

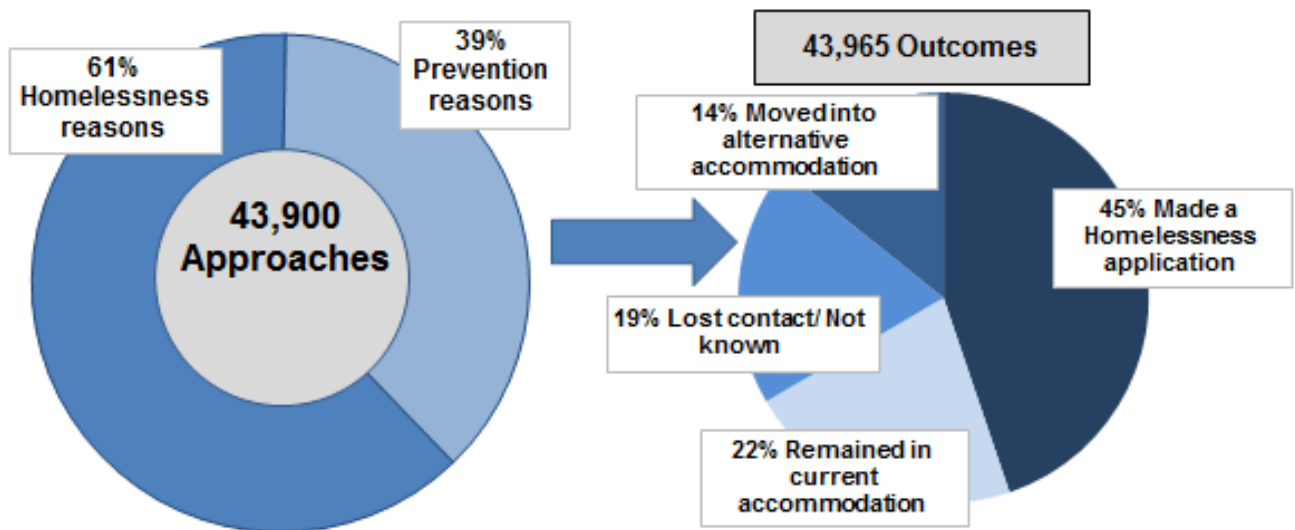
PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Housing Options (PREVENT1) Statistics in Scotland: 2017/18

This bulletin is based on information provided by local authorities to the Scottish Government on the operation of Housing Options services that are made available when households seek assistance for housing-related issues, and which can be used by local authorities as a means of delivering statutory duties around the provision of advice and information for the prevention of homelessness. It provides information on the operation of Housing Options between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, and includes information on the number of approaches made, as well as details on the reasons for the approaches made, the activities undertaken, and the outcomes achieved.

Excel workbooks with the tables and charts from this publication are available to download at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelesstats>

Figure 1: Flow diagram of all approaches to Housing Options services in Scotland, 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018



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Help us improve this publication and its statistics:

These are designated as **experimental statistics**, defined in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics as "*new official statistics undergoing evaluation*".¹

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All tables and charts from this publication are available online at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

¹ For more information on experimental statistics please see: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.html>

Introduction

When households seek assistance for housing-related issues from their Local Authority, they may be presented with advice on a range of housing options, for example, the opportunity to make a homelessness application. This approach, which is known as Housing Options, began to be implemented from around 2009, and more so after the abolition of the priority need test² for homelessness.

Local Authorities can use Housing Options as a means of delivering their duty under [section 2 of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#). It must be stressed however that Housing Options is only one way of delivering the duty and that Housing Options as an approach is not a statutory function. This legislation places a duty on Local Authorities to secure that advice and information about:

- (a) homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, and
- (b) any services which may assist a homeless person or assist in the prevention of homelessness,

are available free of charge to any person in the Authority's area.

The aim of this approach is to make households better informed of their options for accommodation, and can make a more informed choice.

In May 2014, the Scottish Housing Regulator published a national thematic inquiry into Housing Options and homelessness prevention, "Housing Options in Scotland: a thematic inquiry"³. This inquiry assessed the performance of Local Authorities in developing and delivering Housing Options services for their customers. In it, it recommended that Local Authorities and the Scottish Government should work together to provide improved guidance on best practice for Housing Options as it regarded that there was still room for development. A summary of the Regulator's recommendations is found in the [Background](#) Section. Housing Options Guidance was published in March 2016.⁴

Each Local Authority is likely to have its own version of Housing Options as each will have decided how to best deliver their section 2 duty. The Housing Options Guidance published by the Scottish Government in March 2016 is not statutory guidance, but is to be used as a tool-kit for local authorities when developing their approach to Housing Options.

² In November 2012, the Scottish Parliament approved the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012, found online at:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2012/330/contents/made>

³ This report is available online at:
<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-options-scotland-thematic-inquiry>

⁴ Housing Options Guidance (March 2016) is available here:
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/6556>

Defining Success

Success criteria are difficult to define and measure. Whilst Local Authorities have a general prevention duty under section 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Housing Options itself is not specifically defined within a legislative framework.

Because of the differing approaches to deliver their duty, the local authority figures reported in this publication are not directly comparable and cannot be used as indicators of good or bad performance.

In direct contrast, the homelessness legislation provides an assessment framework and each assessment decision gives a statutory entitlement to some form of assistance. The operation of the homelessness legislation can therefore be evaluated by measuring compliance with this framework. For example, the proportion of unintentionally homeless households who secure settled accommodation can be tracked over time.

Scottish Government policy has been for Housing Options to be developed locally. As such, there is no single definition of Housing Options operating across all Local Authorities. The Scottish Government funded Housing Options Hubs are working to develop a training toolkit which will introduce a degree of consistency across the country but there will be local developments taking account of housing markets and available options.

The purpose of this publication is to provide a statistical update on the operation of Housing Options between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, providing further reporting of the statistics available since April 2014.

Main Points

Number of Approaches

- In the last year (1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018), there were 43,900 approaches recorded.
- Compared with the same period one year ago, there has been a reduction of 8,185 approaches across Scotland (-16%). 24 Local Authorities have seen a reduction in approaches.
- It is for local authorities to decide what constitutes an approach, and this can lead to large differences in the volumes of approaches recorded. Across Scotland, the national average for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 is 161 approaches per 10,000 households – around 2% of all households in Scotland.

Open Approaches

- At 31 March 2018, there were 18,270 approaches recorded since 1 April 2014 that still remained open. This equates to 8% of all approaches recorded since 1 April 2014.
- During the first four years of the Housing Options statistics, some local authorities have built up a large number of open cases. However this can be a reflection of local practices and is not, of itself, a measure of success or failure. For example, Midlothian has 30% of its cases still open. Next, North Lanarkshire and Fife have 25% and 24% of cases still open respectively. Where Local Authorities have a high proportion of open cases, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Housing Options approach as approaches can have no recorded outcome.

Reasons for Approaches

- Despite the overall reduction in Housing Options approaches when comparing 2017/18 with 2016/17, the proportion of approaches made for homelessness type reasons (61%) *versus* prevention type reasons (39%) has remained the same across these two years.

Activities

- There is wide variation in the mix of activities offered by local authorities. During 2017/18, 55% of all approaches had activities not exceeding Type I advice - active information, sign-posting and explanation. Type II advice (casework) was carried out in a further 44% of approaches.
- The most common type of activity was to provide general housing advice and tenancy rights advice - this accounted for 38% of all activities during 2017/18. Informing clients of their rights under the homelessness legislation accounted for 27% of all activities.

Outcomes

- For approaches closed during the 2017/18 financial year:
 - 45% of approaches made a homelessness application.
 - 22% remained in their current accommodation.
 - 19% had an unknown outcome or contact was lost.
 - 14% found alternative accommodation, including a social rented tenancy (4%), a private rented tenancy (3%) and moving in with family and friends (2%). Other known outcomes accounted for a further 5%.
- The outcomes achieved by Housing Options vary considerably by Local Authority. For example, during this period:
 - In Clackmannanshire, 96% of all approaches resulted in a homelessness application being made, whilst this figure was 14% in Midlothian and 19% in East Ayrshire.
 - 55% of approaches in North Lanarkshire remained in their current accommodation, compared to 0% of approaches with this outcome in Orkney.
 - For Orkney, 40% found alternative accommodation. This figure was 0% in Clackmannanshire and Eilean Siar.
 - For Midlothian and Aberdeen City, almost a half (48% and 43%) have an outcome of lost contact or not known. In Local Authorities where there are high proportions of lost contacts and unknown outcomes, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of their Housing Options policy.

Repeat Approaches

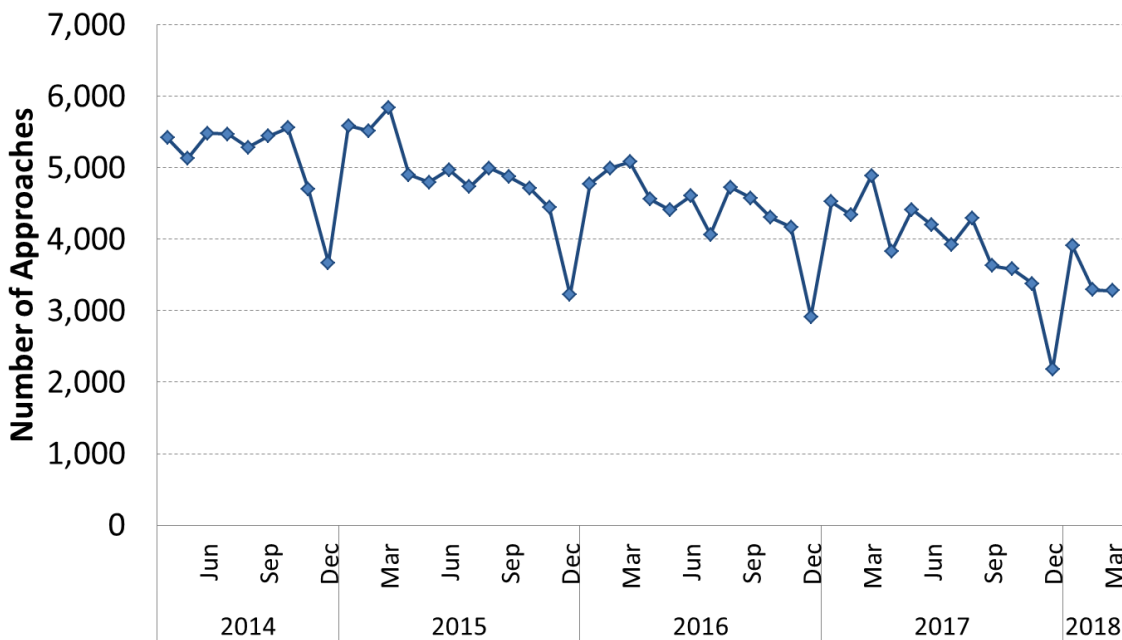
- During 2017/18, the rate of repeat approaches for Scotland was 9% of all households. Renfrewshire and Perth and Kinross had the highest rates of repeat approaches at 14% of households, however this may be a reflection of recording practice. East Lothian, East Ayrshire, Eilean Siar and Orkney all had no repeat approaches in 2017/18.

