

# **Homelessness in Aberdeenshire**

A study of the HL1 'returns' of  
Aberdeenshire Council 2002-2007 and a  
survey of Partner Agencies

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Background

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 called upon local authorities throughout Scotland to produce local homelessness strategies. Central to the production of such strategies was a requirement upon each local authority to better understand the problems of homelessness in its own locality. Accordingly, local authorities sought to gather information about the nature and scale of homelessness in their areas.

The present research sought to inform the work of Aberdeenshire Council as it sought to revise and update its Homelessness Strategy.

In light of the above considerations, the research sought to do the following:

- quantify the scale and composition of the homelessness in Aberdeenshire over the period 2001/2 – 2006/7, drawing upon official (HL1) statistical data
- identify the local authorities' partner agencies (i.e. across the statutory, voluntary, private sectors) and assess the nature and scale of their work with homeless people, including 'rough sleepers' and 'hidden homeless'

## 2. Methods

The research involved two main types of data gathering :

- a quantitative analysis of the HL1 data collected by Aberdeenshire Council over the period 2001-2002 to 2006-2007
- a postal survey of 'key agencies' in the homelessness field in Aberdeenshire. 27 agencies were invited to take part.

The (postal) survey was launched on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007 and was planned to run until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007. By request, the study was extended to the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007. A total of 13 agencies completed questionnaires; a response rate of 48%.

## 3. Findings

### HL1 Analysis

Over the five year period 2002-2003 to 2006-2007<sup>1</sup>, the numbers of households approaching the local authority as homeless in Aberdeenshire has risen from 1187 applications in the year 2002 – 2003 to 1627 applications in the year 2006 – 2007, a rise of 40%. The increase has been uneven, with the most marked change occurring in the period 2003 – 2004 to 2004 – 2005, where a 23% increase in homeless applications was recorded. The proportion of repeat applications increased from 11% in 2003 to 17% in 2007.

Over time (2002 to 2007), women have been more likely than men to approach the local authority as homeless, comprising between 55% and 58% of all applications. However the proportion of women applicants peaked in 2005 and has declined since that time. In terms of ethnicity, the vast majority of applicants have remained White Scottish (85% - 94%), with around 10% of applications coming from households classified as 'White Other British'. A small increase has been noted in applications from other ethnic groups (including 'Other' White, Black and Asian),

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<sup>1</sup> The study had access to six years of HL1 data (2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007). However, in places, for purposes of comparison only the most recent five years of full '12 months' data are used. Data for the year 2001-2002 were for a 4 months period only (i.e. December 2001 – March 2002).

from 3% in 2005 to 5% in 2007, although an increase in the proportion of households where ethnic background is not known slightly inflates the figures presented.

Between 2002 and 2007, lone-parent households, young person households and single person households have been the most likely types of household affected by homelessness and to present as homeless to the local authority in Aberdeenshire, respectively comprising (as overlapping categories) around a quarter, a third and a three-fifths of all homeless applications over the period.

Over time, the most likely decision reached by the local authority in respect of applications was that a household was homeless / threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Between 2002 and 2007 around half of applicants assessed were found to be in this position, the proportion varying from 49% in 2002 to 51% in 2007. Overall, the proportion of applicants assessed as having a priority need (but including those assessed as 'intentionally' homeless / threatened with homelessness) increased from just over half (52%) in 2002 to almost three-fifths (56%) in 2007.

The proportion of homeless applicants for whom a decision was reached by the local authority, through statutory assessment, within a month of application has declined from 86% to 76% between 2002 and 2007. Likewise the proportion of applicants being offered social housing has declined from 37% in 2002 to 28% by 2007. By contrast the proportion of homeless applicants offered temporary accommodation has increased over the same period from 12% to 47%. Offers of advice & assistance only, fell from 47% in 2002 to 21% in 2007.

An area analysis examined the prevalence and nature of homelessness across the six political areas of Aberdeenshire. Over time, the bulk of homeless applications came from women across all political areas, although men were more likely than women to approach the local authority from outwith the area in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2007. Youth homelessness was consistently higher in the Buchan and Banff & Buchan areas between 2002 and 2007, although Kincardine & Mearns, reported record levels of youth homelessness in 2007. Homelessness amongst retired households was associated with Marr for most years, while single homelessness was more prevalent in Buchan and Banff & Buchan over time. Lone-parents were more likely to apply as homeless in Formartine.

In terms of applicants' circumstances, rough sleeping was associated with applicants from Banff & Buchan between 2003 and 2007. The main reason for homelessness, across all political areas, was parents, relatives or friends being no longer able or willing to offer accommodation. Priority need was most likely to be accorded to applicants from the Banff & Buchan area, while an offer of social housing was most likely to be made to applicants from Garioch.

### **Agency Survey**

Agencies taking part in the study comprised a mix of generic housing, social, health and other service providers as well as dedicated homeless services. They ranged in the scale of their operations from small scale projects providing services to 10 clients at any given time to large-scale housing providers working with up to 2,000 or more clients annually.

Seven of the agencies that took part in the survey were able to provide figures for the numbers of homeless people worked with in a year. Agencies worked with between 2 and 130 homeless people annually.

Collectively agencies provided nine main types of service to homeless people in Aberdeenshire : support & care; accommodation; advice & information; referral; mediation; health; education & training; counselling and advocacy. More than half of the agencies which took part in the survey identified prevention as a principle guiding their work with homeless people.

Finally, asked about their own strengths and weaknesses with respect to meeting the needs of homeless people in Aberdeenshire, it was suggested that tackling the problems of homelessness in Aberdeenshire is founded upon good relations between agencies (i.e. partnership working) and awareness and experience of working with homeless people. However these strengths are undermined by a lack of adequate resources, a lack of systematic evidence and a lack of flexibility in service delivery.

#### 4. Policy Implications

The present study sought to explore the problem of homelessness in Aberdeenshire from an agency perspective. It drew upon two main sets of information to do so: an analysis of the HL1 returns of Aberdeenshire Council 2002 – 2007 and a postal survey of known agencies across Aberdeenshire providing services to homeless people. On the basis of the information gathered and analysed it is possible to indicate certain policy directions. In doing so, however, it is important to bear in mind that research of itself does not make social (or housing) policy. Rather research can provide the evidence on which to base policy which must be informed by available resources and the political will to use them. On this understanding the following is suggested.

1. In the five year period 2002 – 2007 , more than 1100 households approached the local authority as homeless in Aberdeenshire each year, with the number of ‘presentations’ reaching a peak in 2007 when 1627 households applied. The increase has been uneven, with the most marked change occurring in the period 2003-2004 to 2004-2005, when a 23% increase in homeless applications was recorded. Up to 17% of applications were repeat applications. At national level the marked increase in homelessness applications over the past 5 years has in part reflected changes in legislation which have fed-in to the numbers of people applying as homeless since September 2002<sup>2</sup>. As such, both nationally and locally, the increase in the numbers of homeless households may be ‘artefactual’ in this sense. However both nationally and in Aberdeenshire, as a result of changes in the law, a more accurate picture of the extent of homelessness is now available. In Aberdeenshire, the figures point to significant numbers of people remaining on the fringes of the community in the north-east of Scotland. ***Accordingly the findings from the present study highlight a need for the continued monitoring of homelessness applications to ensure that the local authority (and its partners) remain alert to the problem of homelessness and extent of social exclusion among a sizeable minority group in the area. The Community Planning process and new homelessness strategy must be used to ‘include’ homeless people in the social and economic life of Aberdeenshire.***

2. Homelessness in Aberdeenshire is experienced by a variety of types of household. Between 2002 and 2007, lone-parent households, young person households and single person households have been the most likely types of household to present as homeless to the local authority in Aberdeenshire, respectively comprising (as overlapping categories) around a quarter, a third and a three-fifths of all homeless applications during this time. ***Accordingly, the research suggests that where solutions are sought and found, they ought to reflect the particular needs of different types of household. As such sensitivity is required in the offers of accommodation and support to homeless applicants to ensure that they are suited to individuals’ circumstances. Single homelessness, in particular, remains a significant problem in Aberdeenshire, requiring targeted responses.***

3. The proportion of households regarded as being homeless / threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless remained fairly stable at around half of all applications between 2002 and 2007. However when we include those assessed as intentionally homeless /

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<sup>2</sup> In 2001 the Scottish Parliament introduced legislation that placed additional duties upon local authorities to provide temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to homeless applicants. Since September 2002, local councils have been required to provide temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to ‘non-priority’ applicants who previously would have been given advice and assistance only.

threatened with homelessness and exclude those who applied as homeless but either lost contact or withdrew their applications before an assessment decision was reached, the total of those (assessed) as being in priority need was seen to rise from 52% to 56% over the period. ***Improvements in homelessness legislation will, in time, remove the priority need definition altogether<sup>3</sup>. In the meantime, it would appear that Aberdeenshire Council has engaged with the spirit of such intended changes by progressively increasing proportions of homeless households accorded priority need status. However if the interim targets are to be met (i.e. 50% reduction in non-priority assessments by 2009) and the 2012 goal achieved, a greater and sustained effort will be required from the local authority.***

4. One of the Scottish Executive's<sup>4</sup> Top Level Outcomes is to prevent and tackle rough sleeping. Findings from the HL1 analysis carried out as part of the present study suggest that between 11% and 14% of homeless applicants in Aberdeenshire, over the period 2002 and 2007, had slept rough. The figure has remained fairly stable over time. Elsewhere amongst the agencies surveyed, only two reported working with rough sleepers (i.e. Aberdeen Foyer and Langstane Housing Association). ***As such the study suggest that a small-scale but persistent problem of rough sleeping in Aberdeenshire remains largely outwith the remit of agencies that potentially could address the issue. Accordingly, steps should be taken by the local authority to highlight the problem of rough sleeping in Aberdeenshire and to engage and work with partner agencies to tackle it.***

5. Another Top Level Outcome relates to the need to make existing homelessness more visible i.e. address 'hidden homelessness'. Notwithstanding the plight of individual households caught up in the 'twilight world' of 'hidden homelessness', the problem of 'hidden homelessness' is both a problem for local authorities (and their partners) trying to tackle homelessness in their areas and for researchers trying to understand homelessness. Thus the conceptual confusion surrounding the use of the term itself can sometimes act to mask the reality of the phenomenon as lived and experienced by those involved. Although the parameters are blurred, concealed households (i.e. people involuntary sharing accommodation with others), households living in intolerable housing (i.e. damp, crowded etc.) and households whose homelessness is not recorded by the local authority constitute at least part of the problem (Fitzpatrick, S Kemp, P & Klinker, 2000). In the present study, enquiries were made through the agency survey to gauge 'hidden homelessness' in Aberdeenshire. As such, agencies were asked about their work with homeless people who slept rough, lived 'care of others', lived in institutions because they had nowhere else to go and those living in insecure accommodation subject to eviction at short notice. They were also asked what percentage of their clients presented as homeless to the local authority. Eight of the 13 agencies which took part in the study reported working with homeless people living 'care of others', while seven agencies worked with people living in insecure accommodation subject to eviction at short notice. Only a small number of agencies (n=3) thought that 75% or more of their clients had declared their homelessness to the local authority. As such, there was evidence of agency working with 'hidden homeless' households in Aberdeenshire. However a general lack of accurate and detailed record keeping by agencies, makes it difficult to estimate the scale of the problem or their success in tackling the problem. ***Accordingly, there is a need to improve systems of data collection in order that the scale and composition of the problem of homelessness in Aberdeenshire, including 'hidden homelessness', can be better understood and tackled.***

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<sup>3</sup> The Homelessness Etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 aims to ensure that by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 the 'priority need test' will be abolished and all homeless people will be given the right to permanent housing. To achieve this end the definition of 'priority need' will be increasingly widened to include all homeless and potentially homeless people. A ministerial Statement issued in 2005 set local authorities an interim target of a 50% reduction in the proportion of non-priority assessments by 2009 (Scottish Executive, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> The Scottish Executive became the Scottish Government with the election of a new SNP administration in May 2007.

## **SECTION ONE : INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 called upon local authorities throughout Scotland to produce local homelessness strategies. Central to the production of such strategies was a requirement upon each local authority to better understand the problems of homelessness in its own locality. Accordingly, local authorities sought to gather information about the nature and scale of homelessness in their areas.

In Aberdeenshire, the Council established a multi-agency homelessness strategy group, commissioned research in the housing and homelessness fields and following consultation (with the Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland), produced its homelessness strategy in 2003. The strategy covered the period 2003-2006 and had two key aims:

- to maximise the prevention of homelessness in Aberdeenshire
- to ensure that households and individuals who do become homeless are given the help they need to obtain and sustain a home of their own

By way of further improving the rights of homeless people, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 also required Councils to provide temporary accommodation to all households assessed as homeless, regardless of whether or not they have priority need. Coupled with the later provisions of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, the intention is to phase out the distinction between 'priority' and 'non-priority' homeless applications and to provide permanent accommodation to all (unintentionally) homeless people by 2012. In this way, it is hoped that local authorities, working with key partner agencies across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, will help to eradicate homelessness in Scotland within a fixed time period. As an interim measure, a Ministerial Statement was issued in 2005, setting local authorities a target of reducing the proportion of non-priority (homelessness) assessments by 50% by 2009 (Scottish Executive, 2005).

To enable local authorities to measure their progress towards meeting the interim goal and 2012 target, a set of 'homelessness top level outcomes' have been identified. The 'outcome measures' relate to five areas: an end to rough sleeping, the increased visibility of homelessness, sustainable resettlement, a reduction in homelessness and a reduction in the duration of homelessness experienced.

The present research sought to inform the work of Aberdeenshire Council in its attempt to satisfy the 'homelessness outcomes' and to meet its increasing obligations to homeless people, both in the interim and longer terms. The 'vehicle' through which the local authority will seek to achieve such aims is its revised Homelessness Strategy. Accordingly, the present study can also be understood as part of the review of that Strategy.

