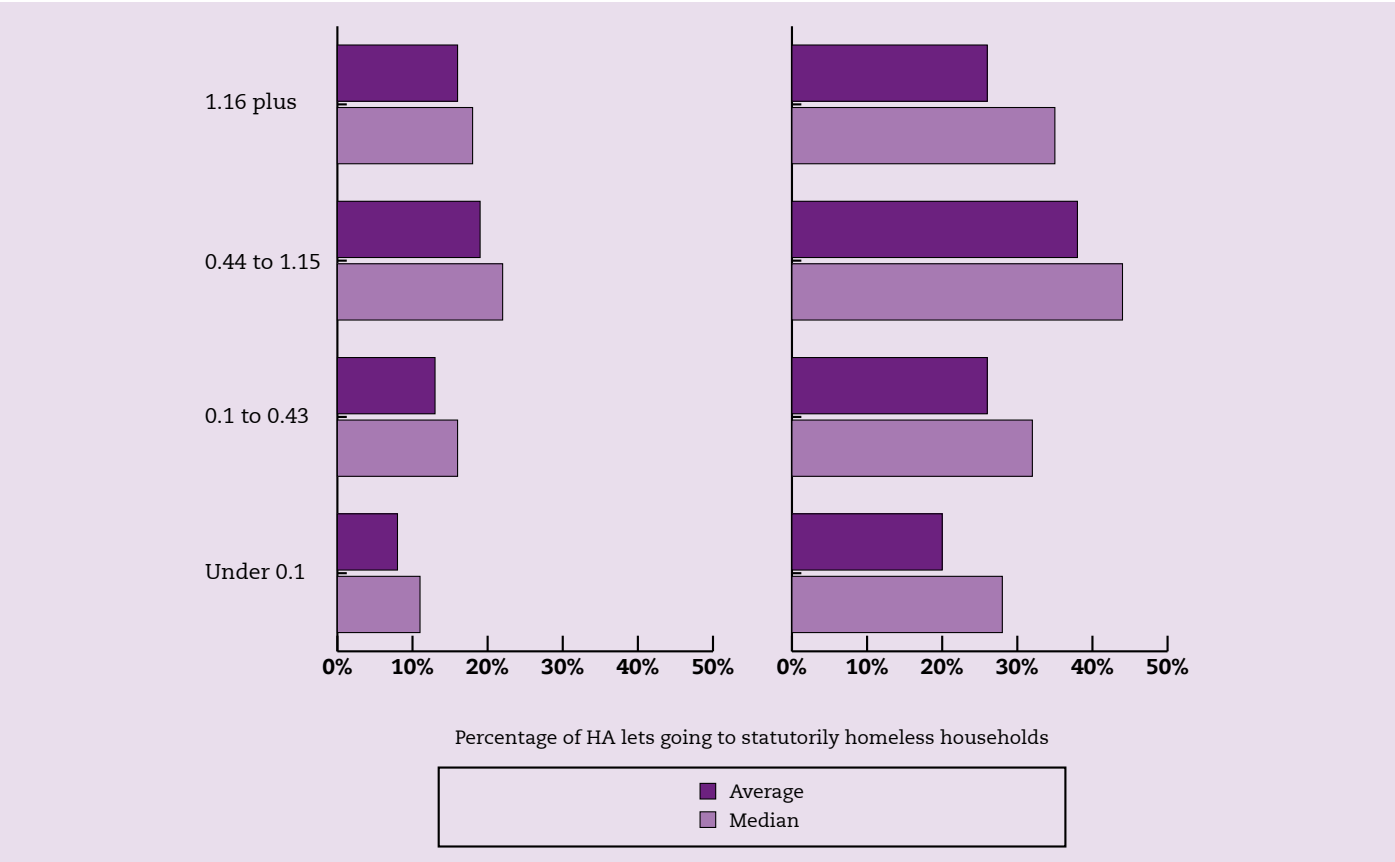
In London, during 2005-06, the average temporary accommodation ratio across the boroughs was 2.76, i.e. there were, on average, the equivalent of 2.76 households in temporary accommodation for each new household accepted as homeless. In the South East, the ratio was 1.74, or, on average, 1¾ households in temporary accommodation for each new household accepted.

By contrast in the North East, the average ratio was 0.17, which meant that, on average, approximately one household was in temporary accommodation for every five that were accepted. Equivalent ratios existed in Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and the North West. Elsewhere the ratio was almost one household in temporary accommodation for each new one accepted (.88 in the South West, 0.73 in the East of England). The East Midlands had, on average, the equivalent of 0.58 households in temporary accommodation for each new one that was accepted.

The temporary accommodation ratio is perhaps best described as a measure of the 'backlog' or 'pool' of statutorily homeless households that an area has in temporary accommodation. It is a relative measure of temporary accommodation usage.

⁶⁷ See Pleace, N. et al (2007) Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 Year Olds London: Communities and Local Government.

Figure 4.3: Average and median percentage of general needs housing association lets given to statutorily homeless households by quartiles of local housing authorities 2005-06 based on temporary accommodation ratios.



Source: CORE 2005-06 and P1E 2005-06. P1E data are grossed figures which include estimates for non-responding authorities. Base: 354 authorities (159 LSVT and 195 Non-LSVT as at 1st April 2006).

In non-LSVT areas, the proportion of HA lets going to statutorily homeless households was higher in areas with a higher temporary accommodation ratio, though the difference was not marked (Figure 4.3). In addition, the proportion of HA lets going to statutorily homeless households remained consistently higher in LSVT areas than it was in non-LSVT areas (Figure 4.3).

Supported accommodation only represents a minority of temporary accommodation use. No associations between use of supported accommodation and proportionate HA activity in making general needs lets to statutorily homeless households could be found (see Chapter 3).

Housing association lets to non-statutorily homeless households

A total of 8,831 households, defined as ‘other homeless’ within CORE, were housed by HAs in general needs lets during 2005-06. The categorisation of ‘other homeless’ is a little nebulous because it potentially includes households that:

- had been found not to be statutorily homeless by an LHA;
- were awaiting a LHA decision;
- had not approached an LHA to see if they might qualify as a statutorily homeless household; and
- had been determined, using criteria that may have been particular to an HA or an individual completing a CORE return, to be ‘homeless’⁶⁸.

Nationally, for every ten lets it made to statutorily homeless households, the HA sector made four to ‘other homeless’ households.

Housing associations allocated a lower proportion of lets to non-statutorily homeless households in areas with a high temporary accommodation ratio and within LSVT LHA areas.

Making lets to non-statutorily homeless households was a fairly minor activity for almost

all the HA sector. There was no evidence to suggest that the role of HAs in providing general lets to non statutorily homeless households had any impact on the rate or overall number of HAs lets made to statutorily homeless households.

Levels of housing association and social rented lets relative to the levels of statutory homelessness

Most HAs, whether they were LSVT or traditional, did not make the bulk of their lets to statutorily homeless households. It was also the case that, in most LHA areas, the bulk of HA lets were not made to statutorily homeless households. As has been shown, proportionate HA activity tended to remain quite low even within areas in which acceptances or temporary accommodation use was high.

One obvious explanation for this pattern might be that HAs did not need to devote any more of their available general needs lets to statutorily homeless households than was already the case. There might be several reasons for this:

- in some areas, there were few acceptances compared to the number of lets that the HA sector had available during the course of a year; and
- in non-LSVT areas, the LHA or an ALMO was still an active social landlord and HAs did not need to take a larger role than they already did.

⁶⁸ For guidance on the CORE returns see: <http://www.core.ac.uk/>

To explore whether this was the case, the research team looked at two sets of LHAs in detail. The first set were the 100 LHAs in which the HA sector made more than 30% of its general needs lets to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06. The second set were the 86 LHAs in which the HA sector made 10% or less of its needs lets to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06.

It was found that the following factors were independently associated⁶⁹ with local authorities being those in which 30% or more of CORE-recorded HA general needs lets went to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06:

- LSVT LHA areas were far more likely to have an HA sector making 30% or more of its lets to statutorily homeless households (46% compared to 14% of non-LSVT LHA areas);
- only 13% of LHA areas with 80 or fewer homelessness acceptances (the lowest quartile) were in this group, compared to 33% of areas with higher levels of homelessness acceptances (see Figure 4.2);
- only 14% of the quartile of LHAs with the lowest temporary accommodation ratio (0.3 or less) were in this group. This compared with 33% of areas with higher temporary accommodation ratios (see Figure 4.3);
- rural LHAs⁷⁰ were more likely (40%) to be in this group than urban areas (17%), as noted this 'rural' effect was found to exist independently of the transfer status of LHAs, so it was not wholly explained by the higher level of LSVT LHAs in rural areas;
- authorities in the East of England were more likely than those elsewhere (50% compared to 25%) to be in this group, again this effect was found not to be wholly explained by the higher levels of LSVT LHAs in this area (see Map 5.1);
- the South West had the same characteristics (51% compared to 24% of authorities elsewhere), again this effect was not wholly down to the level of LSVT LHAs in the region;
- metropolitan district councils (major conurbations of the Midlands and the North) were unlikely to be in this group, only 3% of these LHAs were within it, compared to 31% of other types of LHAs, again this effect was independent of the lower proportion of LSVT LHAs in these areas; and
- LHAs in which the HA sector made 50 or more general needs lets to statutorily homeless households were more likely to be in this group

⁶⁹ i.e. the listed factors were found to be significantly associated when the others listed here were held constant alongside them. The technique employed was binary logistic regression, which tested whether a local authority had an HA sector making 30% or more of its lets to statutorily homeless households against the temporary accommodation ratio for local authorities (quartiles 1-4), level of homelessness acceptances (quartiles 1-4), government regions (including London), whether an area had a significant rural population according to DEFRA definitions and whether or not an LSVT or non-LSVT authority. The broad type of local authority was also tested using metropolitan district, English unitary and district council (London boroughs were covered by the government region for London). Whether an authority operated a Choice-Based Lettings scheme was also included. Whether or not the HA sector in a local authority area made 50 or more lets to statutorily homeless households was also included.

⁷⁰ See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm>

(47% compared to 14% of LHAs with fewer than 50 HA general needs lets to statutorily homeless households⁷¹).

It was found that the following factors were independently associated⁷² with local authorities being those in which 10% or less of CORE recorded HA general needs lets went to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06.

- Metropolitan district councils were more likely than other types of local authority to be in this group (53% compared to 21% of other authorities);
- Authorities in the North East were more likely to be in this group (52% compared to 22% of other regions), as were authorities in the North West (44% compared to 22% of other regions);
- LSVT authorities were unlikely to be in this group (11% of LSVT authorities compared to 35% of non-LSVT authorities), those authorities in which 50 or more HA general needs lets were made to statutorily homeless households were also less likely to be in this group (6% compared to 37% of other authorities); and

- These factors all appeared linked to levels of council or ALMO managed housing within areas.

Evidence on the role of LSVT status compared to other factors

Looking at the activity of the HA sector at local authority level it can be concluded:

- the transfer status of a local authority area is closely linked to the rate at which the HA sector make general needs lets available to statutorily homeless households;
- transfer status is, however, not the sole explanation, there are regional effects that extend beyond this, with proportionately higher HA activity in the South and East and in rural areas, while proportionately lower HA activity is found in the North;
- high use of temporary accommodation for statutorily homeless households and high levels of homelessness acceptances are associated with proportionately higher HA

⁷¹ There were 143 LHAs (40% of all authorities) in which HA sector general needs lets to statutorily homeless households were 50 or more in number.

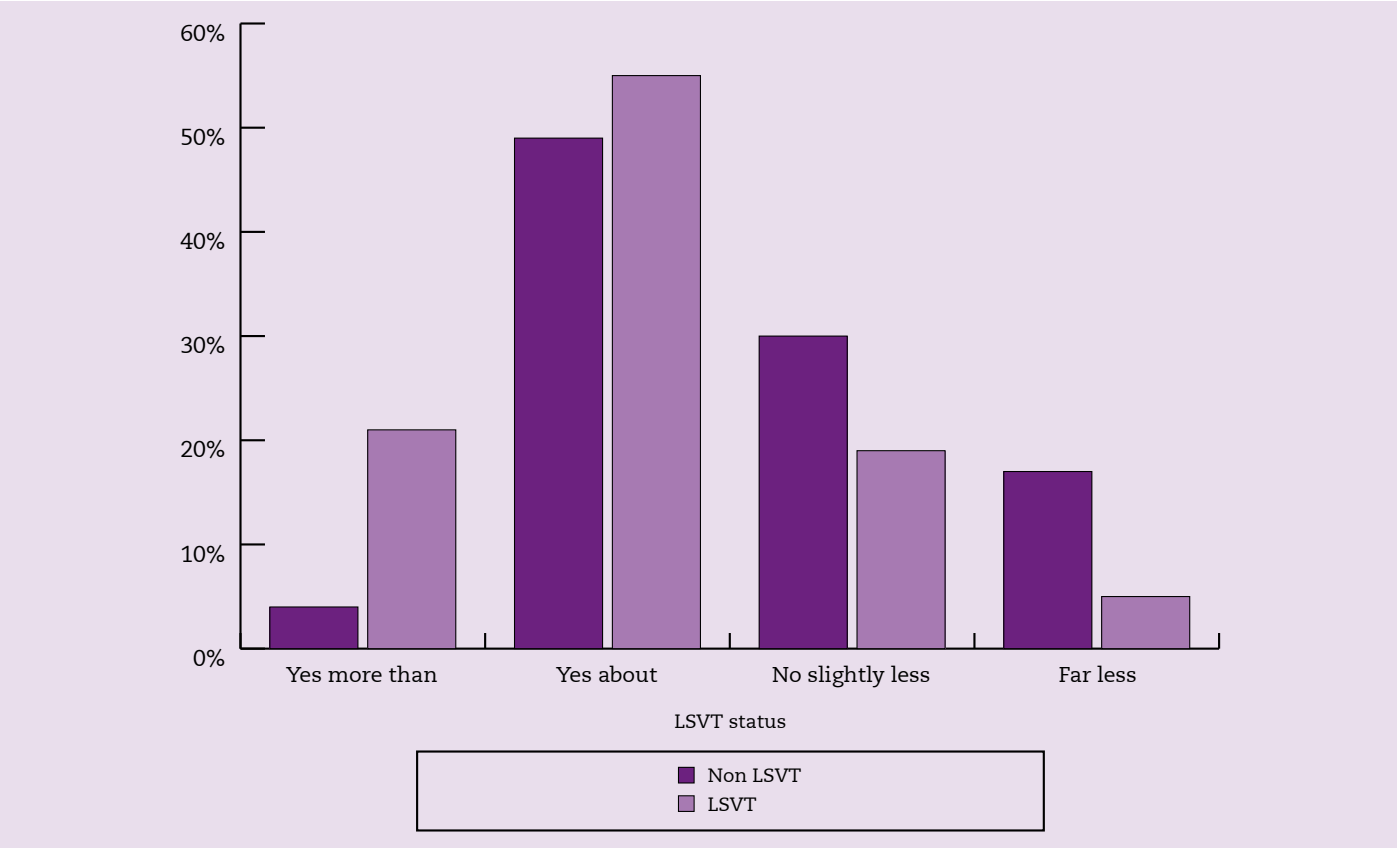
⁷² i.e. the listed factors were found to be significantly associated when the others listed here were held constant alongside them. The technique employed was binary logistic regression, which tested whether a local authority had an HA sector making 30% or more of its lets to statutorily homeless households against the temporary accommodation ratio for local authorities (quartiles 1-4), level of homelessness acceptances (quartiles 1-4), government regions (including London), whether an area had a significant rural population according to DEFRA definitions and whether or not an LSVT or non-LSVT authority. The broad type of local authority was also tested using metropolitan district, English unitary and district council (London boroughs were covered by the government region for London). Whether an authority operated a Choice-Based Lettings scheme was also included. Whether or not the HA sector in a local authority area made 50 or more lets to statutorily homeless households was also included.