Number of Approaches to Local Authorities

Since the PREVENT1 data collection began in April 2014, there have been 215,585 approaches recorded (**see Table 1**). During the financial year (2017/18) there were 43,900 approaches recorded, a reduction of 8,185 compared to the previous year, and which continues the downward trend seen since 2014.

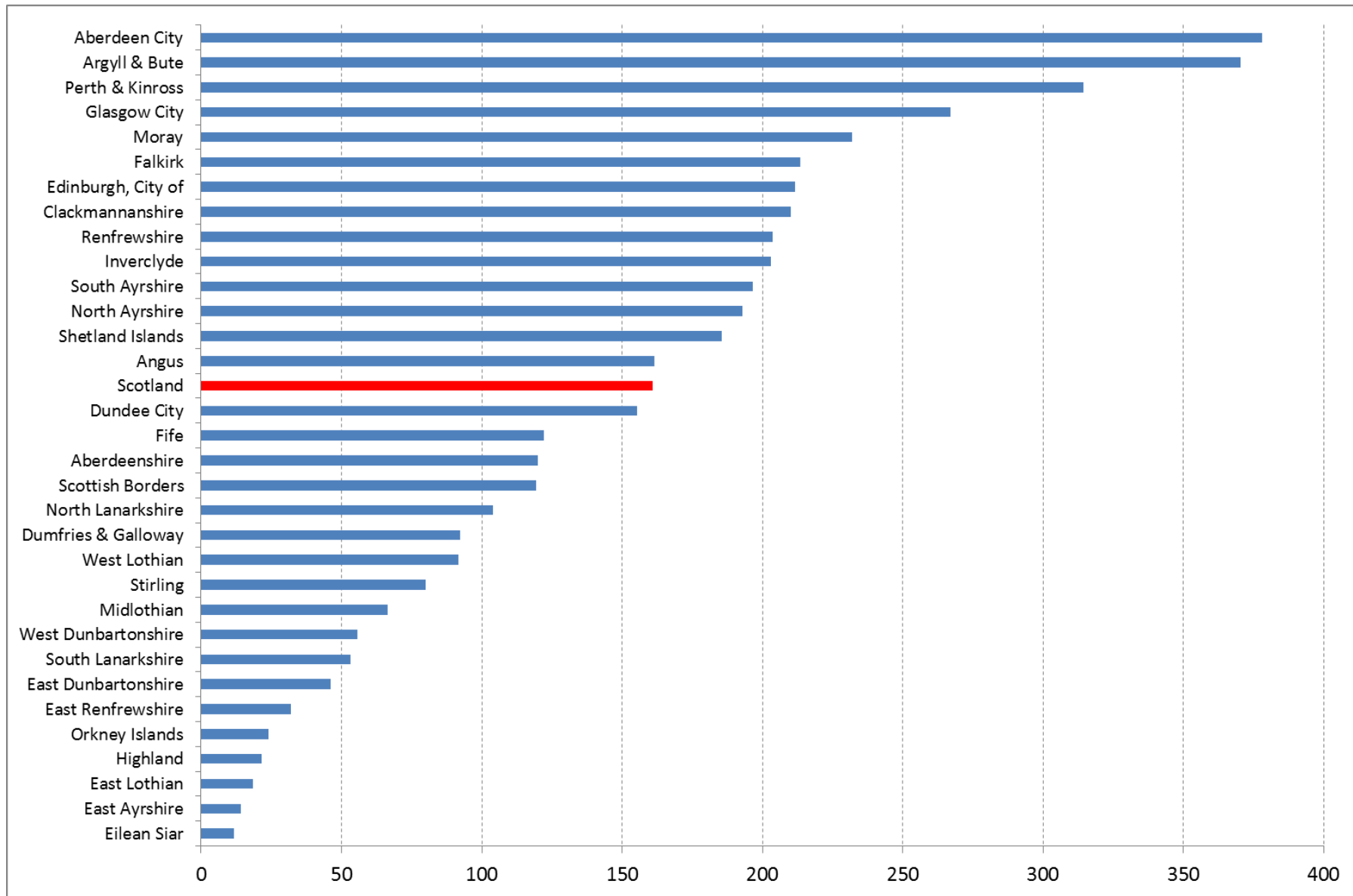
[Chart 1](#) shows the number of new approaches per month. It is not known why there are sharp reductions in the number of approaches made during December each year, but this trend suggests an element of seasonal fluctuation in demand for Housing Options.

Chart 1: Number of New Approaches to Housing Options, 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2018



It is for local authorities to decide what constitutes an approach. This can lead to large differences in the volumes of approaches that are recorded. [Chart 2](#) shows the number of approaches as a percentage of all households in each Local Authority for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. This varies greatly amongst Local Authorities. For example, in Aberdeen City and Argyll and Bute, almost 4% of households within the local authority made a unique household approach to the Housing Options service. This is double the national average of 2% (**Table 2**).

Chart 2: Rates of Housing Options approaches per 10,000 households, 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018



Housing Options has been developing in Local Authorities from around 2009 onwards, although the pace of implementation has varied by Local Authority.

In total, **around 60,840 households made either a homelessness application or Housing Options approach during 2017/18**, a decrease of 3% from around 62,400 during 2016/17.

Figure 1 shows that the number of *unique households* making a homelessness application has fallen from a peak of almost 58,000 households in 2005/6 to around 34,000 households in 2017/18.⁵

Not all households making a homelessness application are found to be homeless though. In 2017/18, of the 34,034 unique households making an application, 28,379 (83%) were found to be homeless – an increase of six percentage points since 2009/10. It is therefore likely that, in addition to reducing the number of homelessness applications since 2009, the introduction of Housing Options has led to a greater proportion of homelessness applications being assessed as homeless and a reduction in lost contacts for those households going on to make a homelessness application⁶.

Comparing 2017/18 and 2016/17 Housing Options statistics, the number of households who made an approach and **did not** go on to make a homelessness application has decreased. Around 26,800 households made an approach and did not make a homelessness application in 2017/18, compared to around 28,700 in 2016/17, a decrease of 7%.

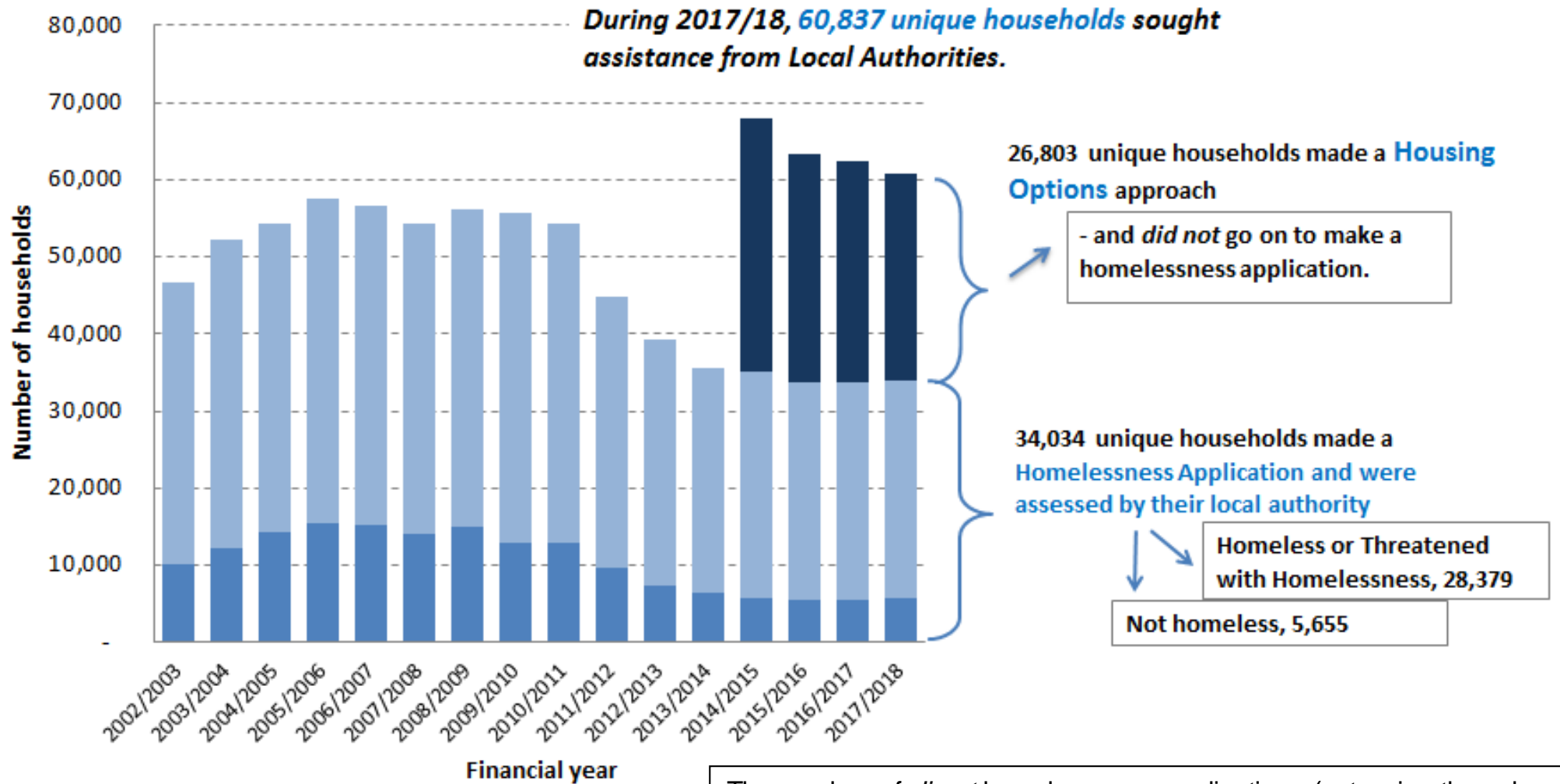
The proportion of homelessness applications which were made directly (and did not go through Housing Options first) has increased over the last year, from 41% to 46% of all applications when comparing 2016/17 to 2017/18. This suggests why the number of Housing Options approaches has decreased over the last year, but the number of homelessness applications has slightly increased.⁷

⁵ The Annual (2017/18) Homelessness publication (published on 19 June 2018) reports the total number of homelessness applications and assessments (not the total number of unique households with an application or assessment); therefore, figures reported here differ.

⁶ Lost contacts prior to a homelessness assessment have reduced by three percentage points between 2009/10 and 2017/18. Where a homelessness duty is owed, lost contacts have also reduced by three percentage points. (See Table 11 in the [2017/18 Annual Homelessness Statistics](#)).

⁷ For more information, see Chart 2 in the Homelessness publication, linked above.