### **1.2 Researching homelessness in Aberdeenshire**

In Scotland as a whole, record numbers of households have approached local authorities as homeless in recent years, such that homeless applications have doubled over a 17 years period to c.60,000 (Scottish Executive, 2006). Aberdeenshire Council has not been immune from such national trends and has witnessed an increase in homeless presentations latterly. Previous research suggested that the problem of homelessness in Aberdeenshire was characterised by three main types of household; single people, lone-parents and young people and linked to relationship breakdown for two-thirds of homeless applicants (Love and Dempster, 2003). However, as the

research began, the composition and causes of the homelessness in Aberdeenshire had yet to be determined.

### **Aims of proposed research**

In light of the above considerations, the research sought to do the following:

- quantify the scale and composition of the homelessness in Aberdeenshire over the period 2001/2 – 2006/7, drawing upon official (HL1) statistical data
- identify the local authorities' partner agencies (i.e. across the statutory, voluntary, private sectors) and assess the nature and scale of their work with homeless people, including 'rough sleepers' and 'hidden homeless'

### **Research Questions**

The proposed research was guided by four research questions :

1. What is the current scale and composition of homelessness in Aberdeenshire?
2. To what extent has the scale and composition of homelessness in Aberdeenshire changed since 2001/2?
3. What are the key agencies working alongside the local authority to tackle homelessness in Aberdeenshire?
4. What is the nature and scale of the work of 'key agencies' with homeless people, including 'rough sleepers' and 'hidden homeless'?

### **Methodology**

The research involved two main types of data gathering :

- a quantitative analysis of the HL1 data collected by Aberdeenshire Council over the period 2001-2002 to 2006 - 2007
- a postal survey of 'key agencies' in the homelessness field in Aberdeenshire

#### *Sample*

With respect to examining the role of partner agencies in addressing the problem of homelessness in Aberdeenshire, the study sought to identify and survey a range of different agencies across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Agencies were selected on the basis that they might have front-line contact with homeless people. In the absence of a comprehensive and up-to-date register of all agencies working with homeless people in Aberdeenshire, a 'purposive' sample of agencies representing the (known) major service providers in the field was made the focus of investigation. As such, 27 agencies were identified and invited to take part in the study (see figure 1.2.1).

#### *Process*

The (postal) survey was launched on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007 and was planned to run until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007. On the 25<sup>th</sup> April reminder letters were sent to the 25 agencies that had not replied to the survey by that date. By request, the study was extended to the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007. A total of 13 agencies completed questionnaires; a response rate of 48%.

### Research Instruments

The study involved the design of questionnaire for use in the (postal) survey. The questionnaire was divided into three main parts: Section A : About You, sought to collect information about the agency respondent, the size of the agency's client base, the numbers of homeless people worked with and the types of client groups served by the agency. Section B: Types of Homelessness, sought information about the housing situations facing the homeless clients worked with, hidden homelessness and socio-demographic information about homeless clients. Section C: Services for Homeless People, sought information about types of services provided, rationale for service provision, effectiveness of work with homeless clients, and strengths and weaknesses of the agency.

**Figure 1.2.1 Agency Sample**

<b>AGENCY</b>		<b>Reply</b>
1	Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau	X
2	Moray Citizens Advice Bureau	
3	Aboyne and Deeside Voluntary Information Centre	
4	Banchory Advice Centre	X
5	Ellon Area Advice Centre	
6	Fraserburgh & District Advice Service	
7	Gordon Rural Action	X
8	Inverurie Advice Centre	
9	Stonehaven Advice & Information Resource Office	X
10	Turriff Advice Centre	X
11	Helping Hands	
12	Instant Neighbour	
13	Victim Support - Aberdeenshire	
14	Buchan and Buchan Voluntary Counselling Service	
15	Alcohol Support Limited	X
16	Grampian Women's Aid	X
17	Drugs Action	X
18	Barnardos 16+	
19	Aberdeen Foyer	X
20	Aberdeen Cyrenians Rent Guarantee Scheme	
21	Turning Point Pitstop Project	X
22	Castlehill Housing Association Ltd	
23	Grampian Housing Association Ltd	
24	Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association Ltd	X
25	Langstane Housing Association Ltd	X
26	Margaret Blackwood Housing Association Ltd	
27	Tenants First Housing Co-operative	X
	<b>Total returns</b>	<b>N=13</b>

X = replied to survey

## SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF HL1s

### 2.1 Introduction

The present section reports on an analysis of the HL1 returns of Aberdeenshire Council. The HL1 returns provide a record of the numbers and types of household presenting themselves to the local authority over the course of a year. In addition, they evidence the response of the local authority to dealing with the problem of homelessness in its area. As such both local authority assessments and ‘disposals’ (i.e. responses) with respect to the homeless households presenting are also recorded.

To begin with the section describes the types of information collected by the local authority through the HL1 ‘returns’. Next an analysis of the ‘aggregate’ HL1 data, collected by Aberdeenshire Council over the six years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 is offered. Thereafter an analysis of the ‘disaggregated’ HL1 data of the local authority is presented. As such the HL1 data is looked at in terms of households applying from the six political areas within the local authority (ie. Buchan, Banff & Buchan, Formartine, Garioch, Kincardine & Mearns and Marr) and households from outwith these areas. Such analysis again covers the six year period 2001-2002 to 2006-2007.

### 2.2 HL1 Data – Types of Information

Aberdeenshire Council, in line with other Scottish local authorities, collects standardised information on households presenting as homeless to the local authority. Accordingly through the HL1 form, information is collected on 27 separate variables which describe both the characteristics and circumstances of the applicant(s) and the assessment and action taken by the local authority in respect of such approaches. The information gathered can usefully be broken down into four main categories (see Figure 2.2.1).

**Figure 2.2.1 HL1 Data – Types of Information**

Category	Phase	Information HL1 Aberdeenshire
Characteristics	<b>One: Applicant Details</b>	age, sex, marital status, ethnicity, children, year apply, political area; repeat homelessness
Circumstances	<b>One: Applicant Details</b>	Application from family home, rough sleeping, settled accommodation, reason homeless
Assessment	<b>Two: Assessment Decision</b>	Statutory assessment, likelihood homeless < 2 months, length time from application to decision, category of priority need
Outcomes	<b>Three: Application Outcome</b>	Contact with applicant until LA duty discharged, last action by LA, re-housing outcome, use of temporary accommodation, advice and assistance, referral to social work, integrated assessment, length time taken to reach a decision

Over the past ten years a number of amendments have been made to the HL1 form which have progressively refined and improved the quality of information collected with respect to a number of variables. Such amendments have also reflected changes in homelessness policy and practice and advances in technology used to support the collection of information. Thus, for example, enquiries about the ‘Priority Need Status’ of households, was amended in 1998 to include ‘vulnerability’ due to ‘youth’. Later, in 1999 enquiries about ‘Household type’, allowed for the collection of information on the sex of the household applying as homeless. Elsewhere, since 1999, enquiries about the ‘Priority Need Status’ of applicants has differentiated between ‘vulnerability’ due to mental illness, learning disability and other factors. Also, since 1999 the issue of racial harassment has been asked about as a reason for applicants losing accommodation. In 2001 a method of Electronic Data Capture was introduced (EDC), which allowed for clearer information about repeat homelessness in particular. The net effect of such changes has been to allow the collection of ‘common’ information of a more general nature about homeless households across all years while offering more accurate and detailed information about the circumstances and experiences of homeless people in more recent years. The latter provides for increasingly accurate cross-sectional analysis of homelessness in Aberdeenshire while the former allows for longitudinal analysis and the measurement of trends.

## 2.3 Aggregate Data from HL1 ‘Returns’ 2001-2002 to 2006-2007

### 2.3.1 NUMBERS OF HOMELESS APPLICANTS

Over the five year period 2002-2003 to 2006-2007<sup>5</sup>, the numbers of households approaching the local authority as homeless in Aberdeenshire has risen from 1187 applications in the year 2002 – 2003 to 1627 applications in the year 2006 – 2007, a rise of 40%. The increase has been uneven, with the most marked change occurring in the period 2003 – 2004 to 2004 – 2005, where a 23% increase in homeless applications was recorded (table 2.3.1).

**Table 2.3.1 Number of Homeless Applications**

Year*	Number of applicants	Number increase	% increase
2003 - 2004	1161 to 1187	26	2
2004 - 2005	1187 to 1461	274	23
2005 - 2006	1461 to 1467	6	(.4)
2006 - 2007	1467 to 1627	160	11

\* year: 2003 – 2004 = (2002-2003) to (2003-2004) etc.

With respect to repeat homelessness, the data show that 17% (n=278) of households in 2007 had previously applied to the local authority as homeless. Over time, the number of repeat applications to the local authority increased from 11% (n=132) in 2003, to 16% (n=193) in 2004, to 15% (n=224) in 2004, to 16% (n=237) in 2006. Differences amongst those applying suggest that repeat homelessness was associated with men, single people with no children and younger people, aged 16-24 years (figure 2.3.1).

<sup>5</sup> The study had access to six years of HL1 data (2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007). However for purposes of comparison only the most recent five years of full ‘12 months’ data are used. Data for the year 2001-2002 were for a 4 months period only (i.e. December 2001 – March 2002).

**Figure 2.3.1 Repeat homelessness**

Type of applicant	Year					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Sex			Men (19%, n=97)	Men (18%, n=106)		Men (19%, n=139)
Age-group		Younger (14%, N=54)	Younger (23%, N=96)	Younger (20%, N=101)	Younger (21% (N=111)	Younger (21%, N=126)
Marital status			Single (20%, N=136)	Single (18%, N=146)	Single (20%, N=173)	Single (22%, N=209)
ALL (%)	4	11	16	15	16	17

The final piece of information about the characteristics of the households applying as homeless, related to the political area from which applications were made. As table 2.3.2 shows, over time, Buchan was the area from which most applications were made, variously comprising between a fifth and a quarter of all homeless applications in Aberdeenshire. Around 10% of all homeless applications to the local authority in Aberdeenshire consistently came from outwith Aberdeenshire itself.

**Table 2.3.2 Political Area of homeless applications**

Political Area	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	25	20	24	23	25	22
Banff & Buchan	17	14	15	17	16	20
Formartine	13	13	12	10	12	12
Garioch	20	21	19	20	17	16
Kincardine & Mearns	6	10	12	11	11	11
Marr	9	11	9	10	11	9
Outwith LA area	10	10	10	8	9	10
N=	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

### 2.3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS APPLICANTS

On approaching the local authority as homeless the characteristics of applicants are recorded in terms of sex, age, ethnicity, marital status and dependent children. Over the six year period, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, the following characteristics have been noted amongst households applying as homeless to the local authority in Aberdeenshire.

**Table 2.3.3 Sex and Ethnicity of Applicants**

Household Type	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>A. Sex</b>						
<b>Male</b>	45	45	44	42	43	45
<b>Female</b>	55	55	56	58	57	55
<b>B. Ethnicity</b>						
<b>White Scottish</b>	94	87	89	88	85	85
<b>White Other British</b>	4	10	8	9	10	10
<b>Other (i.e. other White, Black, Asian, Mixed, Other, not known*)</b>	2	3	3	3	5	5
<b>N=</b>	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

*\* see appendix for full list of ethnic groups*

As table 2.3.3 shows, with respect to sex, women have been more likely than men to present to the local authority as homeless over the period, comprising between 55% and 58% of applicants between 2002 and 2007. The proportion of women applicants peaked in 2005 and has declined since that time. In terms of ethnicity, the vast majority of applicants have remained White Scottish (85% - 94%), with around 10% of applications coming from households classified as 'White Other British'. A small increase, from % to 5% has been noted in applications from other ethnic groups (including 'Other' White, Black and Asian), although an increase in the proportion of households where ethnic background is not known slightly inflates the figures presented.

**Table 2.3.4 Household Type**

Household Type	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>A. Marital Status</b>						
<b>Married (with children)</b>	7	7	8	8	6	7
<b>Married (without children)</b>	7	7	5	6	7	7
<b>Lone parent</b>	30	27	29	30	28	27
<b>Single</b>	57	59	58	56	60	60
<b>B. Age-group</b>						
<b>Young person 16-24 years</b>	39	33	36	34	35	37
<b>Adult pre-retirement</b>	57	63	61	63	62	61
<b>Adult retired</b>	4	4	3	3	3	2
<b>N=</b>	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

As Table 2.3.4 shows, the types of household presenting as homeless to the local authority in Aberdeenshire over the last 6 years, has remained fairly constant in certain respects but have shown small signs of change elsewhere. In general, with respect to marital status, the most likely

applicants have been single people and lone-parents, comprising around three-fifths and a quarter or more respectively of all applications over time. In terms of age, adults aged between 25 and retirement age<sup>6</sup>, have been the most likely applicants, consistently comprising three-fifths of applications over the period. The proportion of applications coming from young people has increased to just under two-fifths of all households, whilst the numbers of retired households has declined.

### 2.3.3 CIRCUMSTANCES OF HOMELESS APPLICANTS

Upon presenting to the local authority as homeless, an applicant's circumstances are assessed and recorded in terms of five main issues: whether or not the application was made from the family home; experience of rough sleeping during the three months prior to the application; experience of rough sleeping the night before applying as homeless; whether or not the application was made from settled accommodation; and the main reason for being homeless.

**Table 2.3.5 Application from Family Home**

Origin Application	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Family Home	72	68	66	70	65	66
Not Family Home	28	32	33	30	35	34
N=	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

As table 2.3.5 shows, the majority of homeless applications are made from the family home, with around two-thirds of applications over time originating from this context. 2002 saw the highest proportion of applications come from the family home, with almost three-quarters of applications citing this background to their homelessness. Latterly around a third of applications have come from outwith the family home.