- activity within LHA areas, but they were just two of many factors; and
- multiple factors beyond LSVT status appear to influence levels of HA activity at the level of individual LHAs. However, no other single factor is as strongly associated with relative HA activity as LSVT status.

Views on whether housing associations housed their ‘fair share’ of statutorily homeless households

Local housing authorities that responded to the survey were more likely to report that HAs were providing a ‘fair share’ of their general needs lets if they were LSVT areas⁷³. As is shown in Figure 4.4,

Figure 4.4: Whether HAs were reported as housing their fair share of statutorily homeless households by transfer status of local housing authority



Source: LHA survey. Base: 212 LHAs (109 non-LSVT, 103 LSVT).

⁷³ LHAs were asked what a ‘fair share’ of lets would constitute in percentage terms, but the data were quite incomplete for this particular question and could not be used.

half of the LHAs that were non-LSVT areas were content with HA activity in housing statutorily homeless households (54%), as were 76% of LSVT HAs. LSVT authorities were less likely to reported that HAs were not housing their fair share of statutorily homeless households (24%) than was the case for non-LSVT authorities (37%) [Figure 4.3].

Those LHAs that reported that HAs were not housing their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households tended to have the following characteristics:

- they were overwhelmingly non-LSVT LHAs (70% of LHAs reporting HAs were not housing their 'fair share');
- were more likely to be urban/unitary LHAs (47% of these LHAs) than non-metropolitan district councils (31%);
- were LHAs that tended to have lower temporary accommodation ratios (65% had a temporary accommodation ratio below 0.45 in 2006-07, compared to 43% of other authorities, see Table 4.8);
- were LHAs that tended to have somewhat higher levels of homelessness acceptances, with an average of 273 acceptances (median 137) in 2006-07, compared to an average of 163 (median 103) for LHAs reporting that HAs were housing their 'fair share'; and

- London was not strongly represented in the survey results (only 12 boroughs out of 33 responded, see Chapter 1), but ten out of those 12 boroughs reported that HAs were housing their 'fair share'. This finding was supported by the focus groups and interviews with representatives of the boroughs.

Nine out of ten HAs that responded to the survey (89%) reported that they 're-housed'⁷⁴ "about the right number of statutorily homeless households". Very small numbers (5%) reported that they "should re-house fewer" or reported that they "should re-house a higher number" of statutorily homeless households (6%).

The perception of many LHA case study respondents was that some HAs took their fair share of statutorily homeless households, others took more than their fair share and others did not take their fair share. In one city, some HAs were entirely committing themselves, or at the very least making the bulk of their general needs lets available to statutorily homeless households, while others were reported as "rejecting 95%" of LHA nominations.

A similar pattern was described by rural LHA respondents in one county, with some HAs being described as continually turning down nominations. However, other HAs were again described as making their fair share of vacancies

⁷⁴ Technically these statutorily homeless households are being provided with settled housing, but the terminology used in the question reflected that used by HAs and LHAs.

available to statutorily homeless households. In a major city, problems had been encountered as a series of partial stock transfers to HAs had taken place. As estates passed to HA management, they suddenly became less accessible to statutorily homeless households. To some extent this had been a result of decanting due to refurbishment.

The exception was London. Housing associations within London were seen as taking their fair share of statutorily homeless households by the respondents from the boroughs. However, some of these respondents told stories that indicated that HAs that had initially not been seen as cooperating had been dealt with by using a fairly firm approach. In one instance a borough had responded to a perceived shortfall in HA commitment by recording and reporting upon HA lets made to statutorily homeless households. It had then begun summoning the larger HAs in its area to quarterly 'performance meetings'. Housing associations were described as "showing new understanding of the borough's needs" as a result of this process.

Some HA respondents in the focus groups and interviews spoke about how they saw responding to statutory homelessness as a key function of their organisation. This was something found across larger and smaller HAs:

"A social landlord needs to be working in the community and many of these [statutorily homeless] people are within in the community where we've got the properties. We don't need to

be forced or encouraged to participate in things like that, it's part of our general ethos to be involved."

"We are not selective in our judgement whether they are homeless or from the [housing] Register, what we would do though if they are coming through the homelessness route is look at any support needs they might have and whether there is a package of support. Our contribution is around the vacancies we have... The decision we have taken is to close our housing registers as there is no benefit to an applicant making half a dozen applications to RSLs and the local authority, when really there is an avenue for us to offer our nomination rights to the local authority and for the local authority to nominate so that person only has to apply once...so we have opened up the supply of our housing fully to the local authority."

Representatives of some other HAs tended to take a different view. These respondents sometimes reported that they thought there was a distorted picture of the proper role of HAs within some authorities. They thought HAs were effectively being expected to respond to whatever demands were made of them, regardless of their independent status or the other objectives that their HA had. In effect, these respondents argued, HAs were being expected to hand over the much or all of the allocation of their stock to LHA control. For HAs within London there was an expectation of 100% nomination rights from the boroughs to any new build HA developments and other HAs respondents reported feeling they were

‘battling’ to retain control over some of their own allocations:

“There is a stereotype – ‘HAs don’t want the difficult work, they just want to cream the best tenants and these poor LAs who can’t build, have no housing stock, and have all the problems’ – but it is not all black and white.”

“Generally local authorities don’t think that HAs are pulling their weight... When I worked in a local authority I thought the HAs weren’t pulling their weight and when I worked for a HA I thought ‘oh they are dumping on us’... I don’t think either is true, it is just the system and the fact that we don’t talk to one another.”

Nominations and referrals that were turned down by housing associations

The housing associations that turned down LHA statutory nominations

In total, 2,490 households were recorded as having had a statutory nomination refused by an HA during 2005-06⁷⁵. Please note that the term ‘refused nomination’ is used here to encompass all refusals to house statutorily homeless households, including via CBL systems.

There were found to be 24 HAs that had turned down one or more nominations and were not reported as having made any lets to statutorily homeless households during 2005-06. These 24 HAs accounted for 491 rejected nominations (20% of the total rejected statutory nominations). Most

Table 4.10: Rejection of LHA statutory nominations by type of housing association 2005-06

Type of HA	Number of HAs	As % of HAs	Total rejections	Average rejections*	Median Rejections*
LSVT HA	32	35%	697	22	5
LSVT HA (1 LHA)	23	22%	145	7	3
Large traditional	58	53%	1,069	18	7
Small traditional	23	20%	83	4	1
Small traditional (1 LHA)	10	11%	65	7	2
All	146	29%	2,059	14	4

Sources: CORE (2005-06). RSR (2005-06) * Total social rented units in management, including supported housing. Small HAs were defined as having under 1,500 units in management .

⁷⁵ At CHP’s request, the Housing Corporation provided RSR data on rejections of LHA statutory nominations.

of these HAs were providers of Supporting People services and only two of the 24 made any general needs lets at all during 2005-06. The reasons for nominations being rejected were not recorded, but possible explanations include there being more demand than these HAs could meet.

One-hundred and forty six HAs that made general needs lets to statutorily homeless households also turned down one or more nominations. Table 4.10 shows the types of HA that had rejected nominations. Small traditional HAs working in one LHA area were the least likely to turn down nominations (11%), quite closely followed by LSVT HAs working within one LHA area (22%). LSVT HAs working in two or more areas (35%) and, particularly, larger traditional HAs working across two or more areas (53%) were comparatively likely to have turned down statutory nominations.

Larger HAs working across at several or many LHA areas were more likely to turn down nominations. Twenty-four per cent of the HAs that worked in 10 or fewer areas had turned down a nomination, this compared to 50% of those working in more than 10 LHA areas. Sixty per cent of the HAs working in 20 or more LHA areas (45 HAs in total) had turned down nominations.

Housing associations that were confined to the Midlands, the North and the South West were less likely to turn down nominations (20% had turned down nominations), than HAs that were active in London, the South East and East (39% had turned

down nominations). These regions were those in which housing stress tended to be relatively high.

Two main sets of reasons were identified by the research as to why HAs were reported as turning down nominations. These were:

- household characteristics; and
- issues within information exchange.

These areas are explored in detail below.

The role of household characteristics

Sixty per cent of LHAs that responded to the survey reported that HAs were 'more likely' to reject certain statutorily homeless households than local authority landlords. This figure was the same for both LSVT and non-LSVT LHAs.

Some LHAs reported that some HAs 'would prefer not to prioritise the housing of statutorily homeless households compared to other households in housing need' (37%). Again, this figure was broadly consistent across LSVT (34%) and non-LSVT areas (40%).

Most LHAs reported that HAs would 'occasionally' not accept nominations (69% overall, 64% for non-LSVT areas and 74% for LSVT areas). However, it was unusual for LHAs to report that HAs 'often' rejected nominations (9% for non-LSVT, 10% for LSVT and 10% overall).

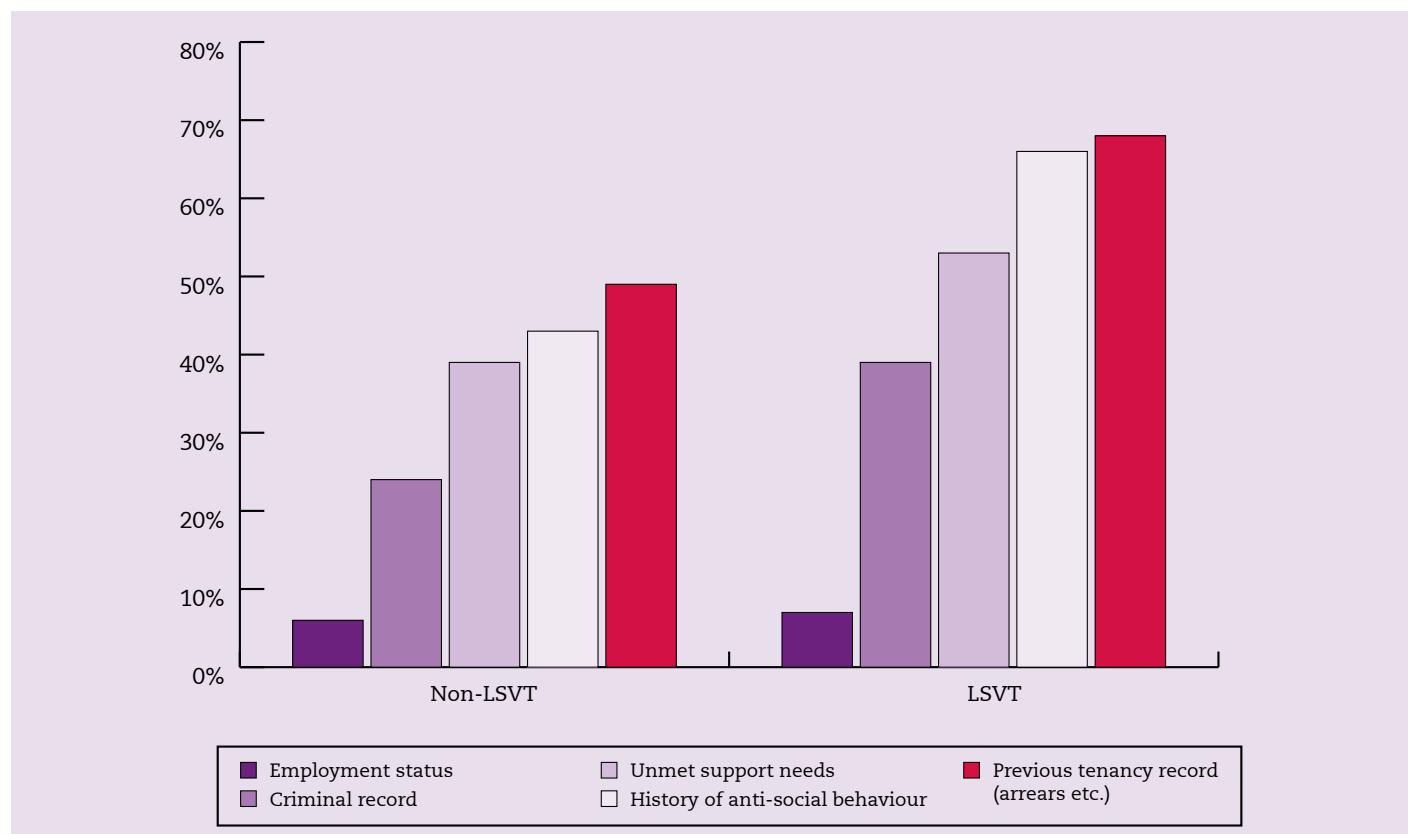
Figure 4.5 summarises why HAs sometimes rejected nominations from the point of view of LHAs. As can be seen, LHAs reported that unmet support needs, a history of anti-social behaviour and previous tenancy record (including a history of rent arrears) were the main reasons why HAs rejected nominations. These were referred to more often in LSVT areas than was the case in non-LSVT LHAs. While a criminal record was also seen by LHAs as a reason why HAs turned down some nominations, most LHAs did not report that the employment status of a household was a factor in

explaining why nominations were turned down by HAs.