Figure 1: Number of unique households making a local authority approach for housing or homelessness assistance, 2002/03 to 2017/18



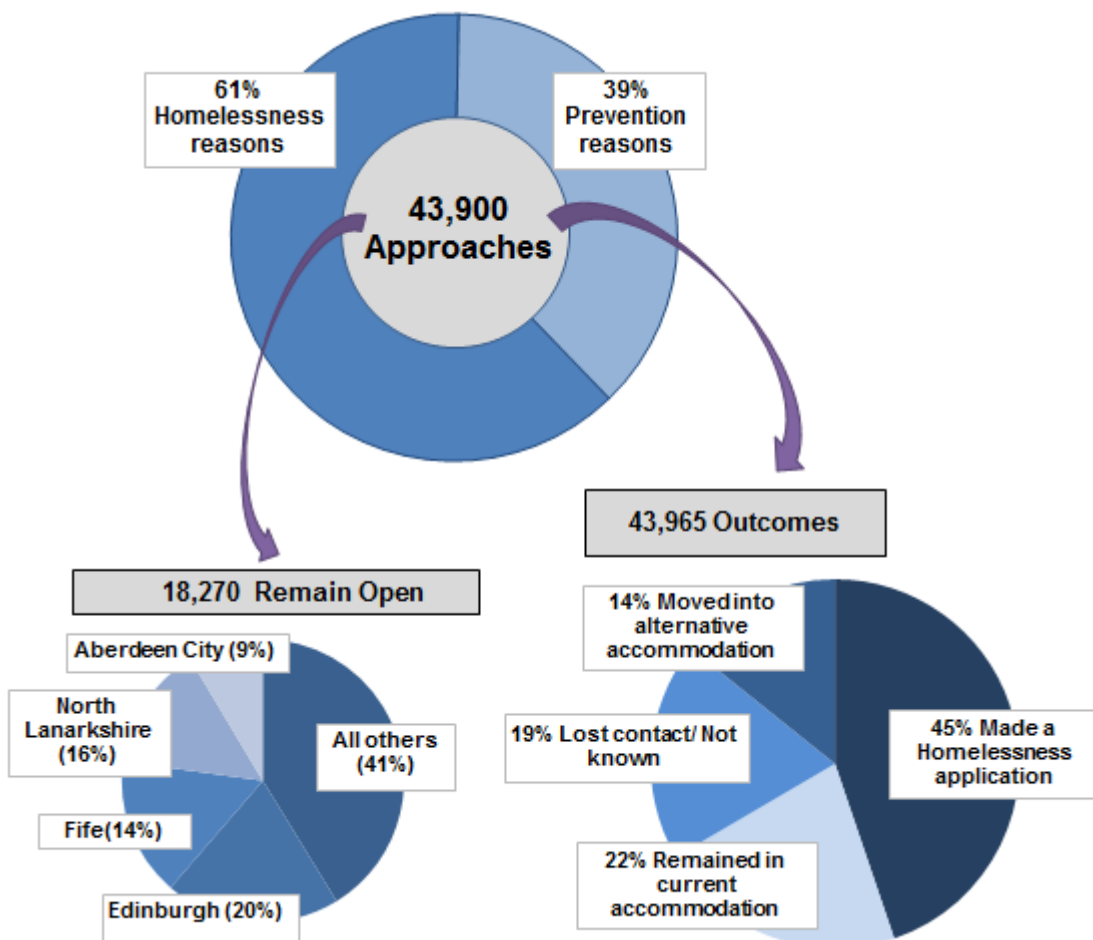
The number of *direct* homelessness applications (not going through Housing Options first) have increased from around 14,200 in 2016/17 to 16,000 in 2017/18 (41% to 46% of all applications respectively)

Flow Diagram

Figure 2 shows a summary of household approaches and outcomes during 2017/18. There were 43,900 approaches to local authorities recorded between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 (where the approach was **opened** between these dates). Of these, 61% were made for homelessness type reasons and 39% were for prevention type reasons.

Outcomes were recorded for 43,965 approaches (these approaches were **closed** between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018). The most common outcome was for a homelessness application to be made (45% of all outcomes), followed by remaining in current accommodation (22%) and moving to alternative accommodation (14%). Contact was lost or the outcome was unknown in 19% of closed approaches.

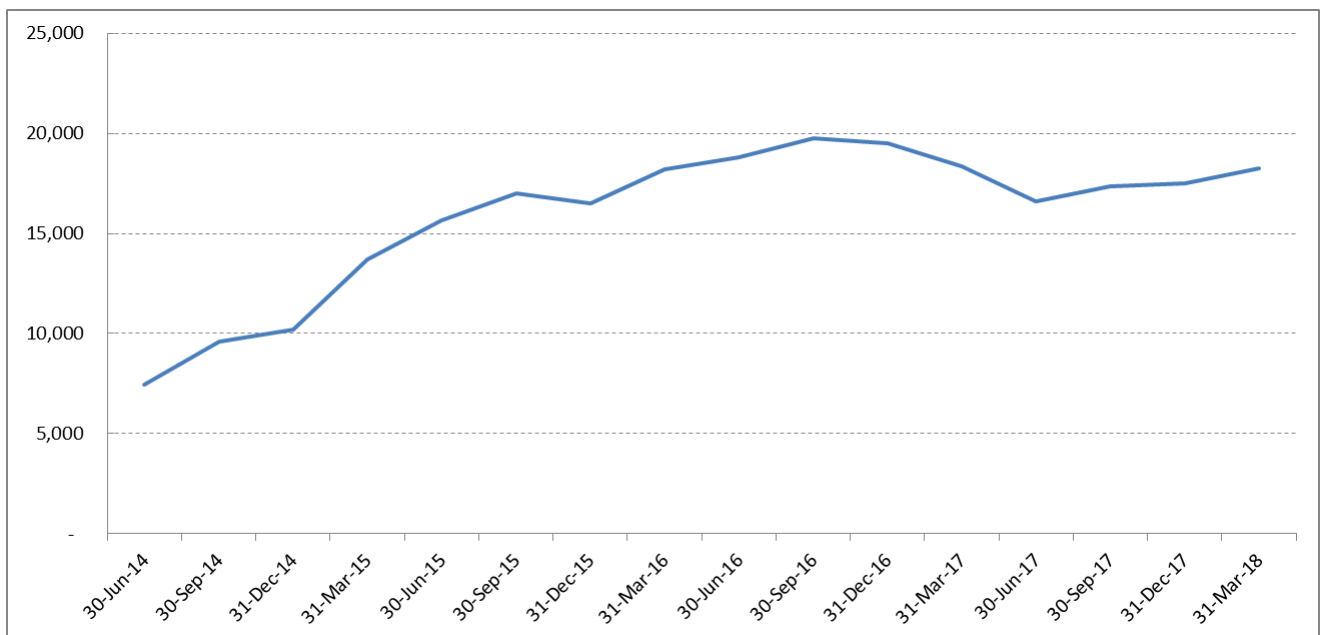
Figure 2: Flow diagram of all approaches to Housing Options services in Scotland, 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018



Open Approaches

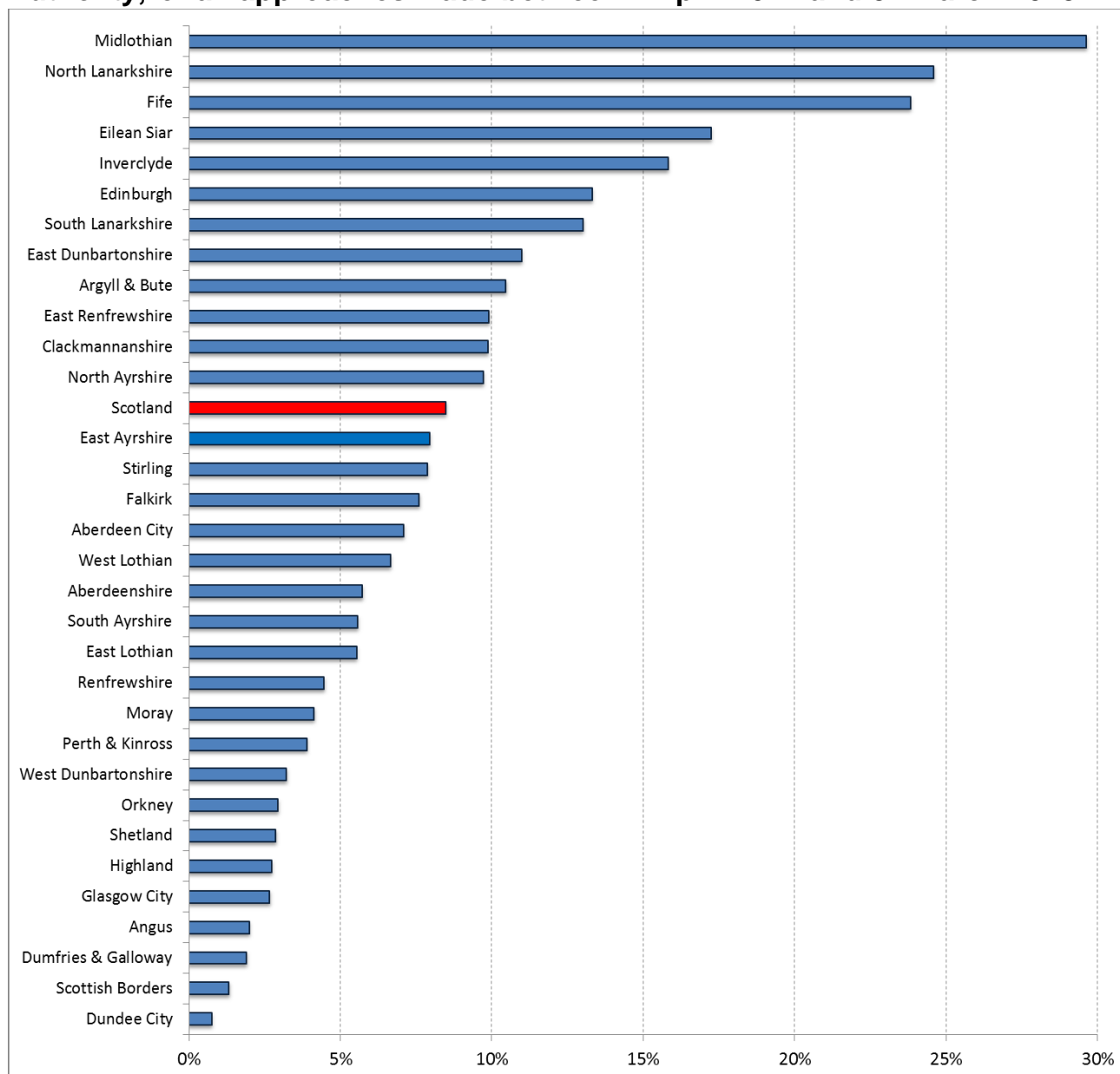
There were 18,270 approaches that were still open as at 31 March 2018. These are approaches which have not yet reached the outcome stage. **Table 3** and **Chart 3a** show that this figure has more than doubled since the first quarter of data collection, 1 April to 30 June 2014 (from 7,430 approaches). It appears that the number of open approaches reached a peak during 2016 (19,735 open approaches were recorded on 30 September 2016). There was a reduction (to 16,620) as at 30 June 2017, and a recent increase to 18,270 at the end of the most recent quarter (see Chart 3a). For Scotland, 8% of all approaches received between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2018 remain open (18,270 of 215,585 approaches).

Chart 3a: Open approaches at the end of each quarter



Since the monitoring of PREVENT1 statistics began, some Local Authorities have built up a large number of open cases. For example, as at 31 March 2018, compared to the Scottish average of 8%, Midlothian had a high proportion of approaches still open (30%) (**Chart 3b**).