**Table 2.3.6 Sleeping Rough**

Sleep Rough	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
A. During previous 3 months	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	14	12	14	11	15	14
No	86	88	86	89	85	86
B. Night Before						
Yes	5	7	7	6	9	9
No	95	93	93	94	91	91
N=	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

In terms of sleeping rough in the three months preceding application, between 11% and 15% of applicants had done so, with the highest proportion of rough sleepers' being recorded in 2006. With respect to rough sleeping on the night immediately prior to applying as homeless, between

<sup>6</sup> Retirement refers to males aged 65 years + and females aged 60 years +

5% and 9% of applicants had done so, with the highest proportions recorded in recent years (2006 and 2007) (Table 2.3.6).

Overall, men were more likely than women to have slept rough in the previous three months prior to applying as homeless. Likewise, men were more likely than women to have slept rough on the night prior to presenting as homeless to the local authority. Also, rough sleeping was associated with single people as opposed to married couples (with or without children) or lone parents. The association between age and rough sleeping was complex. Thus in 2002 and 2003, young people (aged 16-24 years) were more likely than other age groups to have slept rough in the 3 months prior to presenting as homeless. Also, in 2003, young people were more likely to have slept rough on the night prior to presenting as homeless to the local authority. However by 2005, although young people remained more likely than others to have slept rough immediately prior to presenting as homeless, differences emerged between older people (i.e. retirement age and older) and others in terms of sleeping rough. As such by 2006, older people were less likely than others to sleep rough at any stage.

**Table 2.3.7 Application from Settled Accommodation**

Settled Accommodation	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	80	78	74	78	75	76
No	20	22	26	22	25	24
N=	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

Asked about the degree of settledness before presenting as homeless, the findings show that three-quarters or more of applications came from households who had been living in accommodation for six months or more (table 2.3.7).

Finally, the reasons given by applicants for the loss or threatened loss of accommodation is also recorded as part of the circumstances of households on approaching the local authority as homeless.

**Table 2.3.8 Reason for Homelessness**

Reason	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	33	28	36	31	34	38
Dispute within household – non-violent	13	16	12	15	14	15
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	19	15	15	14	13	11
Loss private sector tenancy	7	7	8	8	7	9
Discharge hospital, prison	1	2	2	2	2	2
Other reason	28	32	28	30	30	26
N=	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

As Table 2.3.8 shows, across all six years (2002 – 2007) applicants reasons for homelessness or the threat of homelessness fell into six broad categories: parents, relatives or friends no longer willing to offer accommodation; non-violent disputes within households; harassment, violence or otherwise unsafe environment; loss of a private sector tenancy; discharge from an institution; and ‘other’ reasons. The latter included the loss of local authority tenancies through rent arrears and anti-social behaviour, mortgage default, expiry of short assured tenancies, loss of service tenancies (i.e. including armed forces), emergency circumstances (i.e. fire & flood), loss of hostel accommodation and overcrowding.

The most reported reason for becoming homeless, across time, was as a result of parents, relatives or friends no longer being able or willing to provide accommodation. Such a reason was given by a third or more of applicants in recent years. Non-violent disputes with a partner, spouse or cohabitee, accounted for between 12% and 16% of reasons for homelessness. Violent disputes with a partner, young people affected (indirectly) by violence between parents / guardians, racial harassment and other types of abusive or violent circumstances accounted for between 11% and 19% of reasons for homelessness. Such violent, abusive and threatening circumstances have gradually decreased as reported reasons for homelessness over the six year study period. Over time, the proportion of households reporting the loss of a private sector tenancy through rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or other reason has remained stable at around 7% to 9% of all applicants. Discharge from an institution (i.e. prison or hospital) as a cause of homelessness has likewise remained constant over time with 2% of households latterly reporting such a reason.

**Figure 2.3.2 Reason for homelessness by type of applicant**

Type of applicant	Reason for homelessness					
	Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	Dispute within household – non-violent	Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	Loss private sector tenancy	Discharge hospital, prison	Other reason
Sex	men	women	women		men	
Age-group	younger	adult	adult	adult		retired
Marital status	single	Lone-parent	Lone-parent	Married with children Married without children	single	Married with children Married without children

As figure 2.3.2 shows, the reasons given for homelessness were systematically linked to the type of applicant presenting as homeless to the local authority. Thus men, younger people and single people were more likely to become homeless through loss of accommodation with parents, relatives or friends. Women, adults (aged 25 years < retirement) and lone-parents were more likely to report domestic disputes, both violent and non-violent. Adults and married couples (with and without children) were more likely to experience the loss of private rented tenancies, whilst men and single people were more likely to report homelessness on account of discharge from an institution.

### 2.3.4 ASSESSMENT OF HOMELESS APPLICANTS

Having been approached by households declaring themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness, the local authority is obliged to carry out an assessment of the applicants and to determine (and ‘deliver’) a course of action with respect to the needs identified. The HL1 data

record local authorities' assessments of households in terms of whether or not, in law, they are considered to be homeless or threatened with homelessness. Such an assessment also identifies the 'priority need' status of the applicants.

As table 2.3.9 shows, the decisions taken by the local authority in respect of homelessness applications varied over the six year period (2002 to 2007). The most likely decision reached was that a household was homeless / threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Over time, such an outcome accounted for around half of applications, ranging from 49% in 2002 to 51% in 2007. Around a quarter of applicants, over time, were assessed as being homeless / threatened with homelessness but lacking in priority need. Just under a quarter of applicants were assessed as being neither homeless nor potentially homeless, the proportions declining from 23% in 2005 to 18% in 2007. Over time, between 9% to 12% of applications were 'lost' due to households losing contact with the local authority or withdrawing their applications. Up to 10% of applicants resolved their homelessness prior to an assessment decision being reached.

With respect to the proportion of assessments resulting in an applicant being defined as having 'priority need', more than half of all assessment each year resulted in such a decision. By 2007, the proportion so defined had risen to almost three-fifths of all applicants (56%). The most likely types of household to be assessed as having 'priority need' were females, retired people, couples with children and lone-parents. By contrast men, younger people and single people were less likely to be awarded 'priority need' status.

**Table 2.3.9 Statutory Assessment**

Decision*	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Homeless, priority, unintentional	38 <i>43</i>	35 <i>40</i>	36 <i>42</i>	37 <i>44</i>	32 <i>41</i>	37 <i>45</i>
Homeless, priority, intentional	2 <i>2</i>	2 <i>3</i>	3 <i>4</i>	3 <i>4</i>	4 <i>5</i>	4 <i>4</i>
Homeless non-priority	16 <i>18</i>	20 <i>23</i>	17 <i>20</i>	14 <i>17</i>	17 <i>22</i>	17 <i>21</i>
Potentially homeless, priority, unintentional	5 <i>6</i>	5 <i>6</i>	6 <i>7</i>	7 <i>7</i>	6 <i>7</i>	5 <i>6</i>
Potentially homeless, priority, intentional	1 <i>1</i>	1 <i>1</i>	1 <i>2</i>	1 <i>1</i>	1 <i>1</i>	(.5) <i>1</i>
Potentially homeless, non-priority	7 <i>8</i>	4 <i>4</i>	5 <i>5</i>	4 <i>5</i>	4 <i>5</i>	4 <i>5</i>
Neither homeless nor potentially homeless	19 <i>22</i>	21 <i>23</i>	17 <i>20</i>	19 <i>23</i>	15 <i>20</i>	14 <i>18</i>
Loss contact or withdrew before assessment decision	9	8	10	10	12	11
Homelessness resolved prior to assessment decision	3	4	5	6	10	8
Total in Priority need**						
Yes	<i>52</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>56</i>
N=	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

\* Figures in italics refer to the percentage of assessed applicants only and excludes applicants who lost contact or withdrew before an assessment decision was reached

\*\* Total in priority need refers to assessed applicants only. Figures have been rounded up or down.

As figure 2.3.3 shows, the statutory decisions reached by the local authority were systematically linked to the type of applicant presenting as homeless. Thus the types of applicants most likely to be considered homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless were females, people of retirement age and lone-parents. By contrast the most likely applicants to be considered homeless but not in priority need were male, younger people and single people. Also, the types of applicants most likely to be assessed as neither homeless nor potentially homeless were female, adults (aged 25 years < retirement) and married households with children. Younger people and single people were more likely than others to lose contact with the local authority or to withdraw their application before an assessment decision.

**Figure 2.3.3 Statutory Assessment by type of applicant**

Type of Applicant	Assessment							
	Homeless, priority, unintentional	Homeless, priority, intentional	Homeless non-priority	Potentially homeless, priority, unintentional	Potential homeless, priority, intentional	Potential homeless, non-priority	Neither homeless nor potential homeless	Loss contact or withdrew before assessment decision
<b>Sex</b>	female		male	female	female	male	female	
<b>Age-group</b>	retired	younger retired	younger	adult retired	retired		adult	younger
<b>Marital Status</b>	lone-parent	married with children	single	married with children lone-parent	married with children married without children	married without children single	married with children lone-parent	single

The length of time taken to reach a decision about an application (i.e. the difference between the date the household approached the local authority and the actual date the decision was made, regardless of when the applicant was told of the decision) was looked at in terms of the number of months involved. As table 2.3.10 shows, decisions are made about the vast majority of applicants within a month of application, although the proportion of applicants who were assessed within a month declined steadily between 2002 and 2006, only rising again in 2007.

**Table 2.3.10 Length of time (months) taken to reach a decision about application**

Time	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Average (months)	(.24)	(.20)	(.30)	(.34)	(.45)	(.32)
% < 1 month	86	86	83	80	72	76
N=	309	1161	1187	1461	1467	1627

### 2.3.5 OUTCOMES OF HOMELESS APPLICATIONS

The final set of information collected through the HL1 form relates to the outcome of the household's application. In particular information is collected about contact with applicant until the local authority has discharged its duty, the last action taken by the local authority, re-housing

outcomes (i.e. securing accommodation), use of temporary accommodation, advice and assistance, referral to social work, the use of integrated assessment, the length time the case remained open, the length time between case closure and resolution and the length time between application and resolution.

With respect to households whose application underwent a statutory assessment (i.e. excluding households who withdrew their application before a decision and households whose homelessness was resolved before a decision), the local authority records whether or not contact was maintained with the applicant until its statutory duty was discharged.

**Table 2.3.11 Contact with Applicant until LA duty discharged**

Contact	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Maintained until duty discharged	93	93	91	90	88	86
Lost contact	7	7	9	10	12	14
N=	270	1023	1005	1206	1122	950

As table 2.3.11 shows, over time the local authority maintained contact with the vast majority of homelessness applicants until its statutory duty was discharged. However the proportion of applicants with which it remained in contact declined steadily over the six year period from 93% in 2002 to 86% in 2007.

For households with whom contact was lost (i.e. 7% to 14%) and who were statutorily assessed as being potentially homeless, the local authority records whether or not its statutory duty was discharged before they actually became homeless.

**Table 2.3.12 LA duty discharged before applicant became homeless**

Duty discharged before become homeless	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	94	90	87	78	77	86
No	6	10	13	22	23	14
N=	33	108	132	129	137	87

As table 2.3.12 shows, in the vast majority of cases the local authority discharged its duty before they became homeless. However, there was a steady decline between 2002 and 2006 in the proportion of applicants for whom this was the case, the downward trend only being reversed in 2007.

The last action of the local authority in terms of the application is recorded in terms of offers of accommodation (both permanent and temporary), referral elsewhere and offers of advice and assistance only.

As table 2.3.13 shows, the actions taken by the local authority mainly involved the offer of a tenancy in social housing (e.g. LA tenancy, other RSL tenancy), the use of temporary

accommodation and the offer of advice and information only. The use of all three varied across the study period (2002 to 2007).

In terms of social housing, offers of tenancies fluctuated over time, comprising between 27% and 36% of final offers made by the local authority. The proportion of households being offered social housing declined in the last three years, falling from 38% in 2005 to 28% in 2007. A decline was also noted in the proportion of households refusing an offer of social housing between 2002 and 2007.

The use of temporary accommodation by the local authority steadily increased over the study period, rising from 12% of all 'disposals' in 2002 to just under half (47%) by 2007. However the proportion of households refusing offers of temporary accommodation also rose in parallel.

The offer of advice and assistance only declined between 2002 and 2007, falling from just under half of all actions (47%) by the local authority in 2002 to around a fifth of all actions (21%) by 2007.

The proportion of applicants assessed and then referred to another local authority remained low throughout, at under one percent of all households.

**Table 2.3.13 Last Action taken by local authority**

Action	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Offer tenancy social housing*-accept	33	28	33	36	34	27
Offer tenancy social housing*-not accept	4	3	2	2	2	1
<b>Total social housing</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>28</b>
Offer private tenancy - accept	(.4)	1	1	1	1	(.2)
Offer private tenancy – not accept	-	(.1)	-	-	-	(.1)
Offer temporary housing only - accept	4	15	23	18	22	27
Offer temporary housing only – not accept	8	13	16	14	17	20
<b>Total temporary housing</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>47</b>
Referral to other LA	(.4)	(.5)	(.2)	(.5)	(.4)	(.2)
Offer advice & assistance only	47	37	24	26	22	21
None of above	4	3	2	3	3	5
N=	251	954	916	1092	994	819

\* social housing = local authority, other RSL, Scottish Homes secure / assured tenancy within LA

The last action of the local authority was systematically linked to the types of household applying as homeless. As figure 2.3.3 shows, the offer of social housing was associated with applicants who were women, retired and had children, either as married couples or lone-parents. Temporary accommodation was associated with men, young people and single people. Advice & Assistance was associated with women, married couples (with and without children) and lone-parents.

Figure 2.3.3 Select Last Action by LA by household type

Type of Household	Social Housing	Temporary Accommodation	Advice & Assistance
Sex	female	male	female
Age-group	retired	younger	adult
Marital Status	married with children lone-parent	single	married with children married without children lone-parent

Further information is collected about the types of accommodation applicants live in following the final discharge of duty by the local authority or case closure. 12 types of re-housing outcomes are thus explored.