Non-LSVT LHAs reported that HAs were 'more likely' to reject statutorily homeless households (36%) than LSVT LHAs (21%). Overall, only 29% of the LHAs reported that HA were more likely to turn down statutorily homeless households than other nominated households.

Housing associations themselves were quite likely to report that they had rejected one of more

Figure 4.5: Reasons why housing associations rejected nominations of statutorily homeless households according to local housing authorities.



Source: LHA survey. Base: 212 LHAs (109 non-LSVT, 103 LSVT).

nominations of statutorily homeless households during the period 2005-06 to 2006-07. Overall, 45% reported rejecting one or more nominations. The most commonly cited reasons were:

- a history of anti-social behaviour (27%);
- previous tenancy record (including arrears, 25%);
- unmet support needs (17%);
- applicant was unsuitable for notified vacancy (11%);
- a criminal record (10%); and
- employment status (7%).

Just 11% of HAs reported any form of group exclusion (i.e. a blanket ban on certain types of household). The groups that were excluded by this minority of HAs included households that an HA had previously evicted (7% of HAs) and those with serious criminal records, including Schedule 1 offenders⁷⁶ (10%).

The reasons for turning down these households under some circumstances were really reducible to two main areas of concern. The first was the concern that HAs had to create 'sustainable communities' and the second was the concern that HAs had that they would not be able to successfully manage the tenancies of people with certain types of support need. These issues are explored below.

Sustainable communities

Some LHA respondents thought that there were potential tensions for HAs in pursuing both the Housing Corporation guidance to promote stable, mixed sustainable communities and also housing some groups of statutorily homeless households. This was because homeless households were seen as being likely to be characterised by unemployment and, in the case of some groups, by high support needs:

"I do think there is something that needs to be looked at in terms of the performance framework that the Housing Corporation apply and the legislative framework that we have to work to as a local authority – and how that makes the world difficult, because I think it does. There are lots of conflict in it, I think, that make it really hard to form good partnerships because a lot of the things that associations are measured on through their CORE data mean that they are unwilling to take some risks that we might ask them to take. And yes, most good housing associations, and we have some great ones in [area], work with us... [but] at the end of the day what is really important to them in terms of generating income is CORE data and performance against that."

One LHA respondent, working for a major city, spoke of what they saw as the result of these

⁷⁶ The term 'Schedule 1 Offender' is commonly used for any one convicted of an offence against a child listed in Schedule 1 of the Children and Young Person's act 1995. Interim guidance was issued by the Home Office in 2005 to replace the term 'Schedule 1' with 'a person identified as presenting a risk, or potential risk, to children', though the term 'Schedule 1' is currently still widely used.

tensions. This was a situation in which ‘difficult’ tenants who had been found statutorily homeless were taken on by the LHA itself rather than by HAs:

“I believe that the [LHA] tends to re-house the most difficult households, whereas the associations, probably because of some of the stuff that they have to comply with from the Housing Corporation...around sustainable communities, are more likely to be able to go down a local lettings route which excludes them from some of these responsibilities, than take some of the most difficult.”

Another LHA respondent thought a debate was needed to try to reconcile the tensions between HAs priorities to create ‘sustainable communities’ and the pressures to take on statutorily homeless households:

“I think what we need to do is have a much more open debate with associations, not about figures and numbers and percentages, but about communities and sustainability.”

Some LHA respondents also expressed concerns about the wish of HAs to promote socioeconomic ‘balance’, particularly within new developments:

“One RSL was asking for 45% employed on new schemes – we just can’t sign up to something like that.”

Some LHA respondents had the view that some HAs devoted insufficient effort to promoting a socioeconomic mix via enhancing employment and training opportunities in their new developments. Instead these HAs were criticised for trying to ‘balance’ the communities within new developments by simply excluding long-term unemployed groups, including some statutorily homeless households.

Most LHA respondents generally recognised the need to promote sustainable and balanced communities from their own housing management experience. Their view was that it was not unreasonable to expect HAs to want to control the socioeconomic mix of households within reason, but that did not, of course, include total exclusion of economically inactive statutorily homeless households.

For some HA respondents, there was felt to be a lack of understanding and trust between themselves and LHAs on this issue. The perception of some respondents was that LHAs thought of ‘sustainable communities’ as a “smokescreen” that concealed an unwillingness to deal with households likely to present them with management problems. The reality, according to these respondents was more complex:

“At the moment there is just not the level of trust... between us and the LA... If we say ‘look, in this particular neighbourhood we really need to do some sensitive letting here, we can’t work with this’. I just don’t think we have that level of trust.”

“I know that the politics are with a big and small ‘p’ here, but if you start putting people in one area because they’re hard to let then that is not the way to deal with homeless people. It’s a case then of disturbing the community, you need a balanced community... If we are getting homelessness applicants all the time through the nominations and if we have only a small estate in an area, it will gradually fill up with those people and become difficult to manage, difficult and expensive to maintain and in effect it’s not what social housing is about. It’s about giving people decent homes not just pushing them into places where they don’t want to go and don’t want to stay.”

Statutorily homeless people with high support needs

According to some LHA respondents HAs varied in the extent to which they would house households with high support needs, particularly when the support needs in question might constitute a possible risk to others or existed alongside a history of anti-social behaviour. Several LHA respondents took the view that some HAs were taking a disproportionately high share, others a ‘fair share’ and some HAs a much lower share than should have been the case within their area. A few LHA respondents made references to a small number of HAs that were allegedly ‘cherry picking’ (which in this sense meant selecting prospective tenants who unlikely to present management issues and who were likely to successfully sustain tenancies).

However, some the LHA respondents had mixed views on this question. It was the view of a few respondents that in certain circumstances an LHA was better placed to house highly vulnerable or challenging tenants than some HAs were:

“RSLs don’t have the same links with the other partners as we have: the Police, Probation, social services... We have multi-agency panels for complex cases, we have one on DV [domestic violence] and we have just set one up on mental health and they [HAs] find this very useful as a way in to meeting these other partners... but it does make it easier for us to manage the very difficult tenants.”

Representatives from HAs sometimes reported that complex or multiple needs, particularly if they involved an individual or household exhibiting chaotic or challenging behaviour, were difficult for them to manage without additional support. One large association working across many LHA areas reported turning down six nominations of statutorily homeless households within one LHA area, because of an absence of what they regarded as appropriate support services. One HA respondent reported:

“Single people households, especially male, as there is almost always a problem – there must be for them to be accepted as homeless in the first place.”

People with mental health problems who exhibited anti-social behaviour were viewed by some HA respondents as the hardest group to work with. A reluctance to work with people in this group was linked both to the complexity of their needs, the housing management challenges they could present, but also to the perceived difficulties in getting social services/social care and the NHS involved⁷⁷:

“It is interesting that our anti-social behaviour worker is trained in mental health, it is no accident... The problem going forward is when you try to get referrals to the local psychiatric service.”

The other group mentioned by HA respondents was young people. There is longstanding evidence that social landlords, both LHAs and HAs, and indeed landlords in the PRS, tend to view young people in general and young men in particular, as being disproportionately likely to present management problems⁷⁸. For one respondent working with a specialist HA that focused its services on young homeless and potentially homeless young people, all general needs social landlords were reluctant to work with this group:

“They are discriminatory against young people as a group, and there are disproportionate numbers of young people who are affected by that.”

More generally, a few HA respondents also reported a concern about the withdrawal of packages of care and support to people with support needs after quite short periods of time. One example given was a statutorily homeless lone person who had mental health problems, for whom a package of support was in place when an HA provided them with settled housing. In this example, this package of services was withdrawn fairly soon after the let was made, not because it was assessed as no longer being needed, but because the service was provided on a time-limited basis. Other HA respondents also reported what they saw as a need for ongoing support for some statutorily homeless households, if they were to successfully sustain tenancies.

Some HA respondents talked about the worries that arose from concentrating too many households with high support needs in one place. Although some HA respondents also reported that they were successfully avoiding this problem:

“If you keep putting vulnerable people with support needs into the same area, you are not

⁷⁷ There is some independent evidence indicating that such a group exists, for example see: Nixon, J. Hunter, C., Myers, S., Parr, S, Sanderson, D. and Whittle, S. (2005) An Interim Evaluation of 6 Intensive Support Projects, London: ODPM. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/143393>

⁷⁸ For example see Pleace, N (1995) Housing Vulnerable Single Homeless People York: The Centre for Housing Policy, University of York <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/pleace.pdf>

going to sustain that area. That area is going to be a problem. And what you need, where we have been most successful, is rather than pepper-potting rented in development terms, actually is where we are able to pepper-pot those people with support needs.”

Respondents working for HAs sometimes reported turning down households or individuals with a criminal record or anti-social behaviour on the basis of anticipated risk to surrounding households. Housing associations were reported as being unlikely to house ‘high risk’ households with extensive support being in place:

“All these people can be supported in the community, that is the whole point of care in the community and we agree with that principle. The point is that if you put someone in an area that is already under pressure and say, in the most extreme case, we house a paedophile there, how do we manage that without any resources?”

However, different HA respondents had different views on this question. Those respondents working for HAs that provided Supporting People services were, as would be expected, more likely to consider individuals or households that might present a risk. Some respondents working for general needs HAs also said that they would house individuals who represented a potential risk if the proper support were in place.

Individual examples of successful joint working for statutorily homeless households with higher support needs were often reported by HA representatives and by LHA staff. Such examples almost always had three main characteristics:

- the project was small in scale and focused on a tightly defined group, e.g. former offenders who had been accepted as statutorily homeless and who had care and support needs;
- the project was organised and funded, at least in part, under the auspices of the Supporting People programme;
- coverage was often restricted in some respect, for example to certain areas or certain social landlords.

Issues within information exchange

A majority of LHAs reported that they passed on information about any support needs that statutorily homeless households had to HAs (59%). However, a considerable number (35%) only reported passing on information where there was a “known risk”, while a very small number (5%) admitted not passing on information.

Routine information transfer on all statutorily homeless households was more common for LSVT LHAs (68%) than was the case for non-LSVT LHAs (52%). No differences were reported by local authority type, for example urban or rural authorities were no more or less likely to transfer information.

Those LHAs that reported that HAs were housing a 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households tended to pass on information on a routine basis (64%) more frequently than those LHAs that did not take this view (50%). While LHAs that were discontented with the rate at which HAs housed statutorily homeless households were more likely to only share information where there was a known risk (42%, compared to 31% of LHAs who reported HAs housing their 'fair share'), they were like other LHAs, unlikely to report only occasionally or even never sharing information with HAs.

Overall, 58% of LHAs reported that they had an information sharing protocol with HAs in their area that covered one or more groups of homeless people.

Information sharing protocols were most frequently reported by LHAs with the following characteristics:

- they were more likely to be LSVT LHAs (68%) than non-LSVT LHAs (50%); and
- LHAs that reported that HAs did not house their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households were less likely to a protocol (46%) than those LHAs reported that HAs did house their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households (65%).

These information sharing protocols were not viewed as unqualified successes by those LHAs that possessed them. Only 5% of those with a protocol described it as working 'very well', while 46% used the term 'quite well', while the remaining 49% of LHAs were less positive.

Only one third of HAs (33%) reported that the LHA in their main area of operation 'routinely' provided information on vulnerable statutorily homeless households in their survey responses. Another 31% reported that they received information where there was a 'known' or 'anticipated' risk.

However, 22% reported that LHAs 'only occasionally' passed on information about vulnerable households and 14% reported that they 'never' received such information. This picture was markedly worse than the one suggested by the LHA survey responses.

Housing association satisfaction with information sharing by LHAs in their main area of operation was low. Only 11% reported they were 'very satisfied' with existing arrangements for sharing information on vulnerable statutorily homeless households, though a further 24% reported they were 'satisfied'. However, 65% of HAs expressed at least some dissatisfaction with current information sharing arrangements.

There were not strong differences between HAs involved in LSVT arrangements and traditional HAs in this respect. Both were likely to be dissatisfied with information sharing on

vulnerable statutorily homeless households (58% of LSVT HAs, 71% of traditional HAs).

Housing associations were, however, unlikely to report that they were not informed of the homelessness status of statutorily homeless households when they received a nomination or referral (i.e. being told whether or not a household was statutorily homeless). Overall, only 4% of HAs reported that they were 'often not informed' of the homelessness status of referrals or nominations by an LHA⁷⁹.

Some LHA respondents who took part in the focus groups and interviews reported that they were not always able to give HAs all the information that they needed. For one London borough, this was related to the volume of homelessness they were dealing with, which was described as making information processing very difficult. Other local authorities reported that HAs sometimes had a legitimate point in being reluctant or refusing to house statutorily homeless households on which they had little or no information.

Some LHA respondents recognised a potential tension between the full release of all information, which might make HAs unwilling to house some households, and the operational need of HAs for full information. These respondents tended to view information sharing as something that still required further work:

"There has been an issue for us [LHA] with single homelessness... Officers were reluctant to provide information about single homeless people for fear that they would not get offered anything. RSLs were saying quite rightly that they needed the information so that they could place people appropriately rather than take someone with higher needs than they could manage, so we tried to be more transparent so that it is absolutely clear about the issues to avoid bad allocations but that is something we could still improve on... One of the issues that came up through the protocol development was the need to understand things on both sides and to improve communication."

In one area, the LHA respondents reported variable levels of information exchange with HAs. In this area, local HAs with which there were established working relationships did have information shared with them, and these HAs were the most active in making lets to statutorily homeless households. However, the impression was that the LHA was less willing to share information with HAs with which there was not an already established working relationship:

"The ones [HAs] who are most active in terms of our general needs lettings are the ones that have good relationships with us... and they are smaller, local... and because of the relationship we have historically worked with them on risk assessment... we do share information."

⁷⁹ This finding provides further indications that the CORE data tend to be accurate when they record a household as being statutorily homeless.