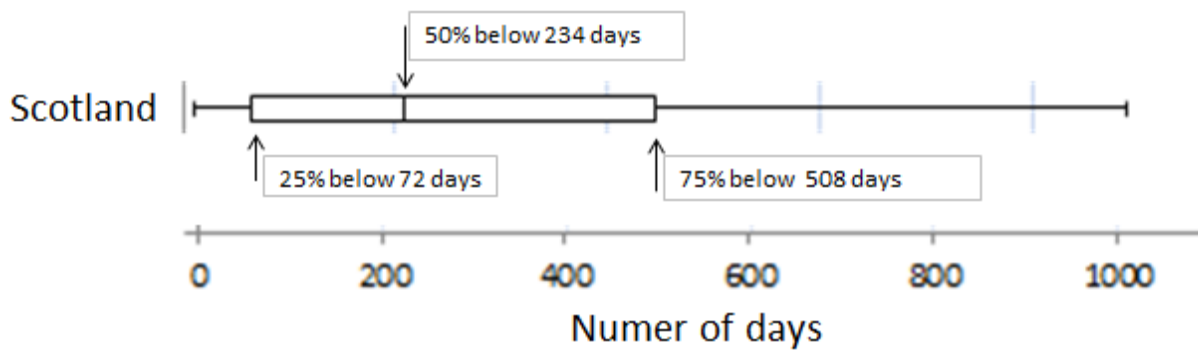
Chart 3b: Percentage of Housing Options approach cases still open by Local Authority, of all approaches made between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2018



Where Local Authorities have a high proportion of open cases, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Housing Options approach as these approaches have no recorded outcome.

Across Scotland, half of open approaches have been open for more than 234 days (over six months). A quarter of such approaches have been open for more than 508 days (over a year and four months). Figure 2 below demonstrates how to interpret this through a box-plot.

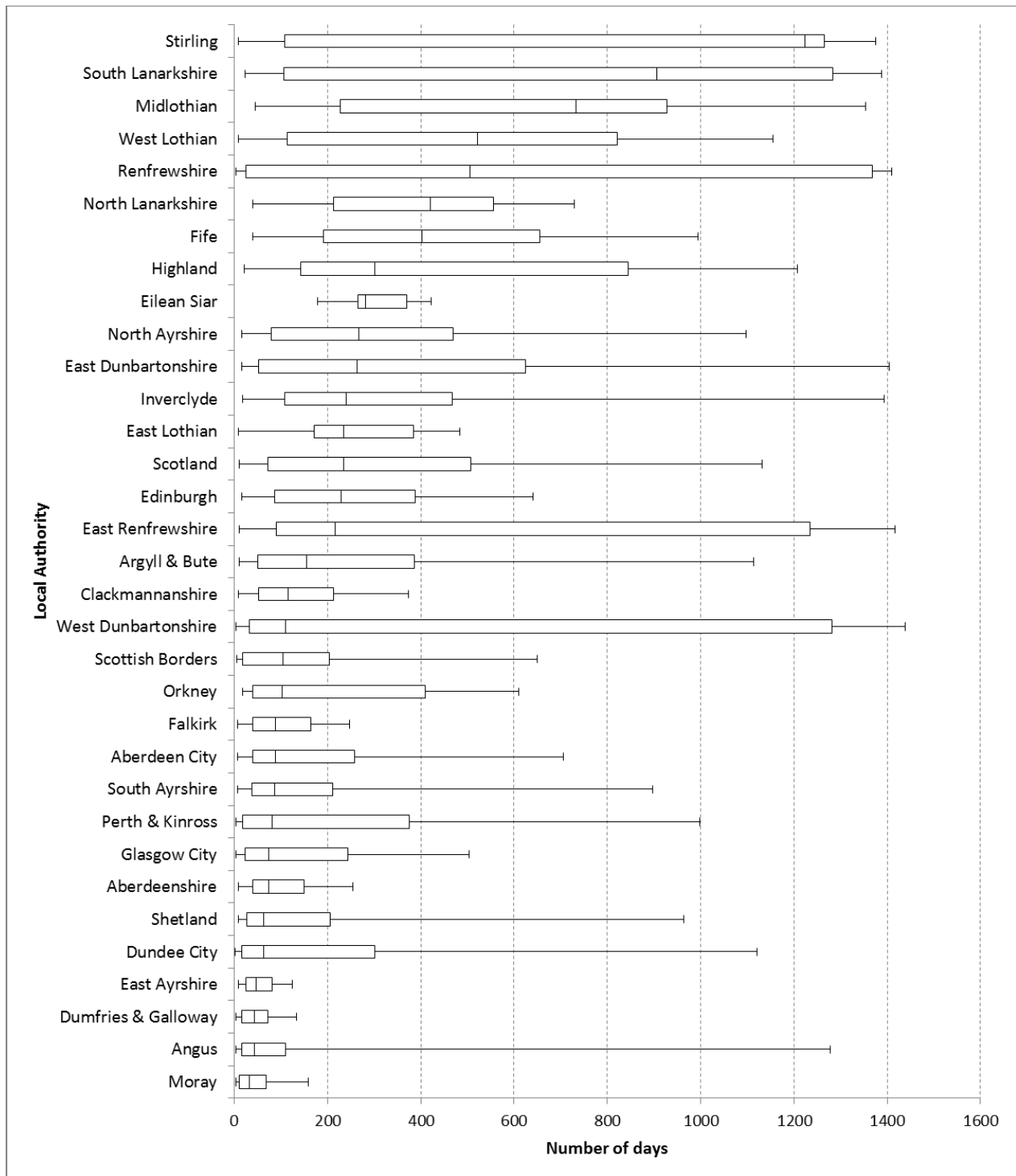
Figure 2: Distribution of the number of days Housing Options approach cases have been open, between approach date and 31 March 2018



There is a large degree of variation between local authorities in terms of the number of days that Housing Options cases have been open (**Chart 3c**).

For example, in Stirling (where 8% of approaches remain open), 50% of open cases have been open for more than 1,223 days (over 3 years). The average length of time for open cases is much shorter in other local authorities. For example, in Moray, the average time for an open case is 33 days (around one month).

Chart 3c: Distribution of the number of days Housing Options approach cases have been open, between approach date and 31 March 2018

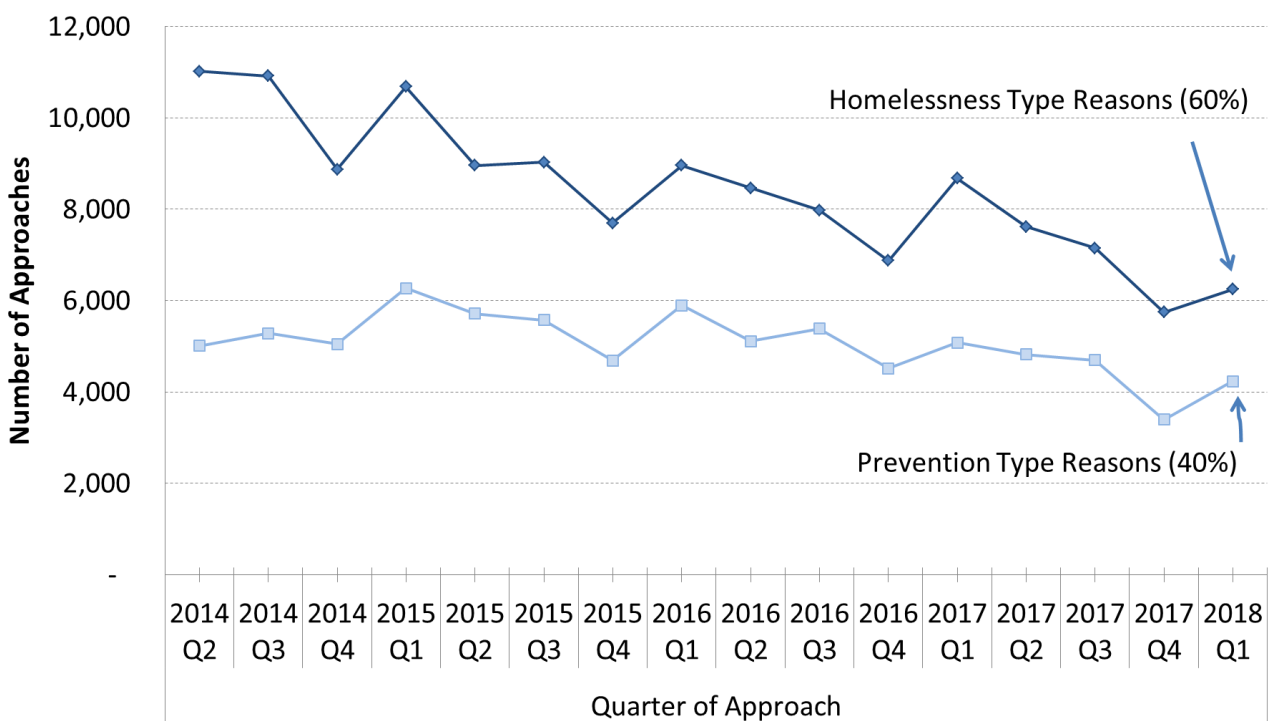


Reasons for Approaches

Whilst the number of homelessness applications has decreased between 2009/10 and 2016/17, the underlying reasons for homelessness have remained very stable over time in Scotland, since 2007⁸.

The majority of Housing Options approaches cite homelessness type reasons, however the volume of approaches made for such reasons has reduced from around 10,000 approaches per quarter initially (66% of all approaches during 2014/2015), to around 7,000 per quarter during 2017/18 (61% of all approaches). During the most recent quarter, there were 6,245 (60%) of applications with homelessness type reasons. The number of approaches citing prevention type reasons has remained relatively stable since the monitoring of Housing Options began – the recent fall to 3,400 during October to December 2017 may be a reflection of overall decreases in Housing Options approaches (**Table 4, Chart 4**).