Table 2.3.14 Re-housing outcome

Re-housing outcome (select)*	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. local authority tenancy	23	26	27	27	24	18
2. Scottish Homes tenancy	-	-	-	(.2)	(.2)	(.4)
3. RSL tenancy: self-contained	6	4	7	6	4	4
4. RSL tenancy: not self-contained	-	(.2)	(.3)	(.2)	(.2)	-
5. private rented tenancy	3	4	4	3	3	4
6. hostel – local authority		(.1)	-	-	-	-
7. hostel - RSL		-	-	-	-	-
8. hostel - other		1	(.3)	(.1)	(.4)	(.2)
9. Bed & Breakfast	1	1	1	(.2)	(.5)	(.4)
10. returned previous / present accommodation	36	31	26	25	23	21
11. moved in relatives / friends	4	6	6	5	4	6
12. tenancy with voluntary organisation	(.3)	(.5)	(.3)	(.3)	(.1)	(.4)
N=	309	1160	1149	1449	1446	1236

\* select = a large proportion of re-housing outcomes are not known and excluded from the table. Accordingly percentages do not add up to 100%.

As table 2.3.14 shows, the most reported re-housing outcome following the final discharge of duty by the local authority or case closure, is for households to make their own arrangements and move in with friends or relatives. Between a third and a fifth of re-housing outcomes result in such a situation, over time. However, the proportion of re-housing outcomes leading to applicants making their own (housing) arrangements steadily declined between 2002 and 2007 from 36% to 21%.

The second most likely re-housing outcome following the final discharge of duty by the local authority or case closure, is for households to take up a tenancy provided by the local authority itself. Over time, up to a quarter of households secured such an outcome. However, the proportion doing so decline between 2005 and 2007 from 27% to 18%.

Further information is collected by the local authority about whether or not the final re-housing outcome was offered with some kind of support to households. As table 3.2.12 shows, the proportion of households offered support with their tenancies by the local authority doubled from 7% in 2002 to 14% by 2007.

**Table 2.3.15 Re-housing and support**

Re-housing offered with support	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	7	8	7	8	13	14
No	93	92	93	92	87	86
N=	228	869	896	1036	958	726

For the declining proportion of applicants who were offered advice & assistance only by the local authority (i.e. 47% of applicants in 2002 to 21% of applicants in 2007), the bulk of such work was carried out by the local authority itself. However, over time, the local authority's role in providing advice & assistance fluctuated from providing for three-fifths (59%) of all applicants in receipt of such help to four-fifths of applicants (81%). Between 2005 and 2007 a steady increase was noted in the role that the local authority played in providing advice & assistance to homeless applicants, reversing a short period between 2004 and 2005 when other organisations had become increasingly involved.

**Table 2.3.16 Advice & Assistance Provider**

Advice & Assistance Provider	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Local authority only	81	74	78	59	61	78
Other organisation only	-	1	(.5)	-	-	1
Both local authority & other organisation	19	25	21	41	39	21
N=	117	352	216	285	218	173

Information is also collected by the local authority about social work involvement with a 'homeless application'. As table 2.3.17 shows, it was the minority of applicants who were referred to social work over time. Also, the proportion of applicants for whom social work involvement was thought necessary remained stable across time, at between 13% and 17%.

**Table 2.3.17 Referral to Social Work**

Referral to social work	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	17	17	17	13	15	15
No	83	83	83	87	85	85
N=	309	1160	1187	1450	1447	1236

Further information is collected by the local authority about the use of integrated assessment of applicants. As table 2.3.18 shows, it was only in a small minority of cases that an integrated assessment was carried out on homeless applicants. As such, over time, between 4% and 9% of applicants underwent such an intervention.

**Table 2.3.18 Integrated Assessment**

Integrated assessment	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	5	9	8	4	5	5
No	95	91	92	96	95	95
N=	309	1160	1187	1450	1446	1236

Finally, information about the date when a household first applied to the local authority as homeless and the date of the last action by the local authority, indicate the length of time taken by the local authority to deal with an application.

**Table 2.3.19 Duration case open**

Length time case open	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Less than one month	64	50	44	33	26	29
1 month	13	21	22	28	28	34
2-3 months	12	16	16	21	23	25
4 months+	11	13	18	18	23	13
Average (months)	1.14	1.62	2.10	2.18	2.53	1.59
Max (months)	20	39	35	30	22	12
N=	309	1160	1187	1450	1445	1236

As table 3.2.16 shows, between 2002 and 2006 the length of time taken by the local authority to deal with a homeless application rose steadily. As such from an average 1.14 months in 2002 the length of time rose to 2.53 months by 2006. In 2007, the average length of time a case remained open fell to 1.59 months. The increase in the length of time taken to deal with a case is also indicated by the proportion of cases dealt with within the first month of application. This fell from around two-thirds of cases being handled swiftly in 2002 to just over a quarter of cases being similarly handled in 2007.

### 2.3.6 Summary

- Over the five year period 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, the numbers of households approaching the local authority as homeless in Aberdeenshire has risen from 1187 applications in the year 2002 – 2003 to 1627 applications in the year 2006 – 2007, a rise of 40%.
- The increase has been uneven, with the most marked change occurring in the period 2003 – 2004 to 2004 – 2005, where a 23% increase in homeless applications was recorded.
- With respect to repeat homelessness, the data show that 17% (n=278) of households in 2007 had previously applied to the local authority as homeless. Over time, the number of repeat applications to the local authority increased from 11% (n=132) in 2003, to 16% (n=193) in 2004, to 15% (n=224) in 2004, to 16% (n=237) in 2006.
- Over time, Buchan was the area from which most applications were made, variously comprising between a fifth and a quarter of all homeless applications in Aberdeenshire.
- With respect to sex, women have been more likely than men to present to the local authority as homeless over the period, comprising between 55% and 58% of applicants between 2002 and 2007. The proportion of women applicants peaked in 2005 and has declined since that time.
- In terms of ethnicity, the vast majority of applicants have remained White Scottish (94%-85%), with 15% of applications coming from households classified as 'White Other British' or other ethnic group, latterly (2006, 2007).
- Between 2002 and 2007, lone-parent households, young person households and single person households have been the most likely types of household affected by homelessness and to present as homeless to the local authority in Aberdeenshire, respectively comprising (as overlapping categories) around a quarter, a third and a three-fifths of all homeless applications over the period.
- The majority of homeless applications are made from the family home, with around two-thirds of applications over time originating from this context.
- In terms of sleeping rough in the three months preceding application, between 11% and 15% of applicants had done so, with the highest proportion of rough sleepers' being recorded in 2006.
- The most reported reason for becoming homeless, across time, was as a result of parents, relatives or friends no longer being able or willing to provide accommodation. Such a reason was given by a third or more of applicants in recent years.
- The most likely decision reached was that a household was homeless / threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Over time, such an outcome accounted for around half of applications, ranging from 49% in 2002 to 51% in 2007.
- With respect to the proportion of assessments resulting in an applicant being defined as having 'priority need', more than half of all assessment each year resulted in such a decision. By 2007, the proportion so defined had risen to almost three-fifths of all applicants (56%).
- The statutory decisions reached by the local authority were systematically linked to the type of applicant presenting as homeless. Thus the types of applicants most likely to be considered homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless were females, people of retirement age and lone-parents.
- The length of time taken to reach a decision about an application (i.e. the difference between the date the household approached the local authority and the actual date the decision was made) was within a month for the vast majority of applicants.
- The proportion of households being offered social housing declined in the last three years, falling from 38% in 2005 to 28% in 2007.
- The use of temporary accommodation by the local authority steadily increased over the study period, rising from 12% of all 'disposals' in 2002 to just under half (47%) by 2007.
- The average time taken to deal with a homeless application rose steadily between 2002 and 2006 from 1.14 months to 2.53 months. In 2007 it fell to 1.59 months.

## 2.4 Area analysis of HL1 ‘Returns’ 2001-2002 to 2006-2007

### 2.4.1 Introduction

Aberdeenshire Council serves a population of c.226,940 people across a mixed landscape covering 2,428 square miles of coast, hills and low lying areas. Following local government re-organisation, the local authority established a system of devolved decision making and policy across six political areas; Buchan, Banff & Buchan, Formartine, Garioch, Kincardine & Mearns and Marr. Diverse in terms of demographic, social, economic and geographical characteristics, the experience of homelessness also varies markedly across such areas. The present section reports on such differences, contrasting the experiences of homeless people in each of the six main political areas as well as the experience of homeless people who originate from outwith the Aberdeenshire Council area but ‘express’ their homelessness in Aberdeenshire.

The ‘area analysis’ examines the characteristics of homeless applicants, reasons for homelessness, the statutory decisions made about homeless applications and the outcomes of these decisions.

### 2.4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS APPLICANTS

#### 2.4.1 Sex of Homeless Applicants by Political Area

Political Area	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	44	56	54	46	46	54	47	53	51	49	49	51
Banff & Buchan	44	56	47	53	44	56	43	57	50	50	47	53
Formartine	39	61	38	62	40	60	27	73	30	70	39	61
Garioch	48	52	38	62	39	61	39	61	38	62	36	64
Kincardine & Mearns	53	47	41	59	47	53	43	57	42	58	41	59
Marr	46	54	48	52	36	64	40	60	39	61	45	55
Outwith LA area	47	53	55	45	53	47	48	52	49	51	53	47
N=	309		1161		1187		1461		1467		1627	

As table 2.4.1 shows, the ratio of male to female applicants varied across political area and less so across time within those political areas. Thus, with the exception of the Buchan area (and applications from outwith Aberdeenshire), where the balance of male to female applications varied over time, all other areas were characterised by a predominance of homeless applications by women across all years, from 2002 to 2007.

Differences were noted too in the age distribution of homeless applicants across the political areas (see table 2.4.2). With exception of ‘youth homelessness’ (i.e. homelessness amongst 16-24 year olds) which was consistently higher in Buchan and Banff & Buchan between 2002 and 2007, - although Kincardine & Mearns recorded record levels of youth homelessness in 2007 - the likelihood of other types of household presenting as homeless varied across political areas and across time. As such, homelessness amongst retired households was associated with Marr in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007, although not in 2004. In 2004, Kincardine & Mearns recorded

more applications from older households (i.e. women aged 60 years+ and men aged 65 years+). Homeless amongst adult households (i.e. those aged 25 years < retirement), varied from year to year and political area. Higher in Kincardine & Mearns in 2002, 2003 and 2006, in 2004, 2005 and 2007 homelessness amongst adult households was associated with presentations in Marr.

**Table 2.4.2 Age-Group of Applicants by Political Area**

Political Area	Year								
	2002			2003			2004		
	young	adult	retired	young	adult	retired	young	adult	retired
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	51	44	5	43	55	2	46	51	3
Banff & Buchan	50	50	-	44	54	2	45	52	3
Formartine	17	78	5	30	64	6	31	67	2
Garioch	42	55	3	30	67	3	31	66	3
Kincardine & Mearns	16	79	5	23	74	3	29	65	6
Marr	39	54	7	23	69	8	26	70	4
Outwith LA area	30	63	7	29	67	4	27	71	3
Political Area	Year								
	2005			2006			2007		
	young	adult	retired	young	adult	retired	young	adult	retired
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	42	55	3	39	58	3	41	58	1
Banff & Buchan	43	54	3	40	59	1	38	60	2
Formartine	22	73	5	28	67	5	34	63	3
Garioch	33	64	3	33	65	2	33	65	2
Kincardine & Mearns	30	69	1	30	65	5	43	56	1
Marr	22	72	5	38	57	5	34	65	5
Outwith LA area	27	71	2	33	64	3	33	64	3

In terms of the marital status of households presenting as homeless, differences were noted across the political areas over time (see table 2.4.3). Thus single homelessness was associated with Buchan and Banff & Buchan across all years, 2002 to 2007. Homelessness amongst lone-parents was associated with Formartine in 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2007, with Garioch in 2003 and 2004 and with Marr also in 2004. With respect to married households (i.e. married with and without children), homeless presentations were associated with Kincardine & Mearns in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. In 2006 and 2007 homeless presentations from married households were associated with Marr.

**Table 2.4.3 Marital Status of Applicant by Political Area**

Political Area	Year								
	2002			2003			2004		
	married*	lone parent	single	married*	lone parent	single	married*	lone parent	single
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	4	25	71	7	18	75	9	23	68
Banff & Buchan	10	21	69	7	22	71	6	22	72
Formartine	17	44	39	20	29	51	19	35	46
Garioch	15	34	52	16	35	49	14	37	49
Kincardine & Mearns	26	32	42	21	30	49	18	29	53
Marr	25	25	50	18	30	52	19	39	41
Outwith LA area	13	37	50	14	25	61	11	25	64
Political Area	Year								
	2005			2006			2007		
	married*	lone parent	single	married*	lone parent	single	married*	lone parent	single
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	12	23	65	10	21	69	12	21	67
Banff & Buchan	10	28	62	11	19	70	11	20	69
Formartine	16	43	41	19	40	41	15	39	46
Garioch	13	33	54	10	36	54	17	36	47
Kincardine & Mearns	23	33	44	14	30	56	15	32	53
Marr	15	25	60	17	28	55	16	24	60
Outwith LA area	18	29	53	14	26	60	11	21	68

\* married refers to married households with and without children

### 2.4.3 CIRCUMSTANCES, ASSESSMENT & OUTCOMES

As part of the identification of applicants circumstances enquiries are made about rough sleeping in the 3 months prior to presenting as homeless to the local authority. As table 2.4.4 shows the experience of rough sleeping was clearly patterned by political area across time. As such, between 2003 and 2007 rough sleeping in Aberdeenshire was associated with applicants from the Banff & Buchan area. Only in 2002 were there more households presenting with a background of rough sleeping found outwith this political area (i.e. in Buchan). However it should be noted that the largest proportion of rough sleepers came from outwith the Aberdeenshire local authority area in all years examined, apart from 2006.