Respondents from HAs were quite likely to be critical of LHA information sharing during the course of focus groups and interviews. Some HA respondents also reported that they suspected that the LHA did not share certain information because it would create a reluctance to house particular statutorily homeless households. Others saw the problems as simply the result of inadequate data sharing protocols, or administrative issues, within LHAs.

Some HAs also thought that LHAs were either overcautious in sharing information because of the data protection legislation, or were sometimes using that legislation as a 'cover' for not providing information that would lead to the HA rejecting a household. Criticism extended to social services departments as well as homelessness sections within local government. For some HAs in some areas, a lack of information sharing on statutorily homeless households was the central issue:

"This is the biggest issue, the lack of information about nominations, you might be doing the viewing and only then discover that someone has learning difficulties and will need support and that is a bit too far down the road, really, to start trying to find appropriate support. That doesn't help people sustain their tenancies."

"One of the biggest problems we have is the quality of the nominations. You can sit down and sign somebody up for a tenancy and literally only know their names, date of birth and family name, but that is it. You don't have any information on

any support needs or anything like that. So the tenancy can struggle before it starts on occasions."

For some HA respondents, the issue of information sharing was less about logistical problems and more about mutual trust. Their view was that LHAs did not share all pertinent information for fear that more statutorily homeless households being rejected by HAs, whereas, in their view, more information would assist in sustainment. As one respondent put it:

"It's about breaking down that mistrust where the council thinks we are going to cherry pick or going to exclude certain people. We are getting over that barrier now, we are not trying to exclude, we are trying to include – so give us that information initially so we can identify what support they need, make it a success. We are not trying to exclude them, not trying to cherry pick, not trying to have the best. Let's be open and honest with each other and transparent."

One LSVT HA respondent reported that in their 'home' LHA area, information sharing worked well. However, since the LSVT HA had begun to also operate in other areas, it found that LHAs with which its working relationships were less well established were less forthcoming with information. This mirrored the reports from one LHA that it shared information more freely with local HAs with whom there was an established working relationship.

The HA respondents reported that difficulties with information sharing meant that they were sometimes providing settled housing to individuals and households in inappropriate settings. This led to management difficulties and sometimes to problems for the person or household concerned.

However, such criticisms were not universal. In one major city, HAs reported there no problems whatsoever with information sharing by the LHA.

Key findings

- Housing association lets to statutorily homeless households were highly concentrated within LSVT areas. Three-quarters of all HA lets to statutorily homeless households took place in LSVT areas and HAs devoted a higher proportion of their general needs lets to statutorily homeless households in LSVT areas (35% of all HA general needs lets compared to 17% in non-LSVT areas);
- The HA sector was itself highly concentrated in LSVT areas. Most of the HA managed social housing stock in England was within these areas (70%);
- Traditional HAs made general needs lets to statutorily homeless households at a lower rate than LSVT HAs (13% of all general needs lets in 2005-06, compared to 19% of all general needs lets made by LSVT HAs);
- The main national data sets do not entirely reconcile with one another, though they do show the same trends. One of the likely explanations for this was that households are being recorded in one data set in one year, but are recorded in another year for another data set;
- Housing associations appeared, from data comparison, to be housing different types of statutorily homeless households at similar rates to which those households were being accepted. This included BME groups;
- There was limited evidence of both beneficial and negative effects from CBL systems, but they were not found to strongly influence the rate at which HAs provided settled housing to statutorily homeless households;
- No specific trends were associated with the small number of LHAs in which homelessness assessment had been contracted out to an HA;
- There was limited evidence of a 'lack of fit' between HA stock and some statutorily homeless households and of under-occupation of HA stock. However, respondents viewed what they regarded as overall shortages of social rented stock provision, relative to housing need, as being more significant;
- Higher levels of homelessness acceptances and relative use of temporary accommodation were found to be associated with relative increases in HA activity in offering general needs lets to statutorily homeless households, but the effects were not particularly pronounced;

- No one factor was found to determine the level of HA activity in providing lets to statutorily homeless households, although LSVT status was a strong predictor, a range of other factors were associated with comparatively high or comparatively low HA activity;
- LSVT LHAs were more likely to report that HAs took their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households (76%) than non-LSVT LHAs (54%). Housing associations were likely to report that they took their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households (89%);
- Respondents from LHAs reported variation in the extent to which HAs were willing to offer general needs lets to statutorily homeless households;
- Statutorily homeless households who were characterised by socioeconomic exclusion were seen by HAs as creating challenges in pursuing 'mixed and sustainable communities' and there were concerns about taking too many such households;
- Housing associations were reluctant to take on vulnerable or chaotic statutorily homeless households without support and care packages in place;
- There were frequent complaints that LHAs did not provide adequate information on statutorily homeless households from HAs.

5 Views on partnership working

Introduction

Chapter 5 provides an overview of partnership working between housing associations and local housing authorities. The chapter reviews:

- partnership working in developing local homelessness strategies;
- partnership working in delivering local homelessness strategies;
- the key factors that facilitated and inhibited effective partnership working;
- the ways in which logistical issues impacted on partnership working;
- the expectations of some LHAs; and
- the occurrence of ‘uneven’ partnership working focused on Supporting People.

The role of housing associations in local homelessness strategies

Developing the strategy

One third of LHAs reported that HAs had been centrally involved in the development of their homelessness strategy (33%), putting HAs slightly ahead of social services departments (27%), but behind other voluntary sector providers of homelessness services (46%). Central involvement of the Probation Service (23%), the NHS (18%) and

homeless people as service users (16%) were less common.

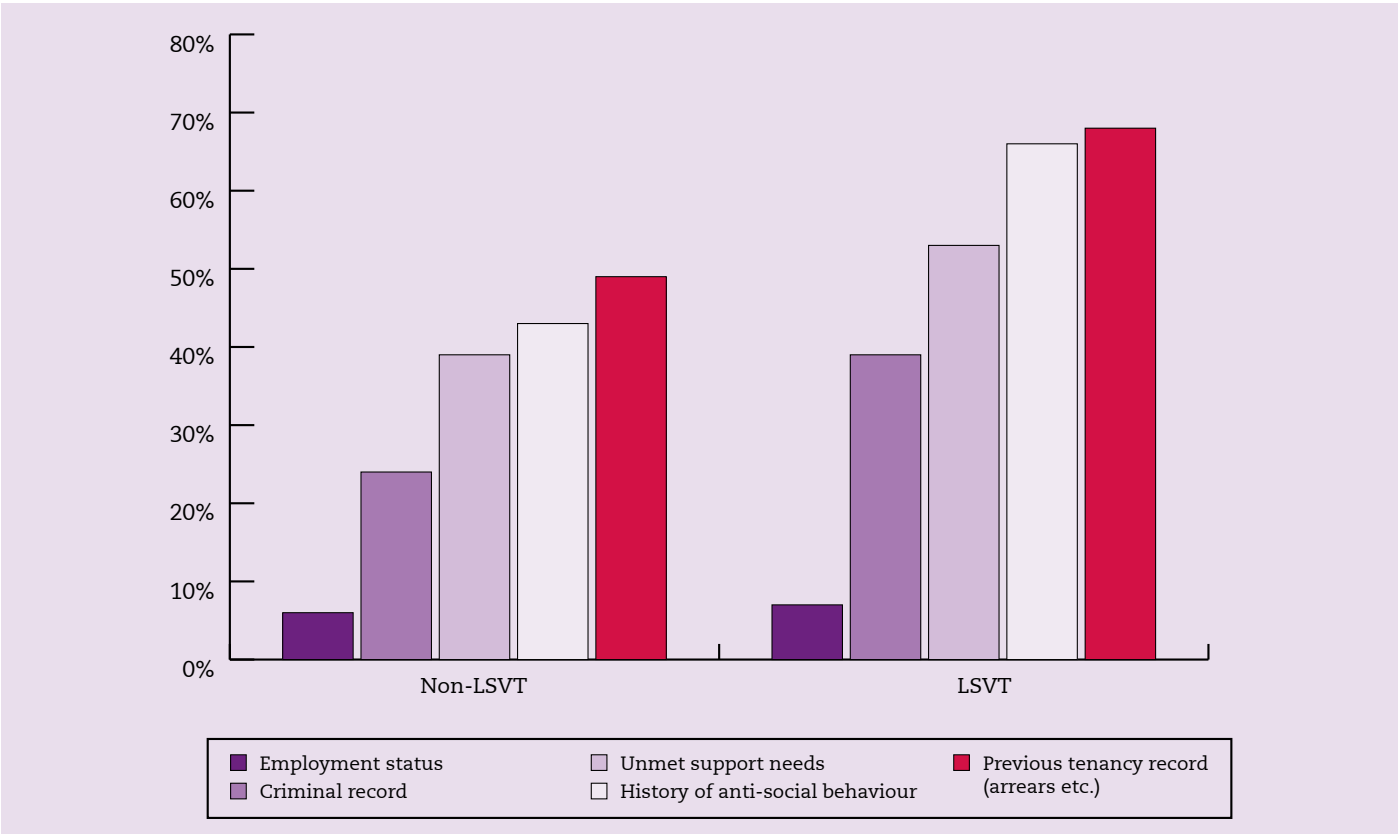
These findings must be balanced against the rates at which ‘some involvement’ of HAs in strategy development was reported by LHAs. Most LHAs reported there was ‘some involvement’ from HAs (70% in non-LSVT areas and 53% in LSVT areas, 61% overall). A very small number of LHAs reported ‘no HA involvement whatsoever’ in the development of their local homelessness strategies (6%)⁸⁰.

When ‘central’ involvement of HAs in strategic development was compared across non-LSVT and LSVT authorities, quite marked differences were apparent (Figure 5.1).

However, perhaps the most striking aspect of these findings was not the notable difference between levels of ‘central’ HA involvement in LSVT and non-LSVT areas (Figure 5.1), but the generally low levels at HAs appeared to be ‘centrally involved’. Less than one half of LSVT authorities were HAs reported as being ‘centrally involved’ in the development of local homelessness strategies (45%) and in non-LSVT authorities this figure fell to 21% (Figure 5.1).

⁸⁰ By contrast, the 2004 Housing Quality Network Services report on the first round of homelessness strategies found that 71% of LHAs said that HAs had been consulted and engaged in the development of homelessness strategies, although there was no assessment of the degree of involvement.

Figure 5.1: Agencies and groups ‘centrally involved’ in the development of local housing strategies by transfer status of LHA.



Source: Survey of LHAs. Base: 212 LHAs (109 non-LSVT, 103 LSVT).

Table 5.1: The roles of housing associations in strategic planning according to local housing authorities.

Type of local housing authority
All or most HAs quite involved
Non-LSVT
LSVT
All LHAs

Sources: CORE (2005-06). RSR (2005-06) * Total social rented units in management, including supported housing. Small HAs were defined as having under 1,500 units in management .

As can be seen in Table 5.1, only 12% of LSVT LHAs reported that all or most HAs in their area were ‘very involved’ in strategic planning:

- a further 18% reported high levels of involvement for one or two HAs (presumably including the transfer HA or HAs);
- the bulk of LHAs reported that all or most HAs were “quite involved”;
- one fifth of non-LSVT authorities (21%) and one in ten of the LSVT LHAs (11%), reported HAs only having a ‘limited role’ (Table 5.1).

These figures are quite surprising. Granted, in a few instances, it may have been the case that an LSVT HA had been created after a local homelessness strategy had been developed. However, the creation of an LSVT would nevertheless seem a reasonable point to have reviewed the local homelessness strategy.

Table 5.2 shows the involvement of HAs in the development of the local homelessness strategy for their main area of operation⁸¹.

Again, ‘central involvement’ appeared to be something of rarity, with only 19% of HAs reporting this in their main area of operation, rising to 29% for LSVT HAs and falling to 10% for traditional HAs. As was reported by LHAs, HAs were likely to report some involvement (63% overall), though almost one fifth (18%) reported no involvement (Table 5.2). Within their main areas of operation:

- 41% of LSVT HAs and 18% of traditional HAs sat on a partnership working group or forum for the local homelessness strategy (29% of HAs overall);
- 62% of LSVT HAs and 54% of traditional HAs reported “implementing the homelessness strategy through general inter-agency working” (59% of HAs overall); and

Table 5.2: The roles of housing associations in strategic planning

	Central involvement	Some involvement	No involvement	All	Base
Traditional HAs	10%	71%	18%	100%	77
HAs involved in LSVT	29%	53%	18%	100%	67
All HAs	19%	63%	18%	100%	144

Source: HA survey.

⁸¹ As the survey would have become both unwieldy and very time consuming to complete for many HAs if all the LHAs areas in which they were operational were asked about in detail, a decision was taken to focus some questions on their main area of operation. The main area of operation was defined as the LHA in which the HA had the single greatest concentration of stock. As most HAs have their origins in one location, even the very largest HAs tended to be characterised by having one local authority area in which they had significantly more housing stock than anywhere else. None of the responding HAs reported that they did not, by this definition, have a ‘main area’ of operation.