Chart 4: Reasons for Housing Options approaches by quarter

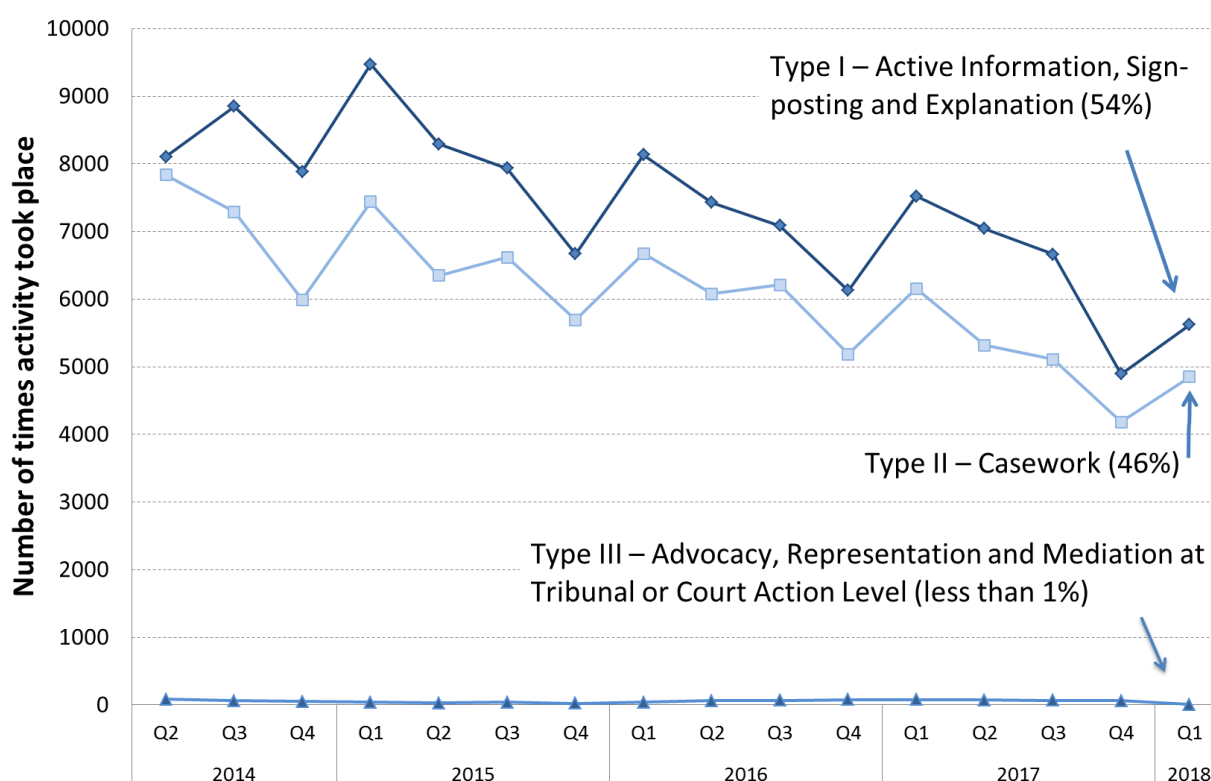


⁸ Further information on reasons for homelessness is found in the recent publication, Homelessness in Scotland: Annual Update: 2017/18, found online at: [2017/18 Annual Homelessness Statistics](#)

Activities Undertaken

Chart 5 shows the three types⁹ of Housing Options activities undertaken by local authorities since the scheme began. During the 2017/18 financial year (April 2017 to March 2018) the majority of approaches (24,215 approaches, 55% of all approaches) resulted in activities which did not exceed Type I advice - active information, sign-posting and explanation. Type II advice (casework) was carried out in a further 19,465 approaches (44%). Only in the remaining 210 approaches was the top level Type III advice (advocacy, representation and mediation at tribunal or court action level) carried out (**see Table 5**).

Chart 5: Intensity of activity types completed for Housing Options approaches by quarter

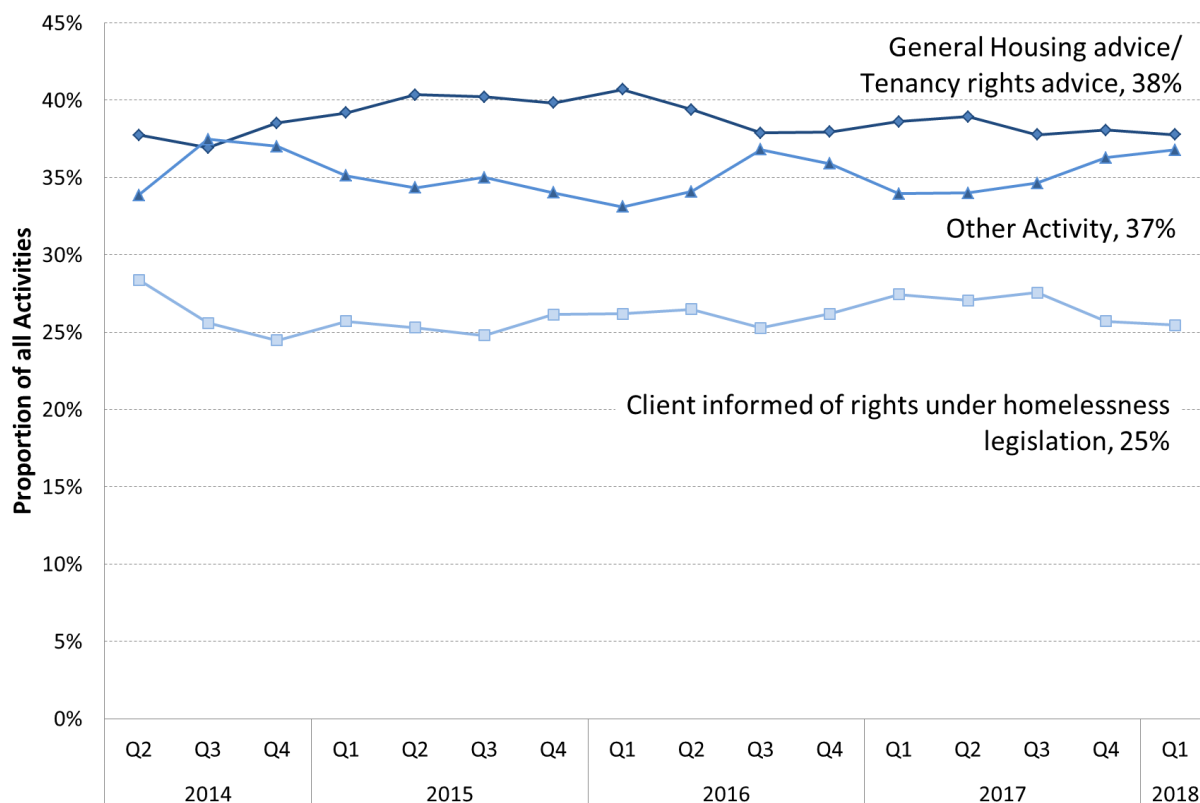


Since monitoring began, the most common type of activity has been to provide general housing advice and tenancy rights advice. Since April 2014, this activity type has fluctuated between 37% and 41% and remains at 38% over the most recent quarter (January to March 2018). The proportion of cases informing clients of their rights under the homelessness legislation has fluctuated between 24% and 28%, and remains at 25% for the most recent quarter. All other activity (this includes activities such as financial advice and assistance moving out of a property)

⁹ Further information on definitions of types of information and advice can be found in: Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers: A Quality Assurance Framework 2009 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/10/08154126/0>

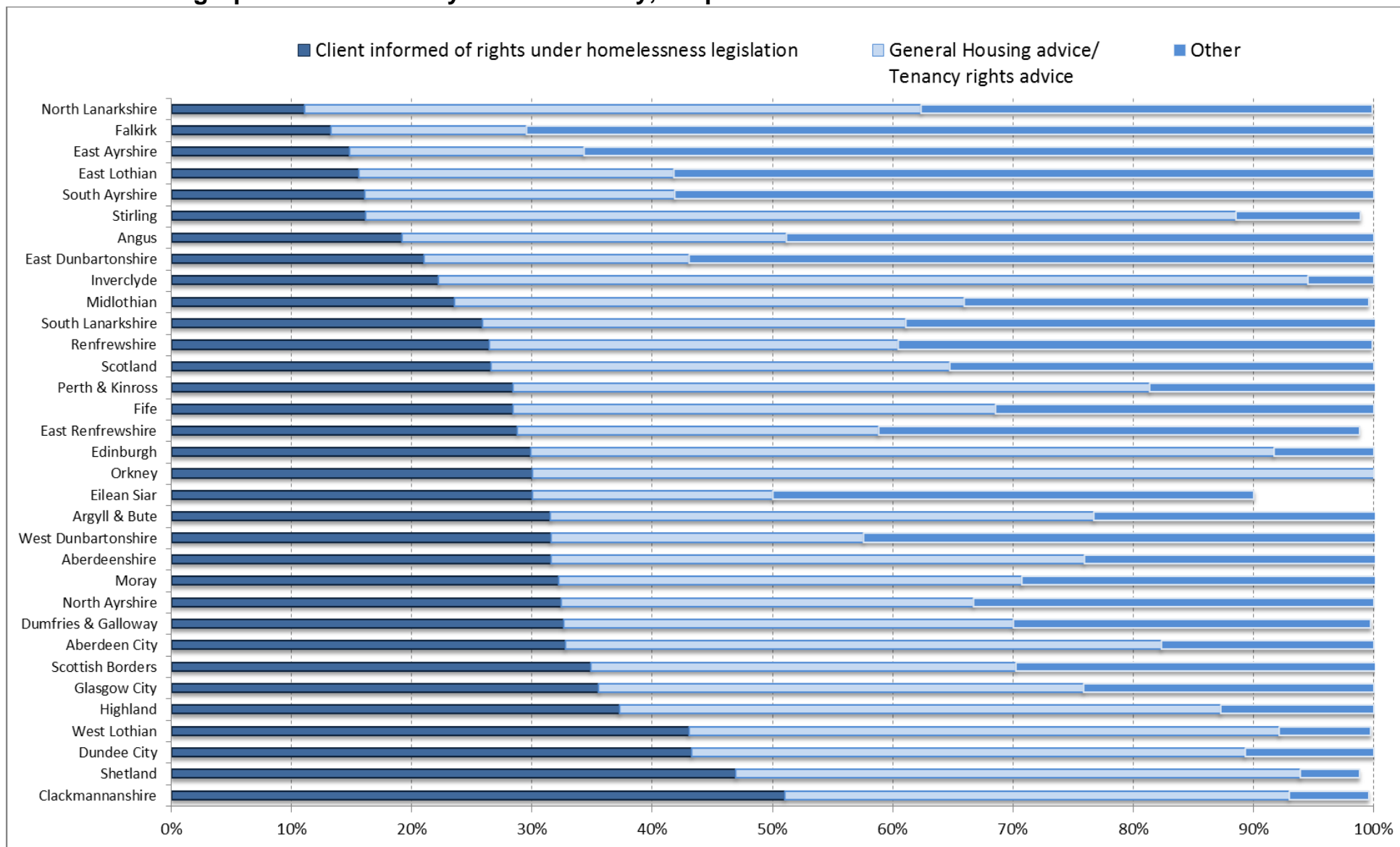
has fluctuated between 34% and 37% over the same time period, and remains at 37% for the most recent quarter. The mix of activities at the national level has remained fairly static since monitoring began, with no activity changing its share by more than five percentage points (**Table 6** and **Chart 6**).

Chart 6: Types of activities completed for Housing Options approaches by quarter



Again there is wide variation in the mix of activities offered by Local Authorities and some of this may be due to differences in how activities are recorded (**Table 7** and **Chart 7**). During 2017/18, over half of Clackmannanshire’s activities were to inform clients of their homelessness rights. Over the same time period, around two-thirds of Stirling, Inverclyde and Edinburgh’s activities (72%, 72% and 62% respectively) related to providing general housing and tenancy rights. In Falkirk, 71% of activities were taken up with other activities such as providing financial advice.

Chart 7: Housing Options activities by Local Authority, 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018



NB: The primary activity type per application is shown here. The PREVENT 1 data specification requires only one activity type per application. Thus, while some applicants may have recorded that they received general housing advice primarily, they may also have received information of their rights under the homelessness legislation – this is not recorded in the chart.