Over time, the problem of rough sleeping in the Banff & Buchan area increased from 14% of applicants in 2002 to 26% of applicants in 2006. 2007 saw a decline in the proportion of rough sleepers in the Banff & Buchan area to 22% of applicants.

**Table 2.4.4 Sleeping Rough < 3 months by Political Area**

Political Area	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	17	15	17	13	16	14
Banff & Buchan	14	18	18	18	26	22
Formartine	5	7	10	2	8	5
Garioch	10	10	12	7	12	11
Kincardine & Mearns	-	4	11	9	10	5
Marr	14	8	6	4	6	11
Outwith LA area	33	22	23	23	23	26

Having presented to the local authority as homeless an attempt is made by the local authority to establish the main reason for the household becoming homeless. As table 2.4.5 (and figure 2.4.1) shows, main reasons for homelessness varied by political area but showed a degree of consistency over time.

Homelessness as a result of the loss of accommodation with parents, family or friends was associated with households presenting as homeless in Banff & Buchan and Buchan in particular.

**Table 2.4.5 Main Reason for homelessness / threat homelessness by Political Area**

Reasons *	Area						
	Buchan	Banff & Buchan	Formartine	Garioch	Kincardine & Mearns	Marr	Outwith Shire
Year	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>2002</b>							
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	35	44	19	31	26	46	20
Dispute within household – non-violent	20	15	15	13	-	14	10
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	20	21	15	15	16	14	27
Loss private sector tenancy	1	6	10	11	16	4	3
<b>N =</b>	77	52	41	62	19	28	30
<b>2003</b>							
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	32	38	27	25	28	24	23
Dispute within household – non-violent	17	19	14	22	13	16	14
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	10	16	16	15	6	12	16
Loss private sector tenancy	7	3	7	4	10	16	4
<b>N =</b>	232	166	152	249	115	128	119

Year	Buchan	Banff & Buchan	Formartine	Garioch	Kincardine & Mearns	Marr	Outwith Shire
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>2004</b>							
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	38	43	28	36	43	34	22
Dispute within household – non-violent	10	11	13	18	10	16	10
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	12	21	15	11	6	15	26
Loss private sector tenancy	9	5	6	5	19	11	2
<b>N =</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>2005</b>							
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	36	32	24	34	34	24	23
Dispute within household – non-violent	12	12	20	22	13	20	12
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	15	19	11	9	8	17	24
Loss private sector tenancy	6	8	8	5	12	18	6
<b>N =</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>2006</b>							
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	39	37	28	34	35	34	25
Dispute within household – non-violent	13	16	15	19	17	13	12
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	13	12	5	11	10	14	18
Loss private sector tenancy	4	5	12	7	7	15	6
<b>N =</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>2007</b>							
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	40	39	35	37	44	37	30
Dispute within household – non-violent	13	17	15	20	15	22	8
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	11	9	6	7	9	9	18
Loss private sector tenancy	7	10	9	8	15	7	6
<b>N=</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>168</b>

*\* reasons = only the four most reported reasons are shown. Accordingly figures may not add up to 100%*

As such, between 2002 and 2007 homelessness as a result of parents, family or friends being unable or unwilling to accommodate an applicant was more likely to be reported in Banff & Buchan and Buchan than elsewhere. The only exception to this pattern was in 2002 and 2004 when in addition to Banff & Buchan or Buchan, Marr and Kincardine & Mearns reported higher levels loss of accommodation due to parents, family or friends being unable or unwilling to accommodate an applicant. Homelessness as a result of a non-violent dispute with a partner was linked with applicants presenting in Garioch between 2004 and 2006. By contrast homelessness

as a result of harassment, violence or an otherwise unsafe environment was associated with households from Buchan or Banff & Buchan in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007. Also in 2003 and 2006, households applying as homeless in Formartine and Marr respectively were likely to report loss of accommodation due to harassment, violence or an unsafe environment. Between 2003 and 2007, households from outwith Aberdeenshire were also likely to be fleeing harassment, violence or an unsafe environment. Homelessness as a result of the loss of a private sector tenancy was linked to applicants from Marr and Kincardine & Mearns, across time.

**Figure 2.4.1 Main reason for homelessness by Political Area (Summary)**

Main Reason	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Loss of accommodation with parents, relatives, friends	Banff & Buchan Marr	Banff & Buchan	Banff & Buchan Kincardine & Mearns	Buchan	Buchan	Banff Banff & Buchan
Dispute within household – non-violent	Buchan	Banff & Buchan	Garioch	Garioch	Garioch	Marr
Harassment, violence, unsafe environment	Buchan	Banff & Buchan Formartine Outwith 'Shire	Banff & Buchan Outwith 'Shire	Banff & Buchan Outwith 'Shire	Marr Outwith 'Shire	Buchan Outwith 'Shire
Loss private sector tenancy	Kincardine & Mearns	Marr	Kincardine & Mearns	Marr	Marr	Kincardine & Mearns

As previously noted, having been approached by households declaring themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness, the local authority is obliged to carry out an assessment of the applicants and to determine (and 'deliver') a course of action with respect to the needs identified. Table 2.4.6 shows the statutory assessment of applicants' circumstances by the political area from which they presented as homeless.

**Table 2.4.6 Statutory Assessment – Priority Need by Political Area**

Political Area	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buchan	57	41	54	60	58	63
Banff & Buchan	67	69	67	74	66	68
Formartine	37	49	58	54	43	52
Garioch	32	38	48	40	39	50
Kincardine & Mearns	79	65	55	59	53	59
Marr	50	48	54	48	57	58
Outwith LA area	70	47	53	49	60	64

As table 2.4.6 shows, with the exception of 2002, when the most recorded cases of priority need were recorded in Kincardine & Mearns, across all other years (i.e. 2003 to 2007), priority need was most likely to be awarded to applicants presenting as homeless in Banff & Buchan. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of applicants in this area were defined as being in priority need in the past five years. By contrast applicants presenting as homeless in Garioch were less likely, across time, to be awarded priority need status. As such between a third and up to a half were defined in such a way.

**Table 2.4.7 Last Action (select) of local authority by Political Area**

Select Last Action	Area						
Year	Buchan	Banff & Buchan	Formartine	Garioch	Kincardine & Mearns	Marr	Outwith Shire
2002	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Social housing offer	29	67	12	10	42	29	27
Temporary Housing offer	3	4	24	15	5	11	13
Advice & Assistance only	31	23	51	61	16	46	20
N=	77	52	41	62	19	28	30
2003	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Social housing offer	19	57	19	11	36	25	22
Temporary Housing offer	13	20	22	31	22	23	34
Advice & Assistance only	24	11	39	49	17	38	25
N=	232	166	152	249	115	128	119
2004	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Social housing offer	22	55	23	10	32	25	28
Temporary Housing offer	21	30	34	38	31	32	27
Advice & Assistance only	6	3	23	40	16	27	18
N=	280	179	138	225	140	109	116
2005	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Social housing offer	29	54	18	12	29	28	23
Temporary Housing offer	17	25	25	29	27	20	24
Advice & Assistance only	6	6	34	43	12	22	19
N=	341	252	147	286	163	152	120
2006	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Social housing offer	27	33	12	12	24	32	29
Temporary Housing offer	18	31	25	26	35	26	29
Advice & Assistance only	6	6	37	32	9	12	8
N=	363	236	170	244	158	160	136
2007	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Social housing offer	17	22	8	8	8	12	13
Temporary Housing offer	15	23	21	24	32	28	30
Advice & Assistance only	7	5	26	24	3	6	4
N=	362	327	195	255	173	147	168

Finally, the last action taken by the local authority with respect to a homeless application was linked to the political area in which the application was made. As table 2.4.7 shows, social housing (i.e. local authority, other Registered Social Landlord, Scottish Homes secure / assured tenancy within local authority) was most likely to be offered to applicants from Garioch in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007. Temporary housing was most likely to be offered to applicants from Formartine in 2002, thereafter applicants from Garioch were more likely to be offered temporary accommodation in 2003, 2004 and 2005, followed by applicants from Kincardine & Mearns in 2006 and 2007. The offer of Advice & Assistance only was more likely to be made to applicants from Garioch in 2002, 2004 and 2005. In 2003 applicants from Marr were the more likely to receive such an offer, while in 2006 and 2007 applicants from Formartine were the more likely to be made an offer of Advice & Assistance only, on applying as homeless to the local authority.

#### 2.4.4 Summary

- With the exception of the Buchan area (and applications from outwith Aberdeenshire), where the balance of male to female applications varied over time, all other areas were characterised by a predominance of homeless applications by women across all years, from 2002 to 2007.
- ‘Youth homelessness’ (i.e. homelessness amongst 16-24 year olds) was consistently higher in Buchan and Banff & Buchan between 2002 and 2007.
- Homelessness amongst retired households was associated with Marr in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007, although not in 2004. In 2004, Kincardine & Mearns recorded more applications from older households (i.e. women aged 60 years and older and men aged 65 years and older).
- single homelessness was associated with Buchan and Banff & Buchan across all years, 2002 to 2007.
- Homelessness amongst lone-parents was associated with Formartine in 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2007, with Garioch in 2003 and 2004 and with Marr also in 2004.
- Rough sleeping was patterned according to the political area from which homeless applications were made. As such, between 2003 and 2007 rough sleeping in Aberdeenshire (in the three months prior to application) was associated with applicants from the Banff & Buchan area. Only in 2002 were there more households presenting with a background of rough sleeping found outwith this political area (i.e. in Buchan).
- Over time, the problem of rough sleeping in the Banff & Buchan area increased from 14% of applicants in 2002 to 26% of applicants in 2006. 2007 saw a decline in the proportion of rough sleepers in the Banff & Buchan area to 22% of applicants.
- However it should be noted that the largest proportion of rough sleepers came from outwith the Aberdeenshire local authority area in all years examined, apart from 2006.
- The main reason for the household becoming homeless varied by political area but showed a degree of consistency over time.
- Homelessness as a result of the loss of accommodation with parents, family or friends – the main reason for homelessness across all years - was associated with households presenting as homeless in Banff & Buchan and Buchan in particular.
- Homelessness as a result of harassment, violence or an otherwise unsafe environment was associated with households from Buchan or Banff & Buchan in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007.
- Homelessness as a result of the loss of a private sector tenancy was linked to applicants from Marr and Kincardine & Mearns, across time.

- With the exception of 2002, when the most recorded cases of priority need were recorded in Kincardine & Mearns, across all other years (i.e. 2003 to 2007), priority need was most likely to be awarded to applicants presenting as homeless in Banff & Buchan.
- Applicants presenting as homeless in Garioch were the least likely, across time, to be awarded priority need status. As such between a third and up to a half were defined in such a way.
- The last action taken by the local authority with respect to a homeless application was linked to the political area in which the application was made. Social housing (i.e. local authority, other Registered Social Landlord, Scottish Homes secure / assured tenancy within local authority) was most likely to be offered to applicants from Garioch in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007.

## SECTION THREE : SURVEY OF AGENCIES

### 3.1 Introduction

The present section reports on the survey of agencies carried out by way of complementing the analysis of the HL1 returns of the local authority. In particular it describes the responses of the 13 agency personnel who ranged in responsibility from the chairperson of 'key' agencies to housing managers and a support worker (Figure 3.1.1).

**Figure 3.1.1 Agency Personnel**

	Agency	Designation
1	Aberdeen Foyer	Head of Housing Support
2	Alcohol Support Ltd.	Manager
3	Banchory Advice Centre	Co-ordinator
4	Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau	Service Manager
5	Drugs Action	General Manager
6	Gordon Rural Action	Co-ordinator
7	Grampian Women's Aid	Co-ordinator
8	Hanover Housing Association	Assistant Area Manager
9	Langstane Housing Association	Senior Housing Services Officer
10	Pitstop	Support Worker
11	STAIR Advice Office	Chairperson
12	Tenants First Housing Co-operative	Housing Manager
13	Turriff Advice Centre	Chairperson

Agency personnel were asked about three main topics: firstly they were asked to describe the agency in terms of its client group(s), including the numbers of homeless people worked with and the scale of its operation. Secondly, they were asked about the types of homeless people worked with, including housing backgrounds (i.e. 'hidden homelessness', rough sleeping etc.) and socio-demographic characteristics. Thirdly, they were asked about the types of services provided for homeless people, including the rationales underpinning service provision, the effectiveness of services and the strengths and weaknesses of the agency.

### 3.2 About the Agency

Agencies were asked about how many clients they worked with in Aberdeenshire, how many homeless people they worked with and the types of client group served by the agency. With respect to the main client group(s) served by agencies, agencies were invited to indicate whether or not they worked with 12 specified groups (or any other group).