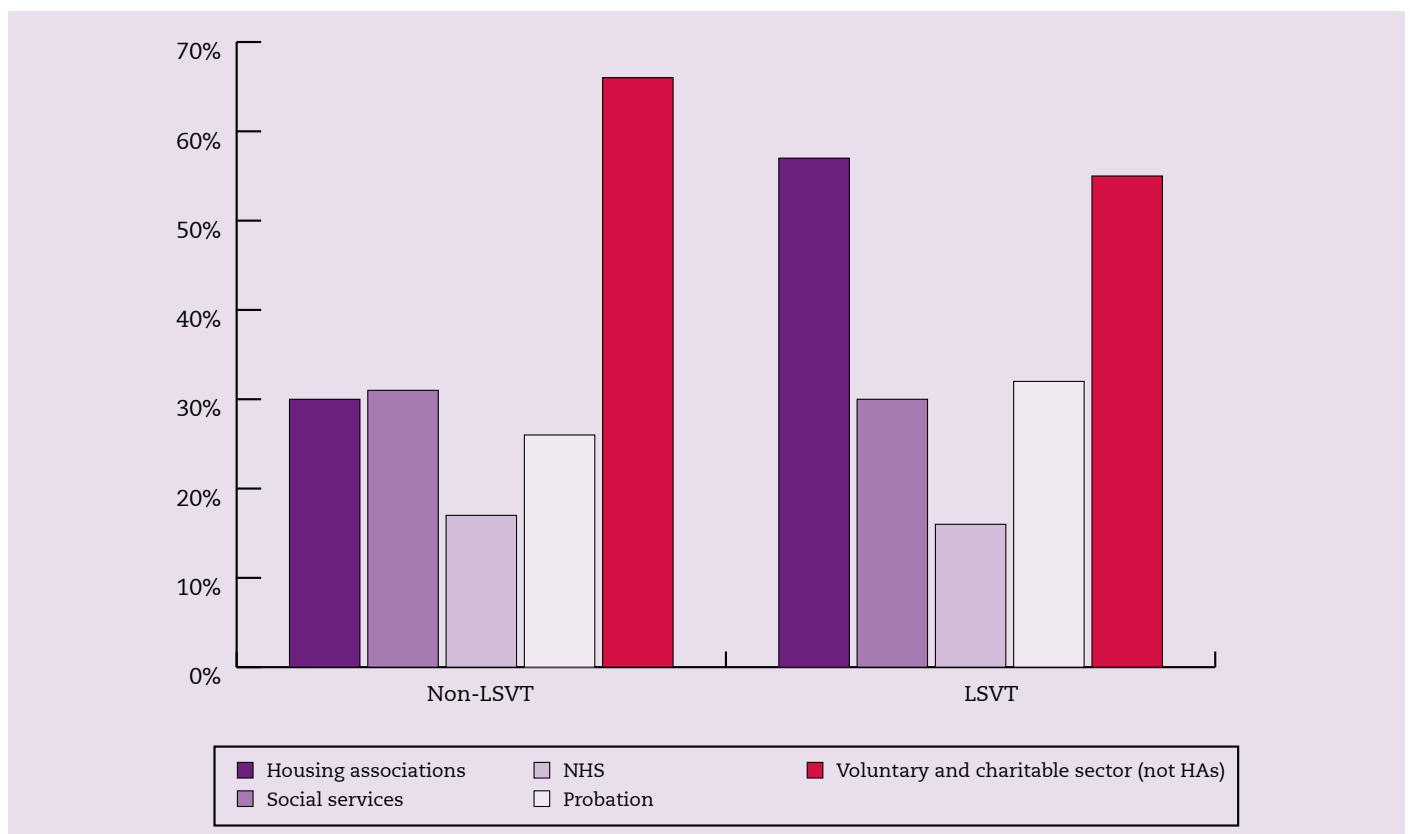
- 20% of traditional HAs and 15% of LSVT HAs reported they were not involved in implementing the local homelessness strategy.

It is worth restating that only those HAs that had made lets to statutorily homeless households or which were providing Supporting People services to homeless people during 2005-06 were surveyed (see Chapter 1). These were associations that were actively involved in providing services to homeless households.

Delivering the homelessness strategy

Local housing authorities tended to report that HAs were often not strongly involved in partnership working in homelessness. Overall, 44% of LHAs reported HAs were ‘involved’ or ‘very involved’ in partnership working. This rose to 57% in LSVT areas and fell to 30% in non-LSVT areas (Figure 5.2). By contrast, charities and voluntary sector agencies (other than HAs) tended to be more involved (Figure 5.2). Many

Figure 5.2: Agencies and groups “very involved” or “involved” in partnership working on homelessness in LHA areas by transfer status of LHA.



Source: Survey of LHAs. Base: 212 LHAs (109 non-LSVT, 103 LSVT).

LHAs possessed joint forums⁸² in which HAs, LHAs and other agencies met (Table 5.3). However, the presence or absence of these forums was not associated with higher or lower levels of reported HA involvement in strategic development or other aspects of partnership working. Outside the joint forums, case conferences and information sharing protocols, the other forms of partnership working listed in Table 5.3 were generally quite

uncommon, particularly in non-LSVT areas. General partnership working in delivering local homelessness strategies did not appear to be influenced, either positively or negatively, by the presence of CBL arrangements. This finding is perhaps quite surprising, for while the role of CBL is much wider than statutory homelessness, it is nevertheless a core task for CBL⁸³ (see Chapter 4).

Table 5.2: The roles of housing associations in strategic planning

Joint training	17%	43%	30%
Joint research	24%	35%	29%
Joint commissioning	16%	28%	22%
Other	12%	6%	9%
Information sharing protocols	37%	70%	54%
Base	109	103	212

Source: HA survey.

Table 5.4: The types of partnership working in homelessness that housing associations reported being involved in within their main area of operation

	Traditional HAs	LSVT HAs	All HAs
Joint fora	50%	68%	58%
Case conferences	42%	74%	57%
Information sharing protocols	71%	77%	74%
Joint training	25%	59%	41%
Joint research	28%	28%	28%
Joint commissioning	20%	19%	19%
Joint assessment	11%	25%	17%
Other	6%	12%	9%
Base	75	69	144

Source: HA survey.

⁸² See Chapter 5 for a discussion of findings on CBL and the housing of statutorily homeless households.

Housing associations described their involvement in partnership working along similar lines within the main areas of operation (Table 5.4). Involvement in joint forums and case conferences were quite common and HAs were quite likely to report participating in information sharing protocols. Again, levels of involvement tended to increase for LSVT HAs.

Housing associations were also asked about their involvement in joint assessment within their main area of operation. These results indicated that this was uncommon, with only 9% of HAs overall reporting some involvement, rising to 12% for LSVT HAs and falling to 6% for traditional HAs.

Only a minority of LHAs reported that partnership working between themselves and HAs functioned 'very well' (8% of LHAs overall), though a larger percentage reported that operational partnership working functioned 'quite well' (34% overall). Whereas 44% of LHAs rated partnership working as 'works neither well or badly'. Only 12% of LHAs reported that partnership working did not work very well or and just 2% reported that worked 'very poorly'. LSVT LHAs were more likely to report partnership working worked quite well or very well (53%) than non-LSVT LHAs (31%).

Housing associations also had mixed views on partnership working with LHAs. When asked about their working relationship with the LHA in their main area of operation, one half of HAs reported that it functioned 'very well' or 'well' (49%). The reports of HAs on their working

relationships with LHAs outside their main area of operation were almost as positive, with 44% of HAs describing these as working very well or quite well.

Housing associations responding to the survey were quite unlikely to report that partnership working with the LHA in their main area of operation were functioning 'badly' or 'very badly' (14%). Housing associations involved in LSVT were more likely to report that partnership working functioned 'well' or 'very well' with the LHA in their main area of operation (55%) than traditional HAs (45%).

Local housing authorities tended to report variation in the quality of partnership working with the different HAs in their area. Twenty per cent of LHAs reported that there was 'high variation' in the quality of partnership working, while another 30% reported that there was 'variation'. Overall, only 18% of LHAs reported there was 'little or no variation' in the quality of partnership working with HAs. There was no distinction between LSVT and non-LSVT LHAs on this point, both were equally likely to report high or low variation in partnership working with different HAs (Figure 5.3).

Among the 62% of HAs that worked in more than one LHA area, the majority (69%) reported that LHAs showed only 'some variation', 'little variation' or were 'very similar' to one another, when it came to partnership working. Only 18% of these HAs reported that, in their experience of partnership working, there was 'high variation'

or ‘variation’, between different LHAs. These results contrasted quite sharply with those among LHAs, 50% of which reported ‘high variation’ or ‘variation’ between different HAs (Figure 5.3).

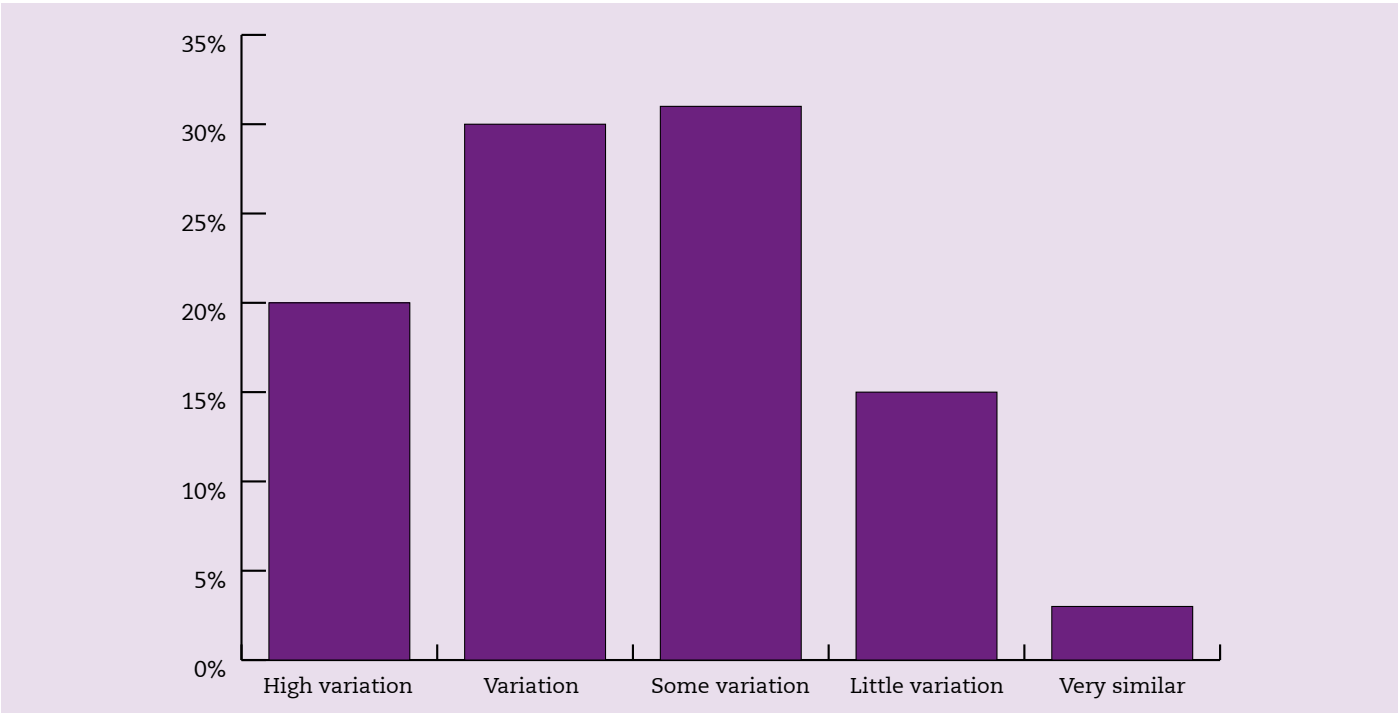
Factors supporting or inhibiting partnership working

Local housing authorities were most likely to report that personal familiarity between relevant LHA and HA staff was important to successful

partnership working (91%, Figure 5.4). They also reported that ‘effective leadership’, both within their own organisation and within HAs was important, as were ‘agreed objectives and priorities’ (Figure 5.4). The presence of specialist HAs, which focused on homelessness services was less frequently mentioned by LHAs, nor were funding arrangements often referred to.

Urban LHAs were more likely (48%) to report that specialist HAs homelessness facilitated partnership than LHAs in rural areas⁸⁴ (22%).

Figure 5.3: Whether the quality of local housing authority partnership working relationships varied across the different housing associations in their area.



Source: Survey of LHAs. Base: 212 LHAs.

⁸⁴ See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm>

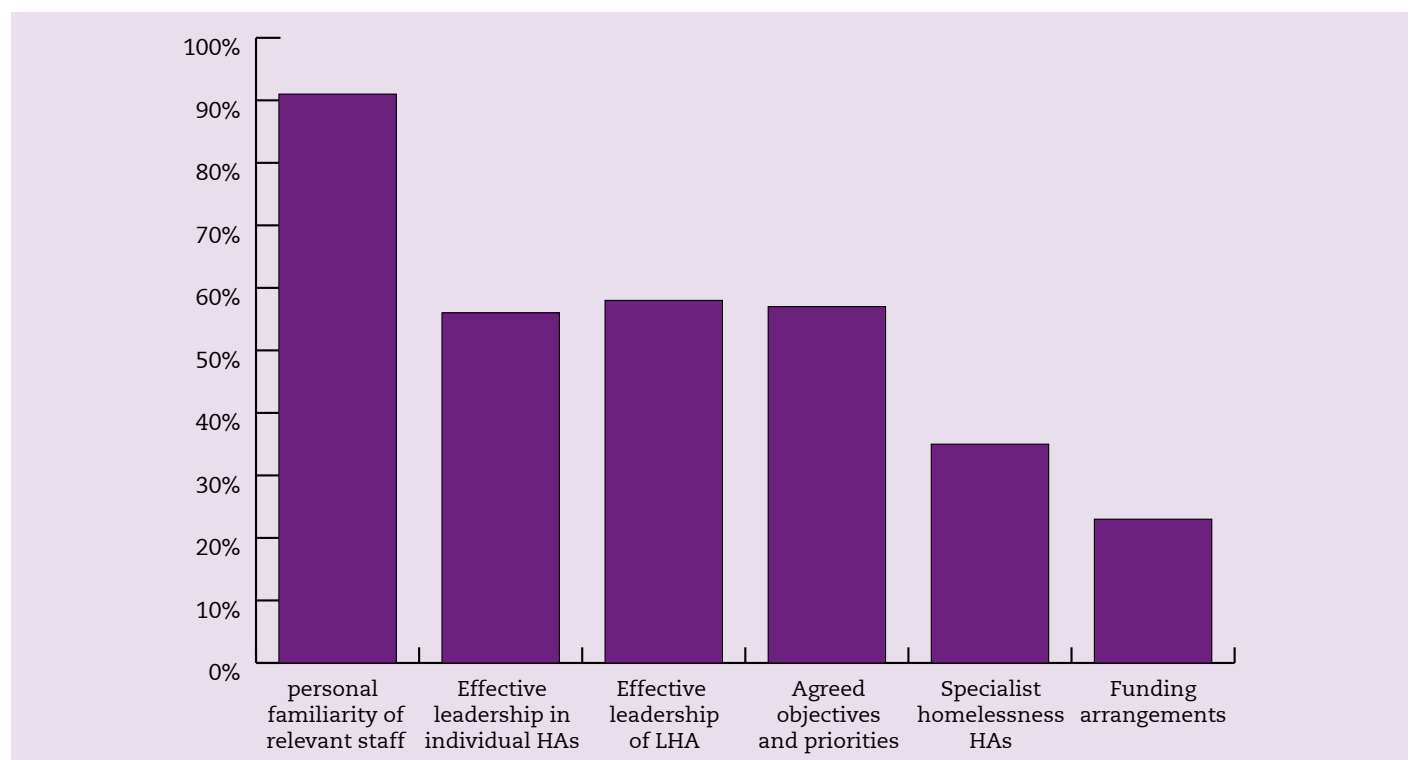
This finding probably reflected the greater concentration of these HAs within cities and LHAs being more used to working in partnership with them. There were no other differences between types of authority or between LSVT and non-LSVT authorities.