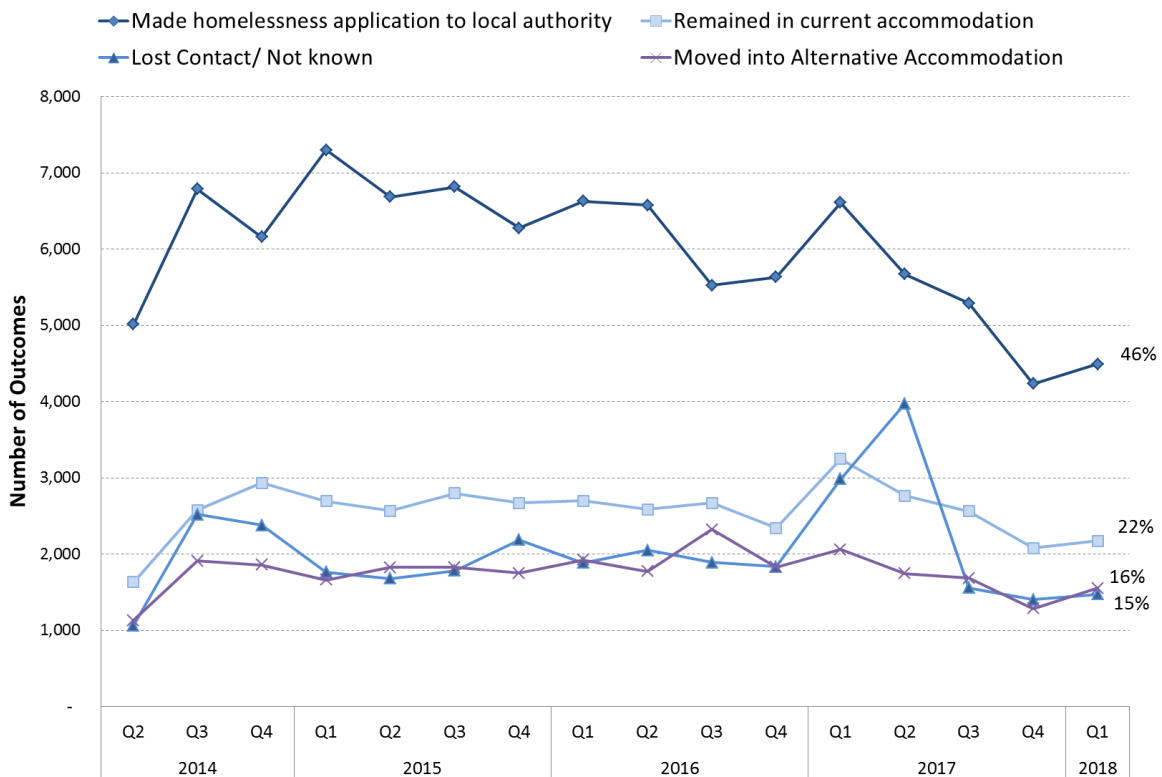
Outcomes

Chart 8 shows the outcomes of Housing Options approaches by quarter (also see **Table 8a and 8b**). Since the beginning of Housing Options in April 2014, the percentage of outcomes in each category has remained relatively stable.

Over the last year, 45% of approaches had the outcome ‘made homelessness application to local authority’. This has fallen from 47% of all outcomes during the previous financial year (2016/17).

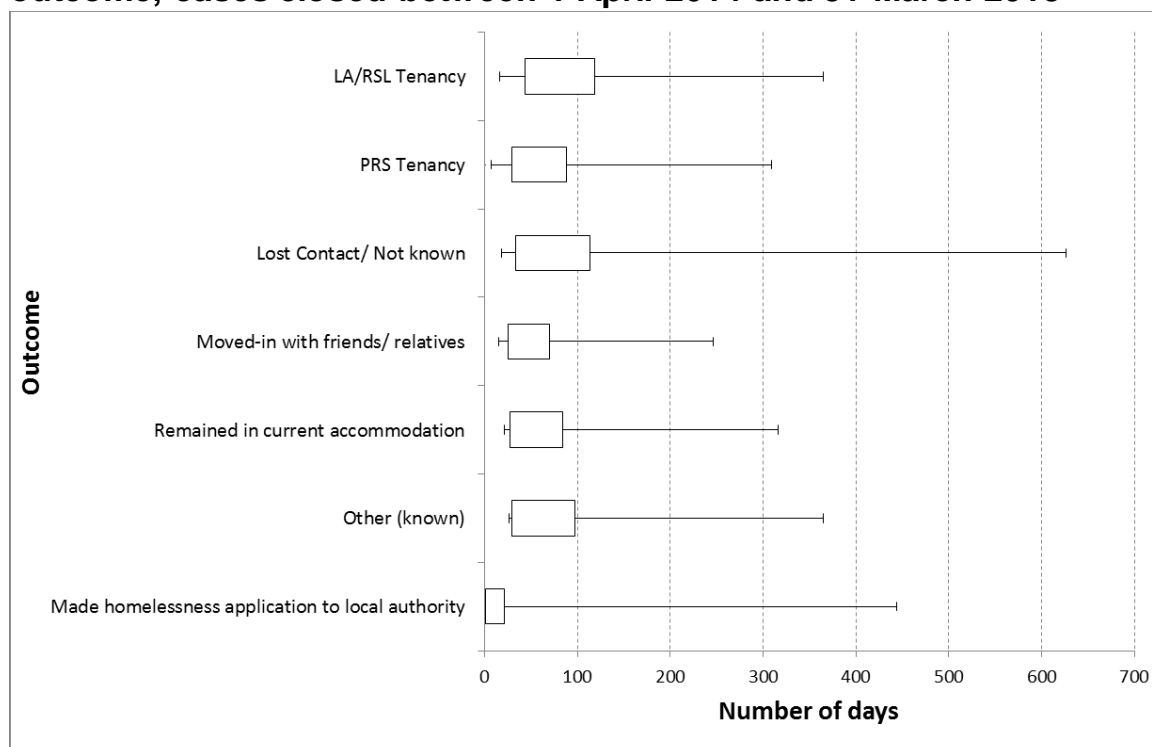
22% remained in their current accommodation (one percentage point greater when comparing to 2016/17); 19% had an unknown outcome or contact was lost (an increase of 2 percentage points from 2016/17) and 14% found alternative accommodation (this includes a social rented tenancy (4%), a private rented tenancy (3%), moving in with family and friends (2%) and Other (known) (5%)).

Chart 8: Outcomes of Housing Options approaches by quarter



Different outcomes take different lengths of time to achieve – **Chart 9** shows the time it has taken to reach different outcomes since the recording of Housing Options began (April 2014).

Chart 9: Distribution of Housing Options approach case durations by outcome, cases closed between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2018



Closing an approach by making a **homelessness application** is relatively quick. Half of these outcomes are done in less than one day and only in a quarter of cases it takes more than 21 days to make a homelessness application.

The next quickest outcomes are **Remaining in current accommodation** and **Other (known)** – half of these outcomes are achieved in around 33 days and only a quarter take more than 90 days for the former outcome and 100 days for the latter.

Moving in with **family and friends** takes slightly longer – half of these outcomes are achieved in 35 days, although again around a quarter of these outcomes take over 80 days to achieve.

Achieving an outcome of a **private or social rented tenancy** takes the longest to time to achieve. Half of private rented tenancies are achieved in 51 days, with a quarter taking more than 110 days. Half of local authority tenancies are achieved in 70 days, with a quarter taking more than 145 days.

Half of **lost contacts or not known** outcomes occur within around 48 days – a quarter of these outcomes take more than 128 days.

Thus if a household needs to make a homelessness application, this is typically done in one day or less. If advice or assistance can be provided to enable the household to remain in their current accommodation, this may take around 33 days to achieve. Moving in with friends and family takes a similar length of time – on

average 35 days. At this point, if a private rented tenancy or social rented tenancy is not available quickly, contact may be lost or the outcome is unknown, and this may occur in 48 days.

Local Authority variation

Over the last year (1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018), Housing Options outcomes vary considerably by Local Authorities (see **Table 9** and **Chart 10**).

In Clackmannanshire and South Ayrshire, the majority (92% and 87% respectively) of all approaches resulted in a homelessness application being made, whilst this figure is 19% in East Ayrshire. Almost 50% of approaches in Argyll and Bute remained in their current accommodation. For West Dunbartonshire, 35% of approaches found alternative accommodation.

For Aberdeen City and Midlothian, almost half had **an outcome of lost contact or not known**. In Local Authorities where there are high proportions of lost contacts and unknown outcomes, it is difficult to assess what the Housing Options policy is achieving.

For approaches with an outcome of **lost contact or not known** (during April 2017 to March 2018), **Chart 11** shows that although the Scottish average to close approaches with this outcome is around 80 days, some Local Authorities used this outcome much more readily. Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire and North Ayrshire closed half of their cases as lost contact/ not known outcomes on the same day as the approach was made.

Chart 10: Variation in Housing Options outcomes for each Local Authority, for cases closed between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