**Table 3.2.1 Main Client Group(s) of Agency**

	Agency	Main Client Groups served by Agency
1	Aberdeen Foyer	homeless people
2	Alcohol Support Ltd.	people with drink / drug problems; offenders / ex-offenders; young people (16-17 years); young people (<21 years) previously looked after; victims of domestic violence; families affected by drink / drug problems
3	Banchory Advice Centre	<i>Not relate to client groups but subject of enquiry</i>
4	Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau	Homeless people; elderly people; physically disabled people; learning disabled people; mentally ill people; people with drink / drug problems; offenders / ex-offenders; young people (16-17 years); young people (<21 years) previously looked after; victims of domestic violence; ethnic minority groups; 'other'
5	Drugs Action	people with drink / drug problems; women involved in street prostitution
6	Gordon Rural Action	elderly people; physically disabled people; learning disabled people; mentally ill people
7	Grampian Women's Aid	victims of domestic violence
8	Hanover Housing Association	Homeless people; elderly people; physically disabled people; mentally ill people; people with drink / drug problems
9	Langstane Housing Association	Homeless people; physically disabled people; learning disabled people; mentally ill people; people with drink / drug problems; offenders / ex-offenders; young people (16-17 years); young people (<21 years) previously looked after; victims of domestic violence; ethnic minority groups; asylum seekers
10	Pitstop	Homeless people; people with drink / drug problems
11	STAIR Advice Office	Homeless people; elderly people; physically disabled people; learning disabled people; mentally ill people; people with drink / drug problems; offenders / ex-offenders; young people (16-17 years); young people (<21 years) previously looked after; victims of domestic violence; ethnic minority groups; 'other' people
12	Tenants First Housing Co-operative	Any person over 16 years of age
13	Turriff Advice Centre	Homeless people; elderly people; physically disabled people; learning disabled people; people with drink / drug problems; offenders / ex-offenders; young people (<21 years) previously looked after; victims of domestic violence; ethnic minority groups; people on low incomes

As table 3.2.1 shows, agencies worked with a wide variety of client groups, with some of the more generic agencies (e.g. ‘advice’ services) reporting work with almost all of the 12 categories of client asked about. Only six agencies reported working with homeless people, as a main client group, although more agencies reported contact with homeless people (see table 3.2.2, below).

**Table 3.2.2 Size of Client Group**

	Agency	Numbers of clients worked with in Aberdeenshire < 1 year	Numbers of Homeless People worked with in Aberdeenshire < 1 year
1	Aberdeen Foyer	-	60
2	Alcohol Support Ltd.	c.250	5 to 8
3	Banchory Advice Centre	201	Not recorded
4	Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau	-	-
5	Drugs Action	35 one-to-one; 200-500 through Helpline/ duty/ needle exchange / sex industry	0-5
6	Gordon Rural Action	c.500	2-3
7	Grampian Women’s Aid	c.65	n/a
8	Hanover Housing Association	c.1000	c.20-25
9	Langstane Housing Association	dk	dk
10	Pitstop	Variable – 10 residents at a time	<as opposite>
11	STAIR Advice Office	-	-
12	Tenants First Housing Co-operative	2347 housing applicants	61 homeless + 69 threatened homelessness
13	Turriff Advice Centre	c.700	10 approx

To gauge the volume of work carried out by agencies, agencies were invited to state how many clients they worked with, in Aberdeenshire, in a year. Such a figure would provide a context for the amount of work carried out with homeless people.

Not all agencies were able to provide information about the scale of their operations but those that did reported a wide range of client bases. On the one hand Grampian Women’s Aid estimated that they worked with around 65 clients in a year while Tenants First Housing Co-operative indicated a client base of 2,347 housing applicants. In between, various agencies worked with tens if not hundreds of clients. Asked then about how many homeless people were worked with, responses indicate that homeless people comprised only a small fraction of the overall client groups served, for most agencies. However, for dedicated housing and ‘homelessness’ services (e.g. Aberdeen Foyer, Pitstop) this was clearly not the case. With respect to the latter, Aberdeen Foyer reported working with 60 homeless people annually in Aberdeenshire, while Tenants First Housing Co-operative reported working with 130 homeless people in a year in the local authority area.

Similarly, Hanover Housing Association with a client base of 1000, worked with 20-25 homeless people each year in Aberdeenshire. Elsewhere, amongst ‘non-specialist’ providers, numbers of homeless people worked with annually did not exceed 10.

### 3.3 Types of Homelessness

Agencies were next asked about the types of homelessness they worked with in Aberdeenshire. As such they were invited to report on the housing backgrounds (i.e. ‘hidden homelessness’, rough sleeping etc.) and socio-demographic characteristics of the homeless people with whom they had contact.

**Table 3.3.1 Housing backgrounds by Agency by Numbers worked with**

Housing Background	Number of agencies	Agency
Hostel / refuge	3	Hanover HA; Langstane HA; Aberdeen Foyer
Bed & Breakfast	7	Pitstop; Turriff Advice; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; STAIR advice; Aberdeen Foyer
c/o others	8	Pitstop; Turriff Advice; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; STAIR advice; Aberdeen Foyer; Drugs Action
Sleeping rough < 3months	2	Langstane HA; Aberdeen Foyer
Institution (e.g. prison)	1	Langstane HA; Drugs Action
Insecure accommodation	7	Pitstop; Turriff Advice; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; STAIR advice; Aberdeen Foyer
Other type of homelessness	1	Langstane HA

As table 3.3.1 shows, agencies collectively worked with homeless people from a wide range of housing backgrounds. The most reported types of homelessness worked with was ‘hidden homelessness’ i.e. working with clients living care of others (e.g. friends, relatives) and wanting their own home, and clients living in insecure accommodation who could be evicted at any time. Only two agencies reported working with those who slept rough.

Further analysis revealed the ‘homeless profiles’ of agencies (i.e. types and numbers of homeless people worked with). As such, as table 3.3.2 shows, Langstane Housing Association reported the widest range of types of homeless worked with (although was unable to quantify such wide-ranging work). By contrast Tenants First Housing Co-operative was able to quantify the scale of its work with homeless people (i.e. 160 people annually) but was unable to specify the types of homelessness dealt with. Other agencies managed both to describe the range of homelessness dealt with and the numbers of homeless people served. Amongst the latter, Hanover Housing Association worked with 20-25 homeless people annually from a wide range of housing backgrounds (i.e. hostel / refuge; B&B; c/o others; insecure accommodation), while Aberdeen Foyer served a similar ‘mixed’ client group – including rough sleepers- providing support to 60 homeless people annually.

**Table 3.3.2 Agency Homeless Client Groups**

	Agency	Housing Background	Numbers of Homeless people < year
1	Aberdeen Foyer	hostel / refuge; B&B; c/o others; sleeping rough; insecure accomm	60
2	Alcohol Support Ltd.	B&B; c/o others; insecure accomm	10
3	Banchory Advice Centre	-	-
4	Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau	-	-
5	Drugs Action	c/o others; institution	0-5
6	Gordon Rural Action	-	2-3
7	Grampian Women's Aid	n/a	n/a
8	Hanover Housing Association	hostel / refuge; B&B; c/o others; insecure accomm	20-25
9	Langstane Housing Association	hostel / refuge; B&B; c/o others; sleeping rough; institution; insecure accomm	dk
10	Pitstop	B&B; c/o others; 'other' housing situation	-
11	STAIR Advice Office	B&B; c/o others; insecure accomm	-
12	Tenants First Housing Co-operative	-	130
13	Turriff Advice Centre	B&B; c/o others; insecure accomm	10

By way of further exploring the issue of 'hidden homelessness', enquiries were made about the proportion of agencies' homeless clients who presented themselves as homeless (or threatened with homelessness) to the local authority in Aberdeenshire. Of the nine agencies which replied to the question, three suggested that 75%-100% of their homeless clients had declared their homelessness to the local authority (see table 3.3.3). As such from the limited data available, it would appear that most agencies worked with a client group of homeless people that remained hidden from the local authority in Aberdeenshire.

**Table 3.3.3 Hidden Homelessness**

Proportion of Clients 'present' as homeless to LA*	Number of Agencies	% of agencies
Less than 10%	3	33
10% - 25%	1	11
75%-100%	3	33
DK	2	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	

\* only actual responses are shown (e.g. no-one reported 26% - 33% and therefore it is 'undeclared')

Finally, agencies were asked about the socio-demographic characteristics of the homeless clients they work with in Aberdeenshire. In particular, they were asked to describe the age and marital status of their homeless clients.

**Table 3.3.4 Hidden Homelessness**

<b>Socio-demographic status of homeless clients</b>	<b>Number of agencies</b>	<b>Agency</b>
<b>Single people</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Aberdeen Foyer; Hanover HA; Turriff Advice</b>
<b>Lone-parents</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Aberdeen Foyer; Hanover HA; Alcohol Support Ltd.</b>
<b>Young people (&lt; 25 years)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Turriff Advice; Alcohol Support Ltd.</b>
<b>Couples with children</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Hanover HA</b>
<b>Couples without children</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Aberdeen Foyer; Hanover HA; Turriff Advice</b>

As table 3.3.4 shows, amongst the four agencies which responded, and which between them worked with more than 100 clients in Aberdeenshire each year, all of the major types of homeless households were worked with. Agencies efforts were focused in particular upon single people, lone-parents and couples with children.

### **3.4 Services for Homeless People**

The final part of the survey examined the types of services provided by agencies who worked with homeless people in Aberdeenshire. As such enquiries were made about the rationales underpinning service provision, the effectiveness of services and the strengths and weaknesses of agencies.

To begin with agencies were asked about the types of service they provided to homeless clients in Aberdeenshire.

As table 3.4.1 shows, collectively agencies provided nine main types of service to homeless people in Aberdeenshire : support & care; accommodation; advice & information; referral; mediation; health; education & training; counselling and advocacy. However previous research has shown that there can be wide variation in the ‘content’ of service offered under each of these headings with respect to different agencies (Love and Dempster, 2003).

As such ‘accommodation’ may include permanent housing and temporary housing provided by social landlords, as well as supported accommodation provided through the Voluntary Sector. ‘Support & Care’ may range from the provision of dedicated support workers to enable clients to cope with the social, emotional and material demands of living independently, to protection for the victims of domestic abuse. ‘Health’ services may include information about general health to specialist advice about substance misuse. ‘Advice & Information’ can refer to help with housing, health, education, training, employment and debt issues. ‘Referral’ may involve directing clients into alternative housing, debt counselling and social work support. ‘Advocacy’ can involve supporting clients through the criminal justice and housing systems. ‘Education & Training’ may include issue based learning on homelessness through pre-vocational education and training’. ‘Mediation’ may include both family mediation and mediation in neighbour disputes.

‘Counselling’ may involve reassuring the victims of domestic abuse, offering guidance to young people on issues such as leaving home, drugs and relations with parents, advising tenants on ways of dealing with multiple debt (including housing debt and rent arrears) and offering advice to partners and children on relationship breakdown.

**Table 3.4.1 Types of Service**

<b>Service</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Support & Care (e.g. dedicated support worker)	4	Aberdeen Foyer; Drugs Action; Grampian Women’s Aid; Pitstop
Accommodation (e.g. permanent, temporary, supported)	6	Aberdeen Foyer; Grampian Women’s Aid; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; Pitstop; Tenants First Co-op
Advice & Information (e.g. housing, debt, drugs, alcohol, employment)	11	Pitstop; Turriff Advice; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; STAIR advice; Aberdeen Foyer; Drugs Action; Banchory Advice Centre; Grampian Women’s Aid; Tenants First Co-op
Referral (e.g. to housing, social work, debt counselling)	11	Pitstop; Turriff Advice; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; STAIR advice; Aberdeen Foyer; Drugs Action; Banchory Advice Centre; Grampian Women’s Aid; Tenants First Co-op
Mediation (e.g. family, neighbour)	3	Hanover HA; Langstane HA; Pitstop Hanover HA; Langstane HA;
Health (e.g. primary care, health promotion, sexual health)	2	Aberdeen Foyer; Drugs Action
Education & Training (e.g. pre-vocational training)	1	Aberdeen Foyer
Counselling (e.g. debt, drugs, domestic violence)	6	Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Drugs Action; Grampian Women’s Aid; Langstane HA; Turriff Advice Centre
Advocacy (e.g. support in housing, criminal justice systems)	4	Drugs Action; Grampian Women’s Aid; Pitstop; Turriff Advice Centre

The most reported services offered to homeless clients were advice & information and referral. Eleven of the 13 agencies reported offering such services. Accommodation and counselling were the next most reported services offered, with six agencies reporting such services.

The survey moved on to explore the rationales underpinning service provision. In particular, agencies were asked if their provision of services was guided by any of the following three principles: prevention (i.e. stopping homelessness occurring), treatment (i.e. ameliorating the problems associated with homelessness) and resolution (i.e. enabling people to find ways out of homelessness).

**Table 3.4.2 Rationales for Service Provision**

<b>Rationale</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Prevention	7	Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; Pitstop; Tenants First Co-op; Turriff Advice Centre
Treatment	5	Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Langstane HA; Pitstop; Tenants First Co-op
Resolution	6	Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Grampian Women's Aid; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; Pitstop
Other (e.g. advice, referral)	4	Banchory Advice Centre; Drugs Action; STAIR advice; Turriff Advice Centre

As table 3.4.2 shows, more than half of the agencies which took part in the survey identified prevention as a principle guiding their work with homeless people. As such, they sought to stop homelessness occurring in the first place. Almost equally reported was resolution, helping clients to find ways out of homelessness. Five agencies reported 'treatment' as a principle guiding their work. As such, they sought to offset the many difficulties attendant upon being homeless. The four agencies that cited other principles guiding their work made reference to the giving of advice, and referral to other agencies. Six agencies were guided by multiple principles (i.e. two or more), with four agencies (i.e. Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover Housing Association; Langstane Housing Association and Pitstop) guided by all three principles asked about.

By way of further exploring agency services in Aberdeenshire, agencies were invited to assess their own achievements against the goals of preventing homelessness, ameliorating homelessness (once it has occurred) and resolving homelessness. They were invited to say whether they were very unsuccessful, unsuccessful, successful or very successful with respect to these three goals.

