



Thinking Outside the Box – Homelessness in UK

Suzanne Fitzpatrick

March 2022

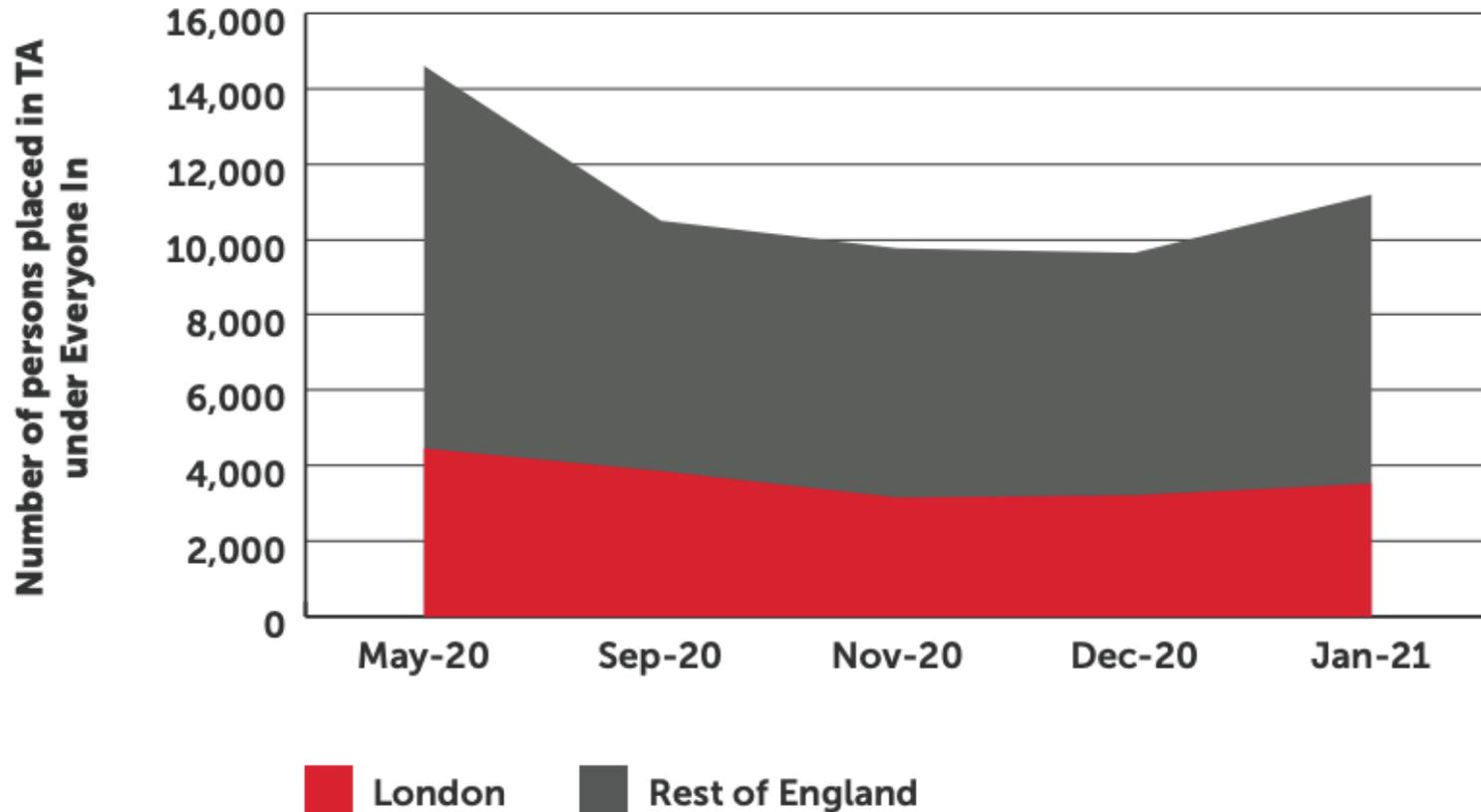
Introduction

- General context for homelessness in the UK (England)
 - COVID-19
 - Rough sleeping
 - Statutory homelessness
 - Position of EEA migrants in the UK
 - Some broad conclusions