Local housing authorities were most likely to identify a lack of agreed objectives and priorities (48%), a lack of HAs specialising in work with homeless people (47%), constraints due to funding arrangements (35%) and a lack of leadership

within individual HAs (also 35%) as inhibiting joint working (Figure 5.5). A 'lack of leadership' within the LHA itself and a 'lack of personal familiarity between relevant staff', were less frequently reported (Figure 5.5).

There was no distinction between LSVT and non-LSVT LHAs in terms of the factors they reported as inhibiting joint working (Figure 5.5). Rural LHAs⁸⁵ were more likely to report that a lack of specialist HAs inhibited partnership working (55% compared to 38% of urban areas).

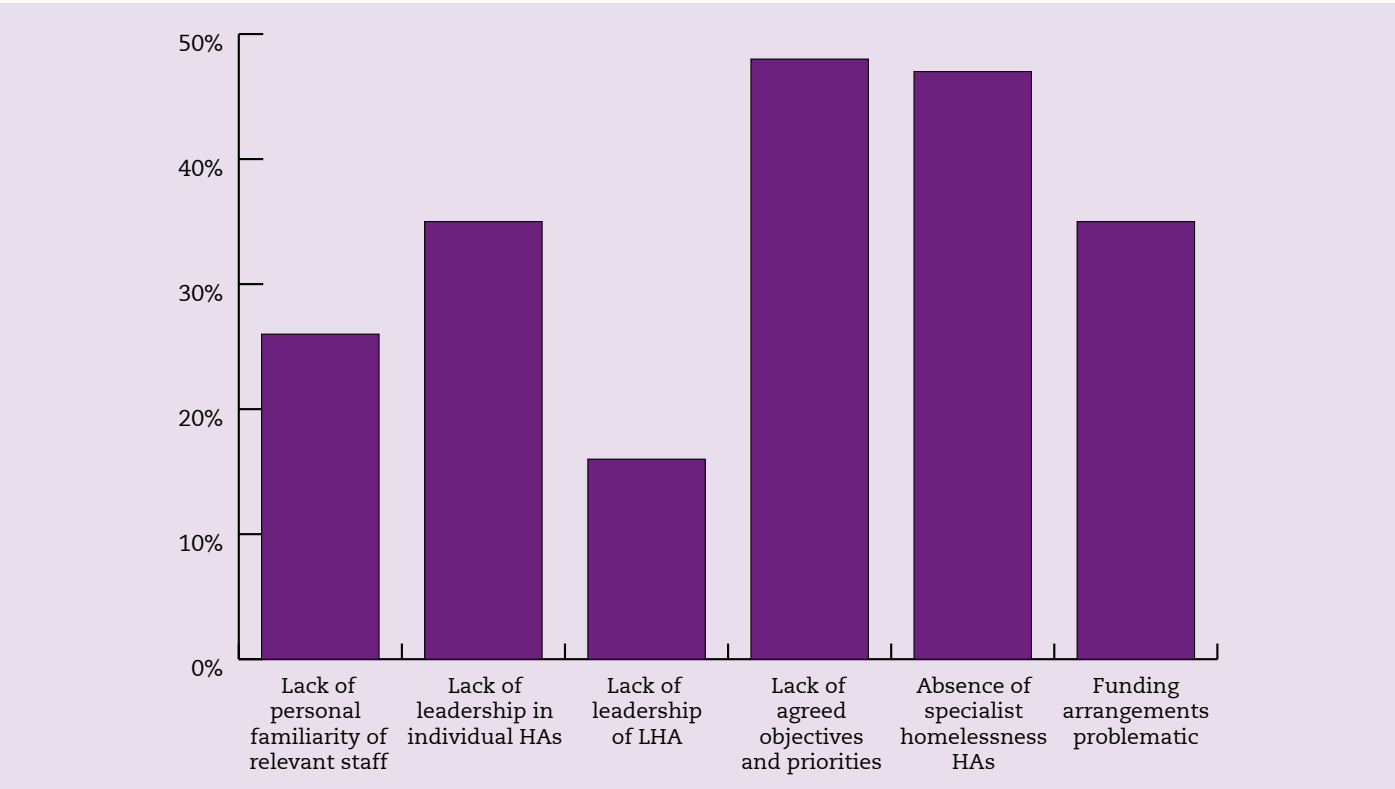
Figure 5.4: Local housing authority views on the factors that supported partnership working with housing associations.



Survey of LHAs. Base: 212 LHAs.

⁸⁵ See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm>

Figure 5.5: Local housing authority views on the factors that inhibited partnership working with housing associations.



Source: Survey of LHAs. Base: 212 LHAs.

Table 5.7: Factors enabling and inhibiting partnership working in HAs main areas of operation

Factors enabling partnership working	Percentage of HAs reporting	Factor inhibiting partnership working	Percentage of HAs reporting
Personal familiarity between relevant HA and LHA staff	88%	Lack of personal familiarity between relevant HA and LHA staff	10%
Effective leadership in HAs	58%	Lack of effective leadership in HAs	6%
Effective leadership within LHA	45%	Lack of effective leadership within LHA	24%
Agreed shared objectives and priorities	53%	Lack of agreed shared objectives and priorities	37%
Funding arrangements	20%	Funding arrangements	30%
Base	144	-	144

Source: HA survey.

Housing associations placed a similar emphasis on personal familiarity between relevant HA and LHA staff (88%) and also on shared priorities and objectives and effective leadership (Table 5.7). They were more likely to report problems with leadership within the LHA in their main area of operation, than within the HA sector, as a inhibiting partnership working (24% compared to 6%, see Table 5.7). The LSVT and traditional HAs did not differ significantly from one another in terms positive and negative factors that they reported as influencing partnership working in their main area of operation (Table 5.7).

The LHA and HA staff who took part in the focus groups and interviews often reported mixed levels of involvement in partnership working. The key influences on partnership working these respondents identified were:

- logistical issues;
- an expectation that HAs would cooperate without consultation; and
- ‘uneven’ strategic partnership working in which HAs focused on Supporting People were more engaged with strategic planning than general needs HAs.

Logistical issues

Sometimes the sheer number of small HAs and specialist providers was reported by LHA respondents in focus groups and interviews as making partnership working difficult. Within

London, LHA respondents described a situation in which ‘preferred partners’ were used for partnership working. These preferred partners were those HAs and voluntary sector agencies which were the biggest providers of services within a borough’s boundaries. Within another major city, it was also viewed as impractical to consult with every potentially interested agency, so the same system had been adopted:

“Because of the size of the city there is always this balance to be struck between making something representative and inclusive and making it manageable, because in the homelessness strategy group, it may be desirable to have a representative of every RSL on there, but it isn’t practical when you are trying to build in other agencies and other city council departments.” LHA representative

Respondents working for HAs that had a presence in many areas also found it difficult to engage with every individual LHA:

“One of the difficulties and challenges for us as an organisation is although we’ve got about 500 services, we work in about 100 local authority areas. So the issue is often our presence in many, not all, but many, of those areas can be quite small... Whilst we would be keen to try to influence and inform homelessness strategies we’re not necessarily a particularly important stakeholder.”

“As we work across [100 plus] councils, we can’t develop our working relationships in the same way

as if you just work within one authority, because we're just so thinly spread. We do everything we can, but we're just not physically able to get round all those organisations on a regular basis."

There were close parallels between the way that larger HAs and larger LHAs handled the process of strategic coordination, both seeking to control the scale and logistical difficulty of strategic partnership working through focusing on 'key partners' or 'key stakeholders'. For the large HAs, this meant engagement in strategic planning only with those LHAs within whose areas in which they were significant service providers.

At local level these practices could be seen as causing problems. One respondent spoke about the difficulty of strategic planning that involved what they termed as 'absentee' HAs, with only small numbers of properties within the LHA and no local housing management service. Some representatives from smaller HAs expressed a wish to be more involved in partnership working, particularly in London:

"The engagement is harder... As a small player, we're seen as a very small fish, and we don't necessarily get the help and co-operation that we need when we need it."

Respondents working for a group of rural LHAs reported that local HAs were keen to be engaged with partnership working, but that others were less interested in participation. For those associations without any significant local

connection or presence, these LHA respondents reported 'going through the motions' of consultation:

"You are just sending out documentation because we have to consult, but you know you won't get a response."

Within London, the major HAs were dealing with many boroughs and had a city-wide presence. For some representatives of London boroughs this was seen as meaning that these HAs could only practically be dealt with on a sub-regional or regional level by groups of boroughs. The boroughs in the South East of London were acting collectively in working with the larger HAs in their areas for this reason.

In one rural area, HAs had self-organised into a group to better represent their interests within the local homelessness strategies and the other strategies covering a county. This was described as promoting coherence and coordination in the HAs dealings with local government. However, this was also portrayed as a response to what one respondent described as a sense that some HAs had that LHAs regarded them as 'subordinates' (see following section).

Some LHA respondents reported that, from their perspective, it was better to have a few, genuinely engaged HAs than a large number of HAs that had been compelled to comply with 'tick box' consultation exercises. By 'tick box' these respondents were referring to something

that, from their perspective, was undertaken simply to fulfil a performance monitoring standard or criteria, but which had limited utility. Staff from both larger HAs and LHAs tended to display scepticism about the effectiveness of consultation that extended beyond major service commissioners and providers of homelessness services.

Joint forums

A few LHA representatives spoke about what they saw as the importance of joint forums for partnership working in developing effective strategic coordination with HAs. For these respondents the use of city or area-wide multi-agency forums, which allowed mutual understanding to develop over time, could be highly effective:

“I also think it needs a maturity of relationships between the city and the housing associations generally, which I think have been built up over time, and a level of trust in some respects that allows probably more of an open debate than we would have been probably been able to have a number of years ago... It just builds up over time, through sharing of information all the way round, having partnership meetings, attending [city-wide homelessness forum], consulting them on things that are important and acting on them.”

In several areas, problems with coordination, inclusion and partnership working had been approached through the development of forums

that were specifically focused on homelessness. These forums were designed to include HAs, the voluntary sector and the LHA.

Staff from HAs that were on these forums tended to view them positively. The sense that participating HAs had that they were at centre of decisions and could influence outcomes was described by one HA respondent as ‘energising’. A few HA respondents also reported that the activity of such groups had brought greater unity to the HA sector, in that they were tending to work together in a way that had not previously been the case.

There were also positive findings about the role of these multi-agency groups in wider consultations. Respondents working for HAs and for LHAs reported that these joint forums could themselves be successful mechanisms in effective consultation in strategic joint working.

A fairly common practice appeared to be for a multi-agency forum to itself organise and undertake wider consultation, i.e. it was the committee or group that sought information and comment from those agencies not directly involved (a broad comparison would be the with the way in which a parliamentary committee consults and seeks evidence). Again, those involved in such exercises tended to view them positively:

“[LHA] are trying to engage perhaps more widely than they have done in the past. And what we try to do as housing associations is make that

engagement, facilitate that a bit more effectively by using [forum] as a conduit if you like. I'm not saying it's working perfectly, but as a general point, I think we are getting the opportunity to input at a far earlier stage." HA respondent

This model was common in London, but some HA respondents reported feeling excluded because they were not working for HAs that were 'key stakeholders' or 'key partners' and thus had no seat on the multi-agency forum.

Expectations of housing association cooperation

Respondents working for the LHA for one major city reported that the city had pursued the development of its first local homelessness strategy with little reference to any other agency. The same story was told by LHA respondents in focus groups and interviews within one rural area. In both cases the HA sector had been expected to 'fall into line'. However, respondents from these areas also reported that the next homelessness strategy would be informed by greater consultation.

One HA respondent reported that their experience of supposedly 'consultative' meetings was that they focused entirely on specific objectives for a particular London borough. From their perspective 'partnership working' essentially consisted of their HA being told what number of statutorily homeless households it should house by that borough. Another LSVT HA was under contract to manage all aspects of the homelessness service,

with the exception of housing advice, which the LHA had retained. Contract specifications meant that staff felt controlled by the LHA:

"We have little freedom in operation, I have to say, or less freedom in operation than we would if we were a stand-alone homelessness unit. That kind of freedom to be innovative and look at different ways of, again, being heavily into the prevention end... That would be seen to be eating into their [LHA] area, and they keep that fairly closed down."

Those working for HAs that were providers of Supporting People funded services (see chapters 3 and 4) also reported that they could feel their strategic and operational freedom was constrained by contract arrangements. One representative of a major HA reported that, within London, what had been intended as city-wide resources were often viewed by the borough in which they were situated as being 'theirs' rather than as a London-wide resource.

"A particular issue for London because they are very aware of the borough boundaries – we haven't been historically and our clients are not – this makes things difficult, inflexible... That is a challenge."

Sometimes multi-agency forums were presented as 'consultative', but this was not felt to reflect the way they actually operated. A few HA respondents thought such forums were mechanisms for LHAs pursuing their own objectives:

“You can see them looking at you and thinking ‘that is really interesting but not where we want to go’... It isn’t that individual managers etc don’t want to work with us but [city] has its own very strong agenda which makes it very difficult for them to listen to us.”

For some respondents working for HAs, the attitudes they encountered within LHAs were very important. Sometimes this was a matter of the attitudes towards HAs that were shown by LHA officers:

“[In one area there is an] individual lead officer who takes a very balanced and flexible view of things, a lot of work goes on and you know that you are able to say what you need to say. In some other areas where it’s very dictatorial and bureaucratic, then those organisations tend to be the worst ones to come across. They don’t talk with you, they talk at you.” HA respondent.

According to HA respondents, mutual antagonism could develop quite quickly between HAs and LHAs and this could lead to pronounced problems in partnership working. Respondents working for HAs reported that when an LHA was prepared to meet HAs halfway, rather than a situation in which LHAs dictated the terms and nature of partnership working to an HA, relationships tended to work well.