As table 3.4.3 shows, most agencies were confident about their work in preventing, treating and resolving homelessness in Aberdeenshire. As such, they claimed to be either successful or very successful in meeting such goals. Thus, with respect to preventing homelessness Turriff Advice Centre explained that they did so '*.. by informing clients of their rights and responsibilities in dealing with their debt problems, including rent arrears. We liaise with landlords and the local authority.*' Langstane Housing Association also explained its success in preventing homeless, observing '*.. by providing good information to applicants, partnership working with other agencies and the development of affordable housing.*' Aberdeen Foyer too was able to explain its success in preventing homelessness, remarking '*The skills that young people learn while at the Foyer enable them to maintain future tenancies.*'

By contrast with the above positive assessment, Tenants First Housing Co-operative felt that it was unsuccessful in preventing homelessness. It explained its view in terms of the workings of the allocation system to award tenancies to housing applicants. Drawing a distinction between homeless and potentially homeless applicants, it considered its own system favoured the former over the latter and observed, '*We award a silver priority pass for impending homelessness. However we recognise that the vast majority of properties available go to those with gold awards (i.e. actually homeless).*'

**Table 3.4.3 Self-Assessment and Goals**

Goal	Successful / Very Successful	Agency	Unsuccessful / Don't Know	Agency
Prevention	7	Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Hanover HA; Langstane HA; Pitstop; Turriff Advice Centre; Drugs Action	1	Tenants First Co-op
Treatment	7	Alcohol Support Ltd.; Drugs Action; Grampian Women's Aid; Langstane HA; Pitstop; Tenants First Co-op	1	Turriff Advice Centre
Resolution	7	Aberdeen Foyer; Drugs Action; Grampian Women's Aid; Langstane HA; Pitstop; Hanover HA; Turriff Advice	1	Alcohol Support Ltd.

In terms of treatment (i.e. ameliorating the problems associated with being homeless), Pitstop, a residential project for homeless people with substance misuse issues, explained how it sought to meet the basic needs of its (ten) clients at any given time, commenting *'The people we house will have shelter, heat and a bed, support for budgeting for food and help with addressing any issues they may have.'* By contrast Drugs Action sought to offset the difficulties of being homeless by linking clients to other specialist agencies. They explained *'.. primarily through referral to other specialist services and supporting that access.'*

Turriff Advice Centre expressed hesitancy about its role in making the plight of people experiencing homelessness better and therefore reported 'don't know' when asked about its success or otherwise in 'treating' homelessness.

Finally, in terms of resolving homelessness, Aberdeen Foyer was clear that its work enabled people to find a way out of homelessness, explaining *'There is evidence that our clients sustain tenancies and live socially and economically independently post Foyer.'* Langstane Housing Association likewise was able to point to positive interventions that helped resolve homelessness, highlighting its sympathetic allocations policy and programme of building affordable housing, *'..the nomination scheme with the local authority provides for 50% of our allocations...we also provide affordable housing ..and furnished accommodation. Also, the use of brown-field sites .. and the good management of tenants.'*

By contrast, Alcohol Support Ltd. Was unclear about its effectiveness in helping clients resolve homelessness. Its difficulty lay in being able to measure positive change in the lives of clients who required *'confidence, self-esteem .. to cope with lifestyles and choices.'*

The difficulty of knowing when a target has been met was the next issue explored with agencies. In particular, they were asked about forms appraisal used to measure performance.

Table 3.4.4 Forms of Appraisal

	Yes	Agency	No	Agency
Self-Assessment against agency own aims & objectives	4	Aberdeen Foyer; Langstane HA; Pitstop; Turriff Advice Centre;	9	Alcohol Support Ltd.; Banchory Advice; Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice; Drugs Action; Gordon Rural Action; Grampian Women's Aid; Hanover HA; STAIR Advice, Tenants First Co-op
External Regulation by recognised body	5	Aberdeen Foyer; Grampian Women's Aid; Langstane HA;Pitstop; Hanover HA	8	Alcohol Support Ltd.; Banchory Advice; Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice; Drugs Action; Gordon Rural Action; stair Advice; Tenants First Co-op; Turriff Advice
Service User feedback	6	Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Drugs Action; Grampian Women's Aid; Langstane HA; Pitstop	7	Banchory Advice; Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice; Gordon Rural Action; Hanover HA; Tenants First Co-op; Turriff Advice; STAIR Advice
Other Agency Approval	3	Langstane HA; Pitstop; Tenants First Co-op	10	Aberdeen Foyer; Alcohol Support Ltd.; Banchory Advice; Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice; Drugs Action; Gordon Rural Action; Grampian Women's Aid; Hanover HA; Turriff Advice

As table 3.4.4 shows, agencies used a variety of means of determining the success or otherwise of their work with homeless people in Aberdeenshire. Many used multiple means to do so. Four agencies measured their own performance against internal aims and objectives. Thus Aberdeen Foyer, a user of multiple forms of assessment, commented upon its self-assessment and other assessments, in the following terms '*Aberdeen Foyer evaluates its own performance which is monitored by the Performance and Audit Committee of our Board. We are inspected and regulated by the Care Commission, inspected by the Supporting People Team and accredited by the Foyer Federation. We attained IIP (Investors in People)and the SHAW 'gold award''*

Similarly Langstane Housing Association, another user of multiple forms of assessment, observed *'Internal auditing and external inspection ensures that the aims and objectives are met. Post allocation surveys are carried out for each tenant....We meet local authority nomination requirements and Section 5 norms.'*

Hanover Housing Association reported the use of external regulation and monitoring to measure performance. It observed *'We provide housing so are aware of when someone is no longer homeless or threatened with homelessness'*. Grampian Women's Aid also reported the use of external regulation (and other forms of monitoring) as follows, *'The agency is registered with the Care Commission (and) all services users complete feedback questionnaires on services provided.'* In all five agencies reported the use of external regulation and monitoring.

Drugs Action was one of six agencies that used service user feedback (alongside other measures) to gauge its own performance. It explained its procedures, for gathering service user feedback, in the following terms, *'This is obtained through the monitoring of outcomes through the 'problem profile.'* Alcohol Support Ltd. likewise commented upon its use of service user feedback to measure performance, explaining the use of casework to do so, *'Child / Family casework and criminal justice casework identifies longer term support (needs), approximately one year to 18 months.. this does affect positive change.'*

Lastly, Tenants First Housing Co-operative was one of three agencies that sought 'other agency approval' by way of monitoring its own performance. It explained its joint working with local authorities to achieve this end, as follows *'We have signed Choice-Based Lettings Protocols with each local authority which set out the terms of approach for ensuring homeless applicants are given opportunity for housing. This is jointly monitored (with the local authority).'*

By way of closing the survey, agencies were invited to reflect upon their strengths and weaknesses in terms of meeting the needs of homeless people in Aberdeenshire. From a list of 10 specified factors they were invited to choose three as major strengths and three as major weaknesses.

**Table 3.4.5 Strengths & Weaknesses of Agencies**

Factor	Strength		Weakness	
	N	%	N	%
Awareness of problems facing homeless people	6	46	0	-
Experience of working with homeless people	5	39	1	7
Availability of adequate resources	1	8	7	54
Skills of staff	4	31	0	-
Motivation of staff	4	31	0	-
Partnership working	8	62	1	8
Collection and use of systematic evidence about homelessness	0	-	5	39
Strategic planning	0	-	3	23
Flexibility in delivering services	2	15	4	31
Belief that homelessness can be successfully tackled	2	15	0	-
Other	2	15	3	23

As table 3.4.5 shows, agencies collectively identified more strengths than weaknesses in the profiles of service providers working to address the problems of homelessness in Aberdeenshire. With respect to the strengths of agencies, the three most reported were partnership working (62%, n=8), awareness of the problems facing homeless people (46%, n=6) and experience of working with homeless people (39%, n=5). Interestingly no agencies reported that strategic planning was a major strength of their approaches. Also, few agencies reported the belief that homelessness could be successfully tackled as a major strength of their organisations.

With respect to the weaknesses of agencies, the three most reported were the availability of adequate resources (54%, n=7), the collection and use of systematic evidence about homelessness (39%, n=5) and flexibility in delivering services (31%, n=4).

In sum, agencies' own assessments of their strengths and weakness suggest that tackling the problems of homelessness in Aberdeenshire is founded upon good relations between agencies (i.e. partnership working) and awareness and experience of working with homeless people. However these strengths are undermined by a lack of adequate resources, a lack of systematic evidence and a lack of flexibility in service delivery.

### 3.5 Summary

- A total of 13 agencies took part in the survey out of 27 agencies invited to do so; a response rate of 48%.
- Agencies taking part in the study comprised a mix of generic housing, social, health and other service providers as well as dedicated homeless services. They ranged in the scale of their operations from small scale projects providing services to 10 clients at any given time to large-scale housing providers working with up to 2,000 or more clients annually.
- Agencies worked with a wide variety of client groups, with some of the more generic agencies (e.g. 'advice' services) reporting work with almost all of the 12 categories of client asked about.
- Only six agencies reported working with homeless people, as a main client group (i.e. Aberdeen Foyer, Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau, Hanover Housing Association, Langstane Housing Association, Pitstop, STAIR Advice and Turriff Advice Centre), although more agencies reported contact with homeless people.
- To gauge the volume of work carried out by agencies, agencies were invited to state how many clients they worked with, in Aberdeenshire, in a year. Such a figure would provide a context for the amount of work carried out with homeless people. Not all agencies were able to provide information about the scale of their operations but those that did reported a wide range of client bases. Seven of the agencies that took part in the survey were able to provide figures for the numbers of homeless people worked with in a year (i.e. Aberdeen Foyer, Alcohol Support Ltd., Drugs Action, Gordon Rural Action, Hanover Housing Association, Tenants First Housing Cooperative and Turriff Advice Centre). Agencies worked with between 2 and 130 homeless people annually.
- The most reported type of homelessness worked with was 'hidden homelessness' i.e. working with clients living in 'care of' other addresses and unknown to the local authority, although agency data on such work was limited.
- Only two agencies reported working with clients who slept rough (i.e. Aberdeen Foyer and Langstane Housing Association).
- Collectively agencies provided nine main types of service to homeless people in Aberdeenshire : support & care; accommodation; advice & information; referral; mediation; health; education & training; counselling and advocacy.

- More than half of the agencies which took part in the survey identified prevention as a principle guiding their work with homeless people.
- Asked about their own strengths and weaknesses with respect to meeting the needs of homeless people in Aberdeenshire, it was suggested that tackling the problems of homelessness in Aberdeenshire is founded upon good relations between agencies (i.e. partnership working) and awareness and experience of working with homeless people.
- However these strengths are undermined by a lack of adequate resources, a lack of systematic evidence and a lack of flexibility in service delivery.

## **SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The conclusion aims to highlight the main findings of the research by returning to the original research questions that guided the study. As such it will attempt to answer the following four questions:

1. What is the current scale and composition of homelessness in Aberdeenshire?
2. To what extent has the scale and composition of homelessness in Aberdeenshire changed since 2001/2?
3. What are the key agencies working alongside the local authority to tackle homelessness in Aberdeenshire?
4. What is the nature and scale of the work of 'key agencies' with homeless people, including 'rough sleepers' and 'hidden homeless'?

In addition, the conclusion will reflect upon the findings of the study and suggest possible policy implications that flow from the research.

### **4.2 Research Questions Answered**

#### **1. What is the current scale and composition of homelessness in Aberdeenshire?**

In line with local authorities elsewhere in Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council collects information on the characteristics of households that present themselves as homeless to the local authority and on the response of the local authority to such presentations. Based on the (much revised) HL1 form, such information comprises 27 variables, which describe both the circumstances of the applicants and the assessment and action taken by the local authority in respect of applications.

The most recent data indicates that 1627 households approached the local authority as homeless in Aberdeenshire in the year 2006 -2007. 55% of recent homeless applicants were women, 45% men and the vast majority were of White Scottish ethnic background (85%). Three-fifths of recent applicants were single people (60%) and a quarter lone-parents (27%). Around a third were young people (37%) and 2% were retirement age or older.

In terms of housing circumstances, two-thirds of applications came from the family home (66%), while 14% of applicants had slept rough in the previous three months. The most reported reason for presenting as homeless was as a result of parents, relatives or friends being unable or unwilling

to provide accommodation (38%). 11% of homeless applications were as a result of applicants experiencing harassment, violence or an otherwise unsafe environment.

The most likely decision reached by the local authority in respect of applications was that a household was homeless / threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Between 2002 and 2007 around half of applicants assessed were found to be in this position, the proportion varying from 49% in 2002 to 51% in 2007. In total, almost three-fifths of recent applicants were found to be in priority need (56%).

For three-quarters of applicants a decision about their circumstances was reached, through statutory assessment, within a month of presenting to the local authority as homeless (76%). A quarter of applicants were offered social housing (e.g. local authority, other RSL) (28%) and just under half were offered some kind of temporary accommodation (47%). A fifth were offered advice & information only (21%).

An area analysis examined the prevalence and nature of homelessness across the six political areas of Aberdeenshire. In 2007, the bulk of homeless applications came from women across all political areas, although men were more likely than women to approach the local authority from outwith the area. Youth homelessness was mainly associated with Buchan and Kincardine & Mearns, the latter figure being historically high and unusual. Homelessness amongst retired households was associated with Marr, while single homelessness was more prevalent in Buchan and Banff & Buchan. Lone-parents were more likely to apply as homeless in Formartine.

In terms of applicants' circumstances, rough sleeping was associated with applicants from Banff & Buchan. The main reason for homelessness, across all political areas, was parents, relatives or friends being no longer able or willing to offer accommodation. Priority need was most likely to be accorded to applicants from the Banff & Buchan area, while an offer of social housing was most likely to be made to applicants from Garioch.

## **2. To what extent has the scale and composition of homelessness in Aberdeenshire changed since 2001/2?**

Over the five year period 2002-2003 to 2006-2007<sup>7</sup>, the numbers of households approaching the local authority as homeless in Aberdeenshire has risen from 1187 applications in the year 2002 – 2003 to 1627 applications in the year 2006 – 2007, a rise of 40%. The increase has been uneven, with the most marked change occurring in the period 2003 – 2004 to 2004 – 2005, where a 23% increase in homeless applications was recorded.