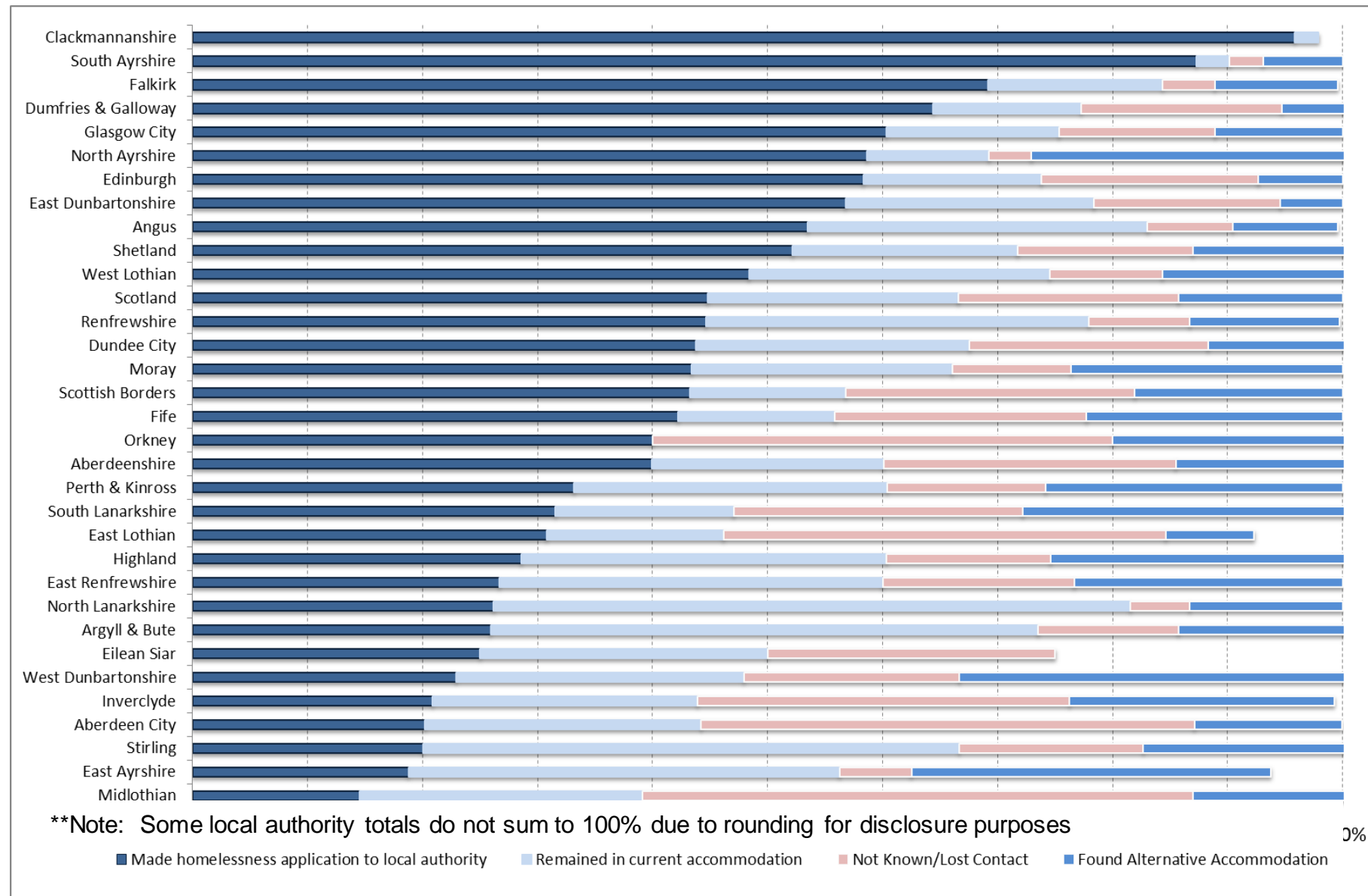
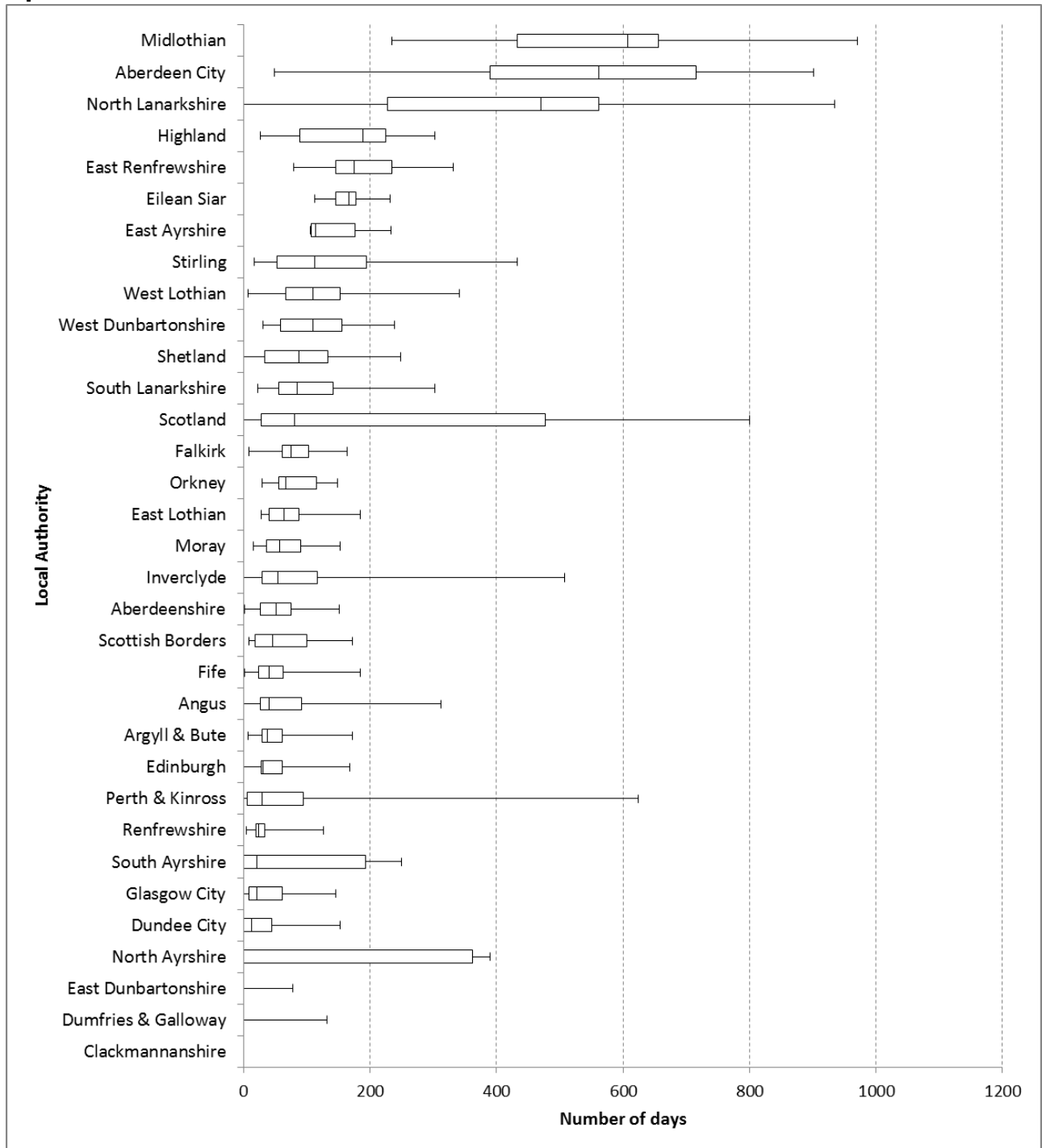


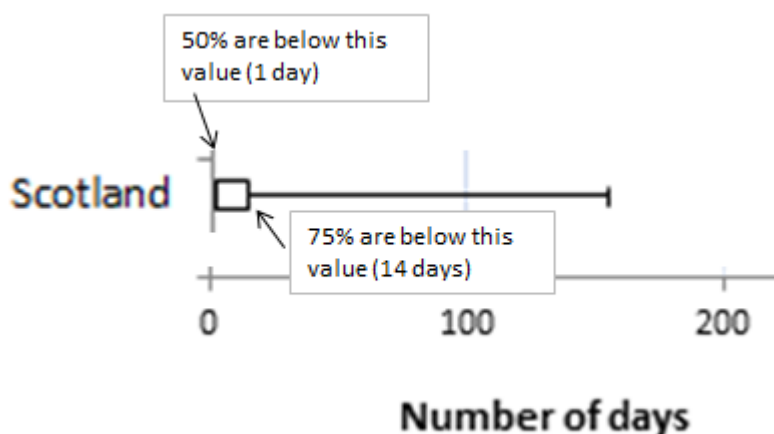
Chart 11: Distribution of the number of days from Housing Options approach to outcome as Lost Contact or Not Known by LA, for cases closed between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018



For the Housing Option approaches **which resulted in a homelessness application**, there is wide variation (across local authorities) in the number of days it takes to make the homelessness application.

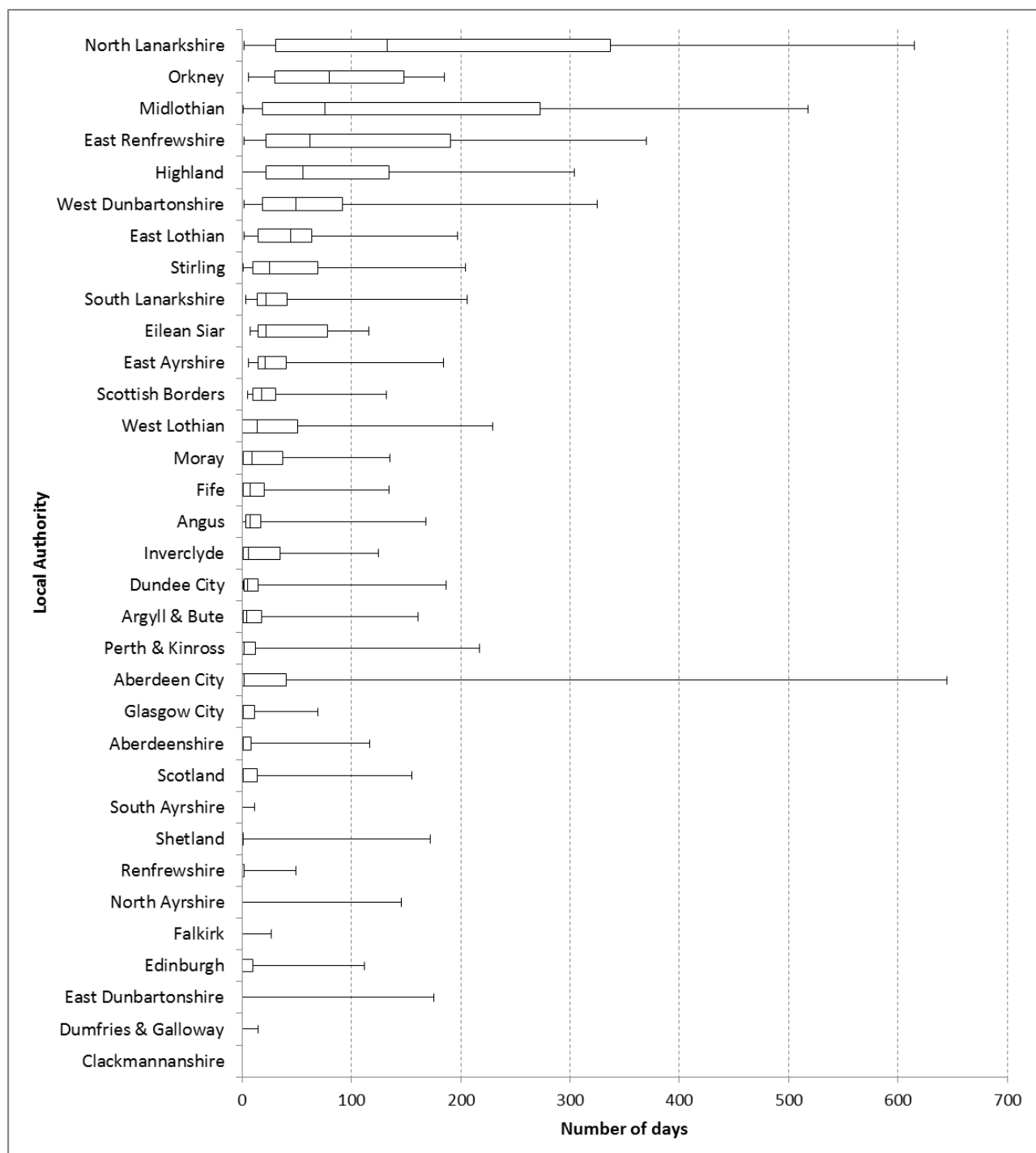
Chart 12 shows that between April 2017 and March 2018, the average time (across all local authorities) to make a homelessness application occurred very quickly (50% of approaches with a homelessness application outcome occurred within 1 day; a quarter of approaches took over 14 days). See the Figure 3 below for a close-up interpretation of the Scotland level box-plot in Chart 12.