For a few respondents working for HAs that had a presence in many LHA areas, the importance of the influence of individual personalities within

some LHAs was something of a concern. While an individual personality could make a very positive difference, partnership working in strategic planning that had developed over years could also potentially be lost with a change in LHA personnel. In the perception of a few HA respondents, this gave strategic planning an arbitrary and unpredictable quality which was not desirable. In one reported instance, strategic working in an area had been undermined because a new LHA appointee ‘simply didn’t have any empathy with the providers’.

‘Uneven’ partnership working focused on Supporting People

In some cases, LHAs were reported by their staff to be more engaged with specialist HAs, typically those involved in providing Supporting People funded services for homeless people (see chapters 3 and 4), than was the case for general needs HAs. This could be expressed as the LHA engaging with the ‘homelessness sector’ of which specialist HAs were one part, to a greater extent than with general needs HAs.

This perspective was shared by HAs in some respects and was partially supported by some of the findings in relation to preventative services (see Chapter 3) and the findings on supported temporary accommodation (see Chapter 4). However, staff from larger HAs that were specialist providers of Supporting People services were not always of the opinion that they were consulted about, or involved in developing, strategy. This

was particularly the case when they had a low presence, for example one or two supported housing schemes, or one floating support service, within an LHA area.

Key findings

- Housing associations were less likely to be centrally involved in the development of local homelessness strategies than current guidance advocates (only 27% of LHAs reported that at least some HAs were 'very involved' in strategic planning);
- There were higher levels of engagement by the HA sector in the development of local homelessness strategies in LSVT areas, but levels were still lower than might have been anticipated (45% of LHAs that were LSVT authorities described HAs as 'centrally involved in homelessness strategies' compared to 21% of non-LSVT authorities);
- Views on the success of partnership working between LHAs and HAs in tackling homelessness were mixed (only 42% of LHAs reported it worked 'very well' or 'quite well' and only 55% of HAs thought it worked 'quite' or 'very' well in their main area of operation);
- Local housing authorities in LSVT areas were more likely to report that partnership was working well (53% reported it worked quite or very well, compared to 31% of non-LSVT LHAs). Housing associations reported that partnership working tended to work best with the LHA that administered their major areas of operation;
- Both HAs and LHAs reported varied success in partnership working between themselves and different LHAs or between themselves and different HAs;
- Personal relationships and trust were seen as key to effective partnership working, as were clearly agreed objectives and clear leadership (91% of LHAs and 88% of HAs);
- There were mixed views on the utility of multi-agency forums that were designed to coordinate strategy. Some respondents reported that these worked well, but some smaller agencies that were not viewed as 'key stakeholders' could feel excluded;
- Logistical problems were reported by LHAs trying to coordinate with many homelessness agencies within their area and by larger HAs trying to coordinate with many LHAs;
- Some HAs reported feeling under pressure to comply with LHA expectations and that this could undermine their autonomy;
- LHAs that did not have specialist HAs providing Supporting People services for homeless people in their area reported that this inhibited effective partnership working in tackling homelessness; and
- There was some evidence that 'uneven' partnership working, which was much more developed with HAs involved in providing Supporting People services than with general needs HAs, was occurring in some LHA areas.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

The first part of this chapter reviews the key findings of the research. The second part of the chapter presents a series of recommendations arising from the study.

Conclusions

The research examined the following areas of partnership working between HAs and LHAs:

- partnership working in strategic planning for prevention of homelessness and delivering of preventative services;
- partnership working in the provision of temporary accommodation for statutorily homeless households;
- partnership working in the commissioning and provision of Supporting People services for homeless people; and
- partnership working in providing settled housing for statutorily homeless households.

The findings on partnership working, prevention, temporary accommodation, homelessness and mixed and sustainable communities, Supporting People and data collection and sharing are presented below.

Partnership working

The research has two main findings on partnership working:

- partnership working is far more advanced within LSVT areas. Both partnership working in general and the housing of statutorily homeless households are less well developed in non-LSVT areas; and
- there is evidence of variation in the success of partnership working at all levels.

Individual HAs are clearly making a substantial contribution in making general needs lets to statutorily homeless households and playing an integral role in strategic planning. In some LHA areas, close working relationships exist between HAs and the LHAs. It is also the case that HAs in LSVT areas are taking the leading role in meeting the housing needs of statutorily homeless households and satisfaction with those LSVT HAs among LHAs is generally quite high.

However, as Chapter 5 showed, even within some LSVT areas, HAs are not always as involved in strategic planning as might be expected. In addition, as Chapter 4 showed, not all were viewed as housing their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households.

In non-LSVT areas strategic partnership working sometimes requires further development. Engagement by some traditional HAs in tackling homelessness is still not all that it could be.

Equally, in some instances, LHAs have simply ploughed ahead with their local homelessness strategies and not really consulted with HAs. In a few instances, LHAs seem to interpret 'partnership working' as constituting HA compliance with whatever directive they issued. This does not reflect current guidance from either the Housing Corporation or Communities and Local Government.

The research results indicate it is not realistic for larger LHAs, with a great many agencies active within their areas, to pursue partnership working other than by focusing on key partners or stakeholders. However, care is needed here as there was some evidence of HAs wishing to be involved, and not being involved, because they were not viewed as 'key' stakeholders.

Larger HAs were sometimes in the same position. It was impractical for them to coordinate with every LHA in which they worked. Yet some LHAs felt that these large HAs were not sufficiently involved. Again, careful judgement is needed about when it was appropriate to expend a higher level of resources on partnership working and move beyond simply being consulted.

There is a case to promote partnership working between those HAs and LHAs where it is clearly going to have a particular and tangible strategic and service delivery benefit. This means focusing

on particular HAs. In many areas, this is what has happened, which means partnership working is focused upon:

- significant general needs HAs;
- significant providers of Supporting People services, including supported accommodation, including all relevant specialist HAs; and
- other key agencies, such as Probation, social services and the NHS.

Another key finding is the extent to which there appears to be miscommunication and mistrust between some HAs and some LHAs. This was illustrated by the differences between LHAs and HAs as to whether or not HAs were taking their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households (see Chapter 4).

In addition, it does appear to be the case that the good practice advocated in Tackling Homelessness is not always being adopted by HAs. Throughout the course of the fieldwork, the Homelessness Action Plans for individual HAs, or between groups of HAs, that Tackling Homelessness suggests, barely received a mention. Nor did HA or LHA respondents make any real reference to 'Homeless Champions' at senior level within HAs⁸⁶.

In this respect, the research has not identified a need for more guidance, it has instead found that existing guidance is not always being followed.

⁸⁶ See Tackling Homelessness: The Housing Corporation Strategy (November 2006)
http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/Homelessness_strat_20061128094557.pdf

There is one other finding, which is to do with the level at which partnership working occurs. Logistical problems often arose because of a mismatch in the operational scope and size of organisations. Perhaps the best example of this was London, where HAs that had a significant presence within the city were not always being involved in partnership working because their level of activity in any single borough was too small. Another example was in rural areas, where similar mismatches in scale were occurring.

Preventing homelessness

Housing associations can work to minimise homelessness occurring among their own tenants, which means policies and services need to be in place to prevent eviction and to minimise the risk of abandonment. In addition, HAs that provide Supporting People services for homeless people can have a strategic role in prevention across one or more LHA areas.

As Chapter 3 showed, there was uneven development of services in some areas. While this was primarily a strategic concern for the LHAs within those areas, HAs also had a potentially significant role in supporting the pursuit of a comprehensive preventative strategy through partnership working.

Some HAs seemed to be experiencing a ‘cultural lag’, in the sense that some HAs appeared, or were at least seen as, not having fully adapted to the preventative agenda. In particular, there was a sense that a few HAs were still more ready to pursue eviction, or use transfers, to deal with problematic tenants, rather than work to sustain existing tenancies. However, this did not seem to be an issue for the majority of HAs.

Guidance from the Housing Corporation and Communities and Local Government was viewed positively as helping promote prevention⁸⁷. It was reported as leading to a reorientation of services by some LHA and HA respondents.

Temporary accommodation

Criticisms of the role of HAs in providing temporary accommodation were rare. Many associations were not involved in temporary accommodation provision or management, though the HA sector had an important role in London, and in some other areas where temporary accommodation use was generally high.

HALS schemes were seen as being impeded by a shortage of suitable PRS stock in some areas. Some respondents also reported shortages of some forms of supported housing (see below).

⁸⁷ For example, see Pawson, H. et al Homelessness Prevention: a guide to good practice (June 2006) London: Communities and Local Government
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/150973>

Homelessness and mixed and sustainable communities

Tackling Homelessness notes that the development of mixed and sustainable communities and tackling homelessness should ‘go hand in hand’ (page 10). However, the strategy also notes:

“We understand that these policies must balance competing demands” (page 10).

This is an issue that requires careful judgement about what is problematic, what is acceptable, and what can realistically be achieved. Housing associations cannot be expected to pursue a social mix in their housing if they are in a situation in which socioeconomically marginalised households are becoming concentrated within their stock⁸⁸. However, allowing a situation in which HAs are systematically excluding all or most statutorily homeless households is equally unacceptable.

The reality is that the balance of referrals and nominations needs to be carefully negotiated and monitored. This suggests the best approach may be local agreements and protocols between LHAs and HAs that are appropriate to particular circumstances, rather than to attempt at global guidance on this issue.

Information sharing, which is discussed below, is a key issue in this respect. Better data sharing and monitoring, in combination with partnership working and cooperation, could help avoid the feared concentrations of socioeconomically marginalised households.

It must also be noted that attempts to promote sustainable communities solely through allocation policies or CBL systems are likely to be inherently limited. The points made in Chapter 4 by some LHA respondents are very important in this respect. It is arguable that the pursuit of mixed and sustainable communities is best achieved through interventions that are designed to promote employment and access to education and training, not simply by attempting to confine access to certain communities to only some groups.

Insofar as can be judged from a comparison between the P1E and CORE statistics and from the fieldwork conducted on the ground, there was no evidence that HAs were not granting tenancies to BME statutorily homeless households at very similar rates to which they were being accepted by authorities. Ethnicity was explored by the research, but no issues arose in respect of partnership working.

⁸⁸ Existing research shows that these mixed tenure developments can be unsuccessful if the social balance is not carefully monitored. See Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (Forthcoming 2008) High Density with High Success? Resident views on life in new forms of high density affordable housing York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Supporting People

Service provision still remains uneven in some areas and this was seen by some respondents as hampering joint working. Sometimes there were issues around services being oversubscribed and sometimes the issue was that a required service did not exist within a given area.

Clearly, it is not possible for every LHA to have a full suite of Supporting People services that can cater for each and every group of homeless people. There are some groups who require higher intensity or specialised support but who are not particularly numerous within homeless populations. Within cities, this may sometimes not be an issue, because there is a sufficient mass of homeless or potentially homeless people to mean that specialised services can be developed and can find a user base. In rural areas, homelessness and potential homelessness may not be sufficiently concentrated for it to make economic or practical sense to develop some services at LHA level, because specialist services will not be used enough to justify the expenditure. The answer in this instance may be to look to cross-authority commissioning.

Without Supporting People playing a full role, the concerns that general needs HAs had in taking on some statutorily homeless households cannot be addressed. Issues such as the maintenance

of sustainable and mixed communities can be better addressed if support services are in place. General needs HAs can become more confident that their other objectives will not be threatened if they offer lets to statutorily homeless households with support needs under such circumstances. Of course, Supporting People cannot overcome the issues that might arise if certain groups of households become concentrated in particular areas, but it can potentially further facilitate the ‘pepper-potting’ of households with support needs that some HAs are already pursuing and thus help ensure that communities are genuinely mixed.

There was sometimes a situation in which strategic development and partnership working involved agencies that were delivering Supporting People services more than it involved the general needs HA sector. This creates an imbalance in partnership working because it means it is focused upon people sleeping rough, young homeless people, homeless people with mental health problems or multiple needs and those homeless families that have support needs. General needs HAs need to be on board to help manage issues like the silting up of hostels or other supported housing. In addition there needs to be strategic planning and partnership working to ensure that those groups, like homeless families, that tend to have fewer support needs⁸⁹, are properly catered for.

⁸⁹ See Pleace, N. et al (2007) Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 Year Olds London: Communities and Local Government.

Data collection and data sharing

At the time of writing it is not possible to fully reconcile the three main datasets on LHA and HA activity in respect of statutory homelessness. This makes a clear understanding of what is occurring difficult to achieve and there is an element of interpretation, not to say guesswork, in arriving at conclusions as to what these data tell us.

The Housing Corporation and Communities and Local Government are moving towards a new system of data collection, the National Register of Social Housing (NROSH), that will hopefully remove some of these difficulties. The data set will also contain information on preventative activities that will be useful for planning purposes. It is also to be noted that the Supporting People Client Records and, more recently, the Supporting People Outcomes data are available to agencies through via the Supporting People Knowledge Web at <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>. The Outcomes data provides monitoring of the success of preventative services.

There do seem to be some really quite profound problems in respect of data sharing between some agencies at local level. It does appear to be case that relevant information is not being shared with HAs and this is unacceptable from their point of view, because, quite reasonably, these HAs want to know who it is they are providing housing to. Without proper data, the HAs cannot allocate housing and arrange or facilitate access to any other services that may be required. Of course,

transparency is required in all respects, and if HAs are to be given all the information they require, it is reasonable to expect that there is, in return, clear and accessible data on, for example, the reasons why they are refusing to offer a let to a given household.

There is also a wider issue here, which is that homelessness data are generally poor. One of the fundamental weaknesses lies in the absence of 'pathways' data, that would allow the process of acceptance, any stay in temporary accommodation and eventual access to a settled tenancy to be viewed at an aggregate level. At the moment, the pathways of individual households can (at least theoretically) be tracked, but trends in the pathways that homeless households take cannot really be analysed. Understanding these pathways could give insight into good practice and flaws in partnership working and would also give a clearer understanding of recurrent homelessness and why there are instances in which preventative interventions fail. It will be interesting to see how far the NROSH system will help tackle these concerns.