Over time (2002 to 2007), women have been more likely than men to approach the local authority as homeless, comprising between 55% and 58% of all applications. However the proportion of women applicants peaked in 2005 and has declined since that time. In terms of ethnicity, the vast majority of applicants have remained White Scottish (85% - 94%), with around 10% of applications coming from households classified as 'White Other British'. A small increase has been noted in applications from other ethnic groups (including 'Other' White, Black and Asian), although an increase in the proportion of households where ethnic background is not known slightly inflates the figures presented.

The types of household presenting as homeless to the local authority in Aberdeenshire over the last 6 years has remained fairly constant in certain respects but have shown small signs of change

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<sup>7</sup> The study had access to six years of HL1 data (2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007). However for purposes of comparison only the most recent five years of full '12 months' data are used. Data for the year 2001-2002 were for a 4 months period only (i.e. December 2001 – March 2002).

elsewhere. In general, with respect to marital status, the most likely applicants have been single people and lone-parents, comprising around three-fifths and a quarter or more respectively of all applications over time. To put such figures in context, less than a third of households in Aberdeenshire are single person households and only 4% are lone-parent households (table 4.2.1). In terms of age, adults aged between 25 and retirement age<sup>8</sup>, have been the most likely applicants, consistently comprising three-fifths of applications over the period. However the proportion of applications coming from young people has increased, over time, to around two-fifths of all households, despite the fact that young people aged 16-24 years comprise less than 10% of the population of Aberdeenshire (table 4.2.1). The numbers of retired households presenting as homeless since 2002 has declined from 4% to 2%.

**Table 4.2.1 Types of Homeless Households Aberdeenshire**

Type of Household	% homeless applicants 2007	N	% of Aberdeenshire population*	N
Young people (16-24 years)	37	603	9.46	21,471
Lone parents	27	436	4.4	3,964
Single people	60	971	28.7	28,070

\* Aberdeenshire Council (2002, 2007)

In terms of housing background, over time, the vast majority of homeless applications were made from the family home, although between 11% and 15% of applicants had slept rough in the 3 months before applying as homeless. Rough sleeping, variable over time, peaked in 2006. Loss of accommodation due to parents, relatives or friends being unable or unwilling to provide accommodation has remained the main reason for homelessness in Aberdeenshire between 2002 and 2007. The proportion of applicants citing harassment, violence or an otherwise unsafe environment as a reason for homelessness, has declined over time from 19% in 2002 to 11% in 2007.

Over time, the most likely decision reached by the local authority in respect of applications was that a household was homeless / threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Between 2002 and 2007 around half of applicants assessed were found to be in this position, the proportion varying from 49% in 2002 to 51% in 2007. Overall, the proportion of applicants assessed as having a priority need (but including those assessed as 'intentionally' homeless / threatened with homelessness) increased from just over half (52%) in 2002 to almost three-fifths (56%) in 2007.

The proportion of homeless applicants for whom a decision was reached by the local authority, through statutory assessment, within a month of application has declined from 86% to 76% between 2002 and 2007. Likewise the proportion of applicants being offered social housing has declined from 37% in 2002 to 28% by 2007. By contrast the proportion of homeless applicants offered temporary accommodation has increased over the same period from 12% to 47%. Offers of advice & assistance only fell from 47% in 2002 to 21% in 2007.

### **3. What are the key agencies working alongside the local authority to tackle homelessness in Aberdeenshire?**

<sup>8</sup> Retirement refers to males aged 65 years + and females aged 60 years +

A postal survey of 27 agencies representing the (known) major service providers in the field of homelessness in Aberdeenshire was carried out between April and June 2007. 13 agencies accepted the invitation to take part in the survey (i.e. response rate 48%).

Agencies taking part in the study comprised a mix of generic housing, social, health and other service providers as well as dedicated homeless services. They ranged in the scale of their operations from small scale projects providing services to 10 clients at any given time to large-scale housing providers working with up to 2,000 or more clients annually (see table 4.2.2)

Asked about work with 12 different client groups (i.e. homeless people, elderly people, physically disabled people, learning disabled people, mentally ill people, people with substance misuse issues, offenders, young people, victims of domestic violence, people from ethnic minorities, asylum seekers and ‘other vulnerable groups’), it was found that agencies worked with a wide variety of client groups, with some of the more generic agencies (e.g. ‘advice’ services) reporting work with almost all of the 12 categories of client asked about. Only six agencies reported working with homeless people, as a main client group, although more agencies reported contact with homeless people.

**Table 4.2.2 Agency and Client Base**

	Agency	Numbers of clients worked with in Aberdeenshire < 1 year
1	Aberdeen Foyer	-
2	Alcohol Support Ltd.	c.250
3	Banchory Advice Centre	201
4	Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau	-
5	Drugs Action	35 one-to-one; 200-500 through Helpline/ duty/ needle exchange / sex industry
6	Gordon Rural Action	c.500
7	Grampian Women’s Aid	c.65
8	Hanover Housing Association	c.1000
9	Langstane Housing Association	dk
10	Pitstop	Variable – 10 residents at a time
11	STAIR Advice Office	-
12	Tenants First Housing Co-operative	2347 housing applicants
13	Turriff Advice Centre	c.700

**4. What is the nature and scale of the work of ‘key agencies’ with homeless people, including ‘rough sleepers’ and ‘hidden homeless’?**

Seven of the agencies that took part in the survey were able to provide figures for the numbers of homeless people worked with in a year. As table 4.2.3 shows, agencies worked with between 2 and 130 homeless people annually.

Agencies collectively worked with homeless people from a wide range of housing backgrounds. The most reported types of homelessness worked with was ‘hidden homelessness’ i.e. working with clients living care of others (e.g. friends, relatives) and wanting their own home, and clients

living in insecure accommodation who could be evicted at any time. Only two agencies reported working with those who slept rough.

Agencies were asked about the socio-demographic characteristics of the homeless clients they work with in Aberdeenshire. Agencies collectively worked with all five major types of households asked about (i.e. single people, lone-parents, young people, couples with and without children) but agency efforts were focused in particular upon single people, lone-parents and couples with children.

Collectively agencies provided nine main types of service to homeless people in Aberdeenshire : support & care; accommodation; advice & information; referral; mediation; health; education & training; counselling and advocacy. More than half of the agencies which took part in the survey identified prevention as a principle guiding their work with homeless people.

**Table 4.2.3 Agencies working with homeless people in Aberdeenshire - Sample**

	Agency	Numbers of Homeless people < year
1	Aberdeen Foyer	60
2	Alcohol Support Ltd.	10
3	Banchory Advice Centre	-
4	Banff & Buchan Citizens Advice Bureau	-
5	Drugs Action	0-5
6	Gordon Rural Action	2-3
7	Grampian Women's Aid	n/a
8	Hanover Housing Association	20-25
9	Langstane Housing Association	dk
10	Pitstop	-
11	STAIR Advice Office	-
12	Tenants First Housing Co-operative	130
13	Turriff Advice Centre	10

Finally, asked about their own strengths and weaknesses with respect to meeting the needs of homeless people in Aberdeenshire, it was suggested that tackling the problems of homelessness in Aberdeenshire is founded upon good relations between agencies (i.e. partnership working) and awareness and experience of working with homeless people. However these strengths are undermined by a lack of adequate resources, a lack of systematic evidence and a lack of flexibility in service delivery.

### **4.3 Policy Implications**

The present study sought to explore the problem of homelessness in Aberdeenshire from an agency perspective. It drew upon two main sets of information to so: an analysis of the HL1

returns of Aberdeenshire Council 2002 – 2007 and a postal survey of known agencies across Aberdeenshire providing services to homeless people. On the basis of the information gathered and analysed it is possible to indicate certain policy directions. In doing so, however, it is important to bear in mind that research of itself does not make social (or housing) policy. Rather research can provide the evidence on which to base policy which must be informed by available resources and the political will to use them. On this understanding the following is suggested.

1. In the five year period 2002 – 2007 , more than 1100 households approached the local authority as homeless in Aberdeenshire each year, with the number of ‘presentations’ reaching a peak in 2007 when 1627 households applied. The increase has been uneven, with the most marked change occurring in the period 2003-2004 to 2004-2005, when a 23% increase in homeless applications was recorded. Up to 17% of applications were repeat applications. At national level the marked increase in homelessness applications over the past 5 years has in part reflected changes in legislation which have fed-in to the numbers of people applying as homeless since September 2002<sup>9</sup>. As such, both nationally and locally, the increase in the numbers of homeless households may be ‘artefactual’ in this sense. However both nationally and in Aberdeenshire, as a result of changes in the law, a more accurate picture of the extent of homelessness is now available. In Aberdeenshire, the figures point to significant numbers of people remaining on the fringes of the community in the north-east of Scotland. ***Accordingly the findings from the present study highlight a need for the continued monitoring of homelessness applications to ensure that the local authority (and its partners) remain alert to the problem of homelessness and extent of social exclusion among a sizeable minority group in the area. The Community Planning process and new homelessness strategy must be used to ‘include’ homeless people in the social and economic life of Aberdeenshire.***

2. Homelessness in Aberdeenshire is experienced by a variety of types of household. Between 2002 and 2007, lone-parent households, young person households and single person households have been the most likely types of household to present as homeless to the local authority in Aberdeenshire, respectively comprising (as overlapping categories) around a quarter, a third and a three-fifths of all homeless applications during this time. ***Accordingly, the research suggests that where solutions are sought and found, they ought to reflect the particular needs of different types of household. As such sensitivity is required in the offers of accommodation and support to homeless applicants to ensure that they are suited to individuals’ circumstances. Single homelessness, in particular, remains a significant problem in Aberdeenshire, requiring targeted responses.***

3. The proportion of households regarded as being homeless / threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless remained fairly stable at around half of all applications between 2002 and 2007. However when we include those assessed as intentionally homeless / threatened with homelessness and exclude those who applied as homeless but either lost contact or withdrew their applications before an assessment decision was reached, the total of those (assessed) as being in priority need was seen to rise from 52% to 56% over the period. ***Improvements in homelessness legislation will, in time, remove the priority need definition altogether<sup>10</sup>. In the meantime, it would appear that Aberdeenshire Council has engaged with the spirit of such intended changes by progressively increasing proportions of homeless households accorded priority need status. However if the interim targets are to be met (i.e.***

<sup>9</sup> In 2001 the Scottish Parliament introduced legislation that placed additional duties upon local authorities to provide temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to homeless applicants. Since September 2002, local councils have been required to provide temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to ‘non-priority’ applicants who previously would have been given advice and assistance only.

<sup>10</sup> The Homelessness Etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 aims to ensure that by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 the ‘priority need test’ will be abolished and all homeless people will be given the right to permanent housing. To achieve this end the definition of ‘priority need’ will be increasingly widened to include all homeless and potentially homeless people. A ministerial Statement issued in 2005 set local authorities an interim target of a 50% reduction in the proportion of non-priority assessments by 2009 (Scottish Executive, 2005).

***50% reduction in non-priority assessments by 2009) and the 2012 goal achieved, a greater and sustained effort will be required from the local authority.***

4. One of the Scottish Executive's<sup>11</sup> Top Level Outcomes is to prevent and tackle rough sleeping. Findings from the HL1 analysis carried out as part of the present study suggest that between 11% and 14% of homeless applicants in Aberdeenshire, over the period 2002 and 2007, had slept rough. The figure has remained fairly stable over time. Elsewhere amongst the agencies surveyed, only two reported working with rough sleepers (i.e. Aberdeen Foyer and Langstane Housing Association). ***As such the study suggest that a small-scale but persistent problem of rough sleeping in Aberdeenshire remains largely outwith the remit of agencies that potentially could address the issue. Accordingly, steps should be taken by the local authority to highlight the problem of rough sleeping in Aberdeenshire and to engage and work with partner agencies to tackle it.***

5. Another Top Level Outcome relates to the need to make existing homelessness more visible i.e. address 'hidden homelessness'. Notwithstanding the plight of individual households caught up in the 'twilight world' of 'hidden homelessness', the problem of 'hidden homelessness' is both a problem for local authorities (and their partners) trying to tackle homelessness in their areas and for researchers trying to understand homelessness. Thus the conceptual confusion surrounding the use of the term itself can sometimes act to mask the reality of the phenomenon as lived and experienced by those involved. Although the parameters are blurred, concealed households (i.e. people involuntary sharing accommodation with others), households living in intolerable housing (i.e. damp, crowded etc.) and households whose homelessness is not recorded by the local authority constitute at least part of the problem (Fitzpatrick, S Kemp, P & Klinker, 2000). In the present study, enquiries were made through the agency survey to gauge 'hidden homelessness' in Aberdeenshire. As such, agencies were asked about their work with homeless people who slept rough, lived 'care of others', lived in institutions because they had nowhere else to go and those living in insecure accommodation subject to eviction at short notice. They were also asked what percentage of their clients presented as homeless to the local authority. Eight of the 13 agencies which took part in the study reported working with homeless people living 'care of others', while seven agencies worked with people living in insecure accommodation subject to eviction at short notice. Only a small number of agencies (n=3) thought that 75% or more of their clients had declared their homelessness to the local authority. As such, there was evidence of agency working with 'hidden homeless' households in Aberdeenshire. However a general lack of accurate and detailed record keeping by agencies, makes it difficult to estimate the scale of the problem or their success in tackling the problem. ***Accordingly, there is a need to improve systems of data collection in order that the scale and composition of the problem of homelessness in Aberdeenshire, including 'hidden homelessness', can be better understood and tackled.***

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<sup>11</sup> The Scottish Executive became the Scottish Government with the election of a new SNP administration in May 2007.

## **Appendix : Ethnicity**

The following classification of ethnic group is used in the HL1 form:

1. White Scottish
2. White Other British
3. White Irish
4. White Other
5. Black, Black Scottish or Black British : African
6. Black, Black Scottish or Black British : Caribbean
7. Black, Black Scottish or Black British : Other
8. Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Indian
9. Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Pakistani
10. Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Bangladeshi
11. Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Chinese
12. Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Other
13. Mixed
14. Other
15. Not Known
16. Refused

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