Figure 3: Distribution of the number of days to make a homelessness application



Some local authorities take much longer than others for homelessness applications to be made (**see Chart 12**). Where the average time to make a homelessness application occurs very quickly, for example, in Clackmannanshire and Dumfries and Galloway, a greater proportion of households may be approaching these Local Authorities in crisis and so the alternatives to a homelessness application may be limited. The average time it takes to reach this outcome (making a homelessness application) is much longer for some local authorities. For example, in North Lanarkshire, 50% of these outcomes take over 133 days. Again, this variation highlights the differences in practice and how Housing Options is used by different Local Authorities.

Chart 12: Distribution of the number of days to make a homelessness application from initial Housing Options approach, for cases closed between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

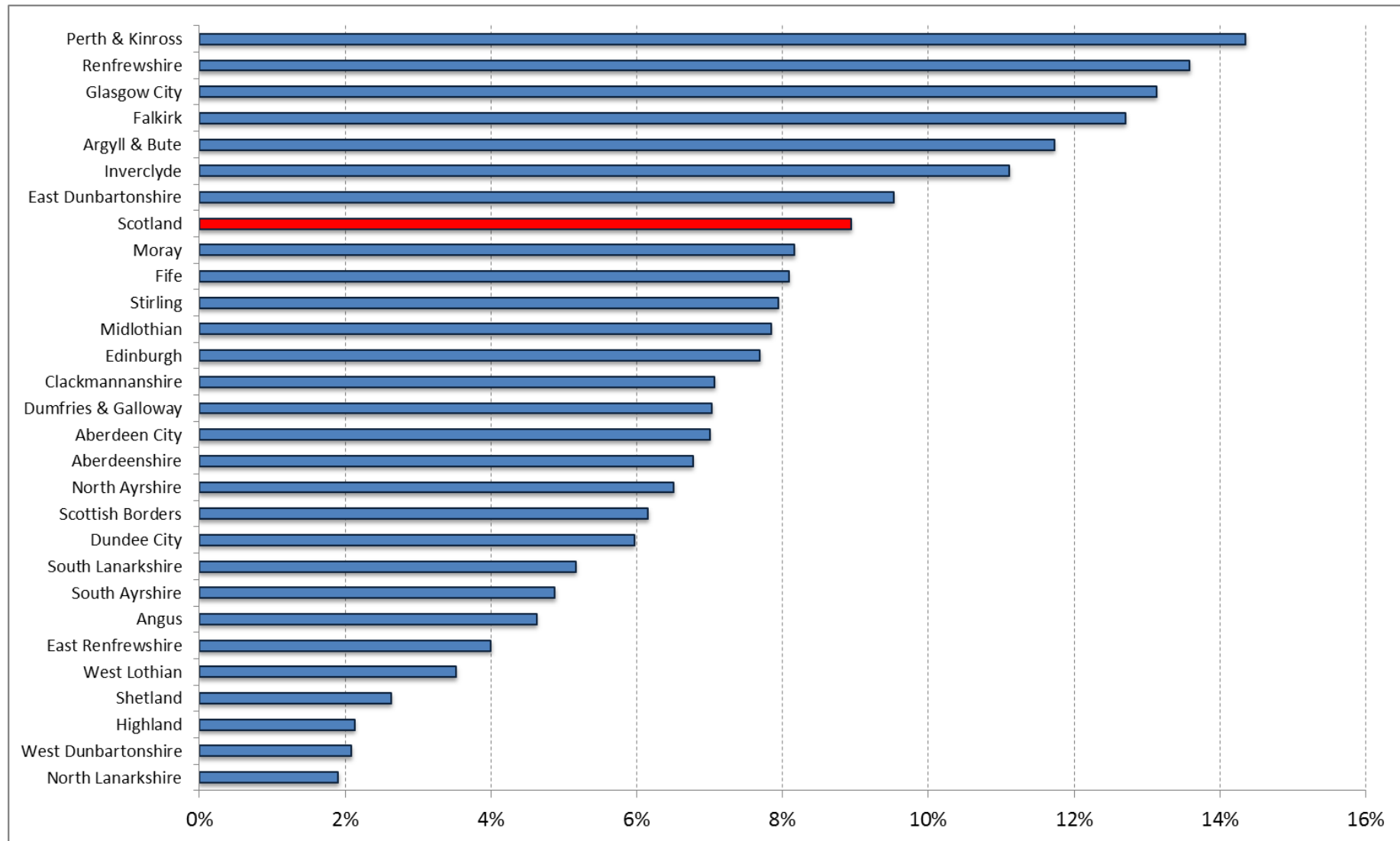


Repeat Approaches

Table 10 shows that, over the last year (1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018), around 39,600 unique households made a Housing Options approach. Of these around 36,100 made only a single approach to a Local Authority, around 3,100 made two approaches and around 415 made three or more approaches. Overall, the rate of repeat approaches for Scotland (for the 2017/18 financial year) is 9% of all households.

Chart 13 shows the variation by Local Authority. Notably, some local authorities had no repeat approaches during this time period and are therefore absent from the chart (East Ayrshire, East Lothian, Eilean Siar and Orkney). Perth and Kinross and Renfrewshire have the highest rates of repeat approaches at around 14%.

Chart 13: Percentage of unique households in each Local Authority area making repeat approaches, between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018



Background

Please see the section on [data quality](#) for a discussion of known factors which might affect the tables in this publication.

Where figures have been rounded, the total shown may not equal the sum of its constituent parts.

All tables in this publication are available at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

Why collect this data?

In March 2012, in its [report on the 2012 Homelessness Commitment](#), the Infrastructure and Capital Investment (ICI) Committee recommended that the Scottish Government should consider the development of a measurement tool for homelessness prevention work.

Consultation began with the Homelessness Statistics User Group (HSUG) on the development of the return (known as PREVENT1), and the final version was agreed by Local Authorities in April 2013. In October 2013, the Minister for Housing and Welfare and COSLA decided that the collection of Housing Options activity should be mandatory in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding across all Scottish local authorities. Data capture commenced in April 2014.

Main users of the data are Local Authorities and Scottish Government policy colleagues, academics and third sector parties. User needs are represented by the [Homelessness Statistics Users Group](#), which also sets out to improve the quality of the data collected.

How the data is collected

One month after the end of each quarter, Local Authorities are asked to submit an XML file containing the information as set out in the [data specification](#). This data is then uploaded to the Scottish Government's ProcXed website. Once the data has been validated by our software, the data is passed over to the Scottish Government's Communities Analytical Division.

Data Quality

The data submitted via the agreed specification includes a number of validations. These validations are provided through an XSD schema and have also been implemented into the ProcXed system. Once Local Authorities submit data to the ProcXed system, a number of validations are triggered and warning messages appear. Local Authorities may re-submit data to fix these errors or they can comment on them to explain why they believe the data is valid. On submission of the data to the Scottish Government, each Local Authority is sent a detailed automatic report showing the contents of the data and any remaining errors.

Data Specification

The data specification for the Housing Options (PREVENT1) statistics is available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/prevent1>

Guidance to help Local Authority officers to record information is available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/introductionprevent1>

Calculation of Households

We collect information on all people within each application. To group people into household units we filter the people table to contain only the main applicant and their partner. We ensure that there is no more than two people for each application. We generate a unique household reference based on the hashed National Insurance Number, gender and date of birth of the main applicant, and if applicable, their partner.

Housing Options

Local Authorities working on the Housing Options approach have looked at the broad description of providing a tailored service to households and have adopted it for their own uses. Housing Options opens up further areas to explore in attempting to achieve the most sustainable options available for them.

Housing Options Hubs

The hubs were awarded grants to undertake joint training, commissioning joint research, developing joint approaches to prevention, benchmarking and sharing practice. These are supported by quarterly seminars which brings the hubs together to discuss their own developments, receive a Scottish Government update, discuss topical issues of the day and enable other organisations access to the hubs to explain their work and the benefits they can offer. An annual conference with a wider invitation list is also held to promote prevention across all interested organisations.

Hub	Hub Members
Ayrshire and South Hub	North Ayrshire Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, East Ayrshire Council, Inverclyde Council, South Ayrshire Council.
East Hub	City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, Falkirk Council, Midlothian Council, Scottish Borders Council, West Lothian Council.
North and Islands Hub	Highland Council, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Eilean Siar, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council.
Tayside, Fife and Central Hub	Perth and Kinross Council, Angus Council, Argyll and Bute Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Dundee City Council, Fife Council, Stirling Council.
West Hub	East Dunbartonshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow City Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, Glasgow Housing Association (GHA).

Recommendations from the Scottish Housing Regulator thematic inquiry

These recommendations have been taken from:

<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-options-scotland-thematic-inquiry>

The Scottish Government should:

- provide enhanced guidance for Local Authorities on the delivery of Housing Options;
- ensure that guidance provides clarity on how Local Authorities operate Housing Options effectively within the context of homeless duties and obligations; and
- use the recently introduced mandatory data collection for Local Authorities to evaluate the success of policy on Housing Options.

The Scottish Government and Local Authorities should:

- build on the work of the Hubs to further develop clear and supportive practice tools to help practitioners deliver Housing Options effectively.

Local Authorities should:

- ensure all outcomes in Housing Options cases are recorded in accordance with the Scottish Government's recently introduced monitoring system;
- ensure that outcomes achieved through Housing Options are consistent, appropriate and meet people's needs;
- consider opportunities for early intervention and work to prevent homelessness;
- ensure that support assessments are given to people who need them;
- review any use of staff performance targets around reducing numbers of homeless applications to ensure these do not result in behaviours that act against the achievement of good outcomes for people in need;
- minimise the time people wait between initial contact and Housing Options interview;
- support front line officers with appropriate training and clear guidance and procedures;
- ensure they complete a homeless assessment, while progressing Housing Options efforts, where there is clear evidence of homelessness or potential homelessness.
- have a consistent structure for Housing Options interviews to ensure that relevant and important questions are always asked;
- ensure that advice and information is given in a balanced and appropriate way;

- improve the quality of record keeping to ensure accurate records of discussions and outcomes and provide a timely record of discussions and actions for the service user; and
- implement a systematic and consistent system of audit of Housing Options work with the aim of improving service delivery.

Comparisons with other UK Statistics

England

In March 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government produced an official statistics release on homelessness prevention and relief in England which takes place outside the homelessness statutory framework¹⁰. The main points from the latest release, covering the period October to December 2017, are:

There were 52,440 successful cases of homelessness prevention or relief outside the statutory homelessness framework in England, up 3% on 50,840 in the same quarter of 2017.

- 92% were preventions and 8% were cases of relief;
- 56% of preventions enabled households to remain in their existing home, whilst 44% were assisted to obtain alternative accommodation;
- Of those cases who were assisted to remain in their own homes, the two most common prevention actions were:
 - Other assistance to remain in the private or social sector (this covers a range of actions such as resolving anti-social behaviour, tackling disrepair and adaptations to property); and,
 - resolving housing benefit problems.
- Of those cases who were assisted to find alternative accommodation, the most common type of alternative accommodation was:
 - Social housing in the form of a Part 6 offer of the local authorities' own accommodation or nomination to a Private Registered Provider and,
 - Supported accommodation.

Scotland

Information is available on the Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

¹⁰ This is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-and-homelessness-prevention-and-relief-england-october-to-december-2017>

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Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

e-mail: statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route. Summary tables can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact joseph.jobling@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

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