There are, of course, some data protection issues. However, these are quite manageable if a system of securing free and informed consent to data sharing becomes part of the process of prevention and homelessness assessment and all involved agencies, including HAs, agree to data sharing where proper consents are in place. Further information on proper procedure in data collection and sharing can be secured from the Information Commissioner's Office (<http://www.ico.gov.uk/>).

Changes since the research was commissioned

Since the research was commissioned CLG has established the Homelessness Action Team in conjunction with the Housing Corporation. The team undertakes targeted work on strategy and building on the relationships between LHAs and HAs. A team of advisors now exists to help ensure HAs undertake appropriate roles in tackling homelessness, including prevention, temporary accommodation provision and housing need. The team was established following the publication of the Housing Corporation's Tackling Homelessness strategy which is referred to throughout this report.

Recommendations

- There are logistical issues in partnership working that are linked to the relative scale and operational area of some organisations in relation to others. There is a case for sub-regional, or city-wide, forums that could include agencies like major HAs that have a significant role at that level, but which do not have a significant presence in any one LHA area (city-wide forums are only necessary in urban areas administered by more than one LHA⁹⁰). Strategic planning could be further

enhanced, in areas such as cross-authority commissioning of necessary Supporting People services, through such arrangements. It may make more sense for strategies for tackling homelessness to be planned and executed at sub-regional or regional level, rather than at LHA level, in many instances;

- There is evidence of misunderstanding and miscommunication between LHAs and HAs and there is also some evidence of operational tensions. The problem is by no means a universal one, but varied success in partnership working on an agency-by-agency basis was widely reported. Both sets of agencies have to make allowances for each other's positions. There may be scope for improving training and education in this respect. It is to be noted that the Housing Corporation is already pursuing this agenda with the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation;
- There are tensions between the pursuit of three policy agendas, namely tackling homelessness, controlling anti-social behaviour and promoting mixed and sustainable communities. It is important to be very clear, at all times, that any assumption that any and all statutorily homeless households are automatically a) likely to be permanently economically marginalised, and b) likely to exhibit anti-social behaviour is simply not

⁹⁰ This includes several of the major cities and conurbations in England, such as Greater Manchester, the Liverpool/Merseyside Conurbation, the Newcastle/Tyneside Conurbation and the Bournemouth/Poole Conurbation. While London is administered by 33 boroughs (including the City of London), the GLA does have a strategic function in relation to homelessness see: <http://www.london.gov.uk>

supported by the research evidence⁹¹. Certainly these issues exist and for some groups of homeless people more than others, but they will also occur to some degree within any given population that a social landlord houses. One way forward is to recognise the tension where it exists and to avoid unrealistic expectations. For example, LHAs should not expect HAs to take every referral or nomination;

- The tensions between tackling homelessness, controlling anti-social behaviour and pursuing mixed and sustainable communities can also be tackled in other ways. Partnership working with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus can allow social landlords to help to tackle problems like high levels of worklessness among tenants. An attempt to create mixed and sustainable communities purely by using allocations system merely displaces the problem somewhere else. If HAs start to systematically exclude certain groups, it may well be that they begin to pool in the lower end of the private rented sector, or become more concentrated in the stock of some social landlords than others;
- Data collection and data sharing need to be improved. Strategic planning, service delivery and monitoring of preventative interventions cannot be properly monitored at present, nor can the effectiveness of partnership working. Subject to the proper data protection controls, i.e. free and informed consent, HAs should always be in a position in which they have the required information to take a judgement

about whether they wish to allocate housing and then which housing and other services to allocate to a statutorily homeless household. Equally, allocation decisions by HAs need to be transparent;

- There is evidence that the level of statutory homelessness, within which should be included populations in temporary accommodation who have been found statutorily homeless, varies very considerably across England. Significant drops in homelessness acceptances are also now occurring due to the impact of preventative services. Blanket recommendations as to the proper level of HA general needs lets that should be provided for statutorily homeless households are unhelpful in this context, as this will lead to over-provision in some areas and under-provision in others. Locally negotiated nominations agreements are therefore recommended; and
- An over-emphasis on Supporting People services in developing and implementing local homelessness strategies should be avoided. These services are of central importance and there is evidence that gaps can exist which need to be addressed, particularly if the management of sustainable communities is to be pursued alongside tackling homelessness. However, general needs HAs remain central to homelessness strategies and should be included where appropriate.

⁹¹ See Pleace, N. et al (2007) Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 Year Olds London: Communities and Local Government.

Appendix 1: List of responding agencies

Agencies participating in interviews and focus groups

Local authorities (alphabetical)

Birmingham City Council
 Broadland District Council
 Bristol City Council
 Dacorum District Council
 East Hertfordshire District Council
 Hertsmere District Council
 Liverpool City Council
 London Borough of Croydon
 London Borough of Greenwich
 London Borough of Haringey
 London Borough of Hillingdon
 London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
 London Borough of Southwark
 North Norfolk District Council
 Norwich City Council
 Watford District Council

Housing associations (alphabetical)

Aldwyck Housing Association
 Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association
 Berrybridge Housing Association
 Broadland Housing Association
 Bromford Carina
 CDS
 Elim Housing
 Family Housing Association
 Friendship Care and Housing
 Guinness Partnership
 Hexagon

Hightown Praetorian
 Industrial Dwellings Society
 Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association
 Knightstone Housing Association
 Liverpool Housing Trust
 Midland Heart
 Notting Hill Housing Trust
 Optima Community Association
 Peabody Trust
 Poplar HARCA
 Raglan Housing Association
 Salvation Army
 Southern Housing Group
 Solon South West
 St Basils
 St Mungos
 Stonham
 Swale Housing Association
 Tower Hamlets CH
 Venture Housing Association

Agencies that responded to the online surveys

Local authorities (alphabetical)

Adur District Council
 Allerdale Borough Council
 Amber Valley Borough Council
 Arun District Council
 Ashfield District Council
 Aylesbury Vale District Council
 Barrow Borough Council
 Bassetlaw District Council

Bedford Borough Council
Birmingham
Blackburn with Darwen
Borough of King's Lynn And West Norfolk
Borough of Poole
Boston Borough Council
Breckland
Bristol City Council
Broadland District Council
Broxbourne
Bury Council
Calderdale Council
Cambridge City Council
Canterbury City Council
Carlisle
Carrick District Council
Castle Morpeth Borough Council
Charnwood Borough Council
Chelmsford Borough Council
Cheltenham Borough Council
Cherwell District Council
Chester-Le-Street District Council
Chester
Chiltern District Council
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
City of Durham Council
City of York
Colchester Borough Council
Congleton Borough Council
Copeland Borough Council
Corby Borough Council
Cotswold District Council
Council of The Isles of Scilly
Coventry City Council
Crawley Borough Council

Dacorum
Darlington Borough Council
Daventry District Council
Derwentside District Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Dover District Council
Easington
East Dorset District Council
East Hampshire
East Hertfordshire
East Lindsey District Council
East Northamptonshire Council
East Staffordshire
Eastbourne Borough Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Elmbridge
Epping Forest District Council
Epsom And Ewell Borough Council
Erewash Borough Council
Exeter
Fylde Borough Council
Gloucester City Council
Gosport Borough Council
Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Guildford Borough Council
Halton Borough Council
Harlow Council
Harrogate Borough Council
Hartlepool Borough Council
Hastings Borough Council
Havant
Herefordshire
Hertsmere
High Peak
Horsham District Council

Hyndburn
 Ipswich Borough Council
 Isle of Wight
 Kerrier District Council
 Kettering Borough Council
 Kingston Upon Hull
 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
 Lancaster City Council
 Leeds City Council
 Leicester City Council
 Lichfield District Council
 Liverpool City Council
 London Borough of Bromley
 London Borough of Camden
 London Borough of Croydon
 London Borough of Greenwich
 London Borough of Haringey
 London Borough of Hillingdon
 London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
 London Borough of Redbridge
 London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames
 London Borough of Southwark
 London Borough of Waltham Forest
 London Borough of Westminster
 Manchester City Council
 Mansfield District Council
 Melton Borough Council
 Mendip District Council
 Mid Beds District Council
 Mid Devon District Council
 Mid Sussex District Council
 Middlesbrough Council
 Milton Keynes Council
 Newark And Sherwood District Council
 Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council

Newcastle Upon Tyne
 North Dorset District Council
 North East Derbyshire District Council
 North East Lincolnshire Council
 North Hertfordshire District Council
 North Kesteven District Council
 North Lincolnshire Council
 North Somerset
 North Warwickshire Borough Council
 North Wiltshire District Council
 Northampton Borough Council
 Nottingham City
 Nuneaton And Bedworth Borough Council
 Oldham
 Oxford City Council
 Pendle Borough Council
 Plymouth
 Portsmouth
 Preston
 Purbeck District Council
 Reading Borough Council
 Redditch Borough Council
 Reigate And Banstead Borough Council
 Ribble Valley
 Richmondshire District Council
 Riyal Borough of Windsor And Maidenhead
 Rossendale Borough Council
 Rother District Council
 Rugby Borough Council
 Rushcliffe Borough Council
 Rushmoor
 Rutland
 Salisbury District Council
 Sedgfield Borough Council
 Sedgemoor District Council

Selby District Council
Sevenoaks District Council
Sheffield City Council
Shepway District Council
Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council
Solihull
South Bucks
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Gloucestershire Council
South Hams District Council
South Lakeland District Council
South Northamptonshire
South Ribble Borough Council
South Shropshire District Council
South Staffordshire Council
South Tyneside Council
Southend
Spelthorne Borough Council
St Albans
St Edmundsbury Borough Council
St Helens Council
Stafford Borough Council
Stockport
Stockton Borough Council
Stoke-On-Trent City Council
Stroud District Council
Sunderland City Council
Surrey Heath Borough Council
Swale Borough Council
Swindon Borough Council
Tameside
Tandridge District Council
Taunton Deane Borough Council
Test Valley Borough Council
Thanet District Council

Three Rivers District Council
Thurrock
Tonbridge And Malling Borough Council
Trafford Borough Council
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Uttlesford District Council
Vale Royal Borough Council
Wakefield Mdc
Wansbeck District Council
Watford Borough Council
Waveney District Council
Waverley
Wealden District Council
Wear Valley District Council
Welwyn Hatfield Council
West Berkshire Council
West Devon Borough Council
West Lancashire District Council
West Lindsey District Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
West Wiltshire District Council
Weymouth & Portland
Wirral
Woking
Wolverhampton
Worcester City Council
Worthing Borough Council
Wychavon District Council
Wycombe District Council

Housing associations (alphabetical)

1066
Accent Nene Limited
Accord Housing Association

ACIS Group	FAMILY FIRST LIMITED
Aldwyck Housing Association	Family Housing Association (Birmingham Ltd)
Ashram Housing Association	Foundation Housing Association
Axiom Housing Association	Franklands Village Housing Association
Beechdale Community Housing Association Ltd	Friendship Care and Housing
Bethnal Green & Victoria Park Housing Association	Gallions HA
Boston Mayflower Ltd	Gloucestershire Housing Association
Bournville Village Trust	Hallmark Community Housing Association
Bpha	Halton Housing Trust
Brentwood Housing Trust Ltd.	Harroagate Families HAL
Bristol Community Housing Foundation	Hastoe
Broadland Housing Association	Havebury Housing Partnership
Caldmore Area Housing Association	Headrow Limited
Calico	Heantun HAL
CBHA	Hexagon
Cherwell Housing Trust	Home Group Ltd
Chevin HA	Housing Hartlepool
Christian Action (Enfield) Housing Association	Hundred Houses Society
Coastline Housing Ltd	Hyde Housing Association (Hampshire Region)
Community Gateway Association	Industrial Dwellings Society (1885) Ltd
Community Housing Association	Islington & Shoreditch HA
Contour Homes	Jephson Homes Housing Association
Cornwall Rural Housing Association	Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
Cotman Housing Association Ltd	Knowsley Housing Trust
Crosby Housing Association	Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association Ltd
Croydon Churches HA	Marches Housing Association
Dales Housing Limited	Mendip Housing Ltd
Derwent Housing Association Ltd	Mercian HA Ltd
Devon and Cornwall Housing Association	Metropolitan Housing Trust
Drum Housing Association Limited	Moat
East End homes	Moorlands Housing
Eastlands Homes Partnership Limited	Muir Group Housing Association
Empowering People Inspiring Communities Ltd	New Charter Housing Trust Group
Erimus Housing Ltd	New Linx Housing Trust
Exeter Housing Society	NomadE5 Housing Association Ltd

North Hertfordshire Homes	Sovereign Housing Association
North Somerset Housing	Springboard Housing Association
Notting Hill Housing Trust	St Vincent's Housing Association
Octavia Housing and Care	Staffordshire HA
Optima Community Association	Suffolk Housing Society
Orwell Housing Association Limited	Swale Housing
PCHA	Swan Housing Group
Peabody Trust	Teign Housing
Penge Churches Housing Association	Testway Housing Ltd
Penwith Housing Association	The Co-operative Development Society Limited
Pierhead Housing Association	The Community Housing Group
Poplar HARCA	The Dane Housing Group Ltd.
Presentation Housing Association	The Swaythling Housing Society
Purbeck Housing Trust	Three Valleys Housing
Raglan Housing Association	Tower Hamlets Community Housing Limited
Raven Housing Trust	Trent & Dove Housing
Redditch Co-operative Homes	Trident
Riviera Housing Trust	Two Rivers Housing
Rosebery Housing Association	Twynham Housing Association
Salvation Army Housing Association	Walterton and Elgin Community Homes Ltd
Sanctuary Hereward (London & South East)	Warrington Housing Association
Sanctuary Housing Group	Warwickshire Rural Housing Association
Sarsen Housing Association & Ridgeway	Waterloo Housing Association
Community Housing Association	Weaver Vale Housing Trust
Servite Houses	West Kent Housing
Severn Vale Housing Society	West Wiltshire Housing Society
SHAL Housing Limited	Westcountry HA
Shepherds Bush HA	Westlea Housing Association
Shoreline Housing Partnership	Weymouth and Portland Housing
Signpost Housing Association	Willow Park Housing Trust
Solon South West Housing Association Ltd	Women's Pioneer Housing
South Liverpool Housing	Worcester Community Housing
South Shropshire Housing Association	Worthing Homes
South Yorkshire	Wulvern Housing
Southern Housing Group Limited	Wyedean

York Housing Association

Yorkshire Coast Homes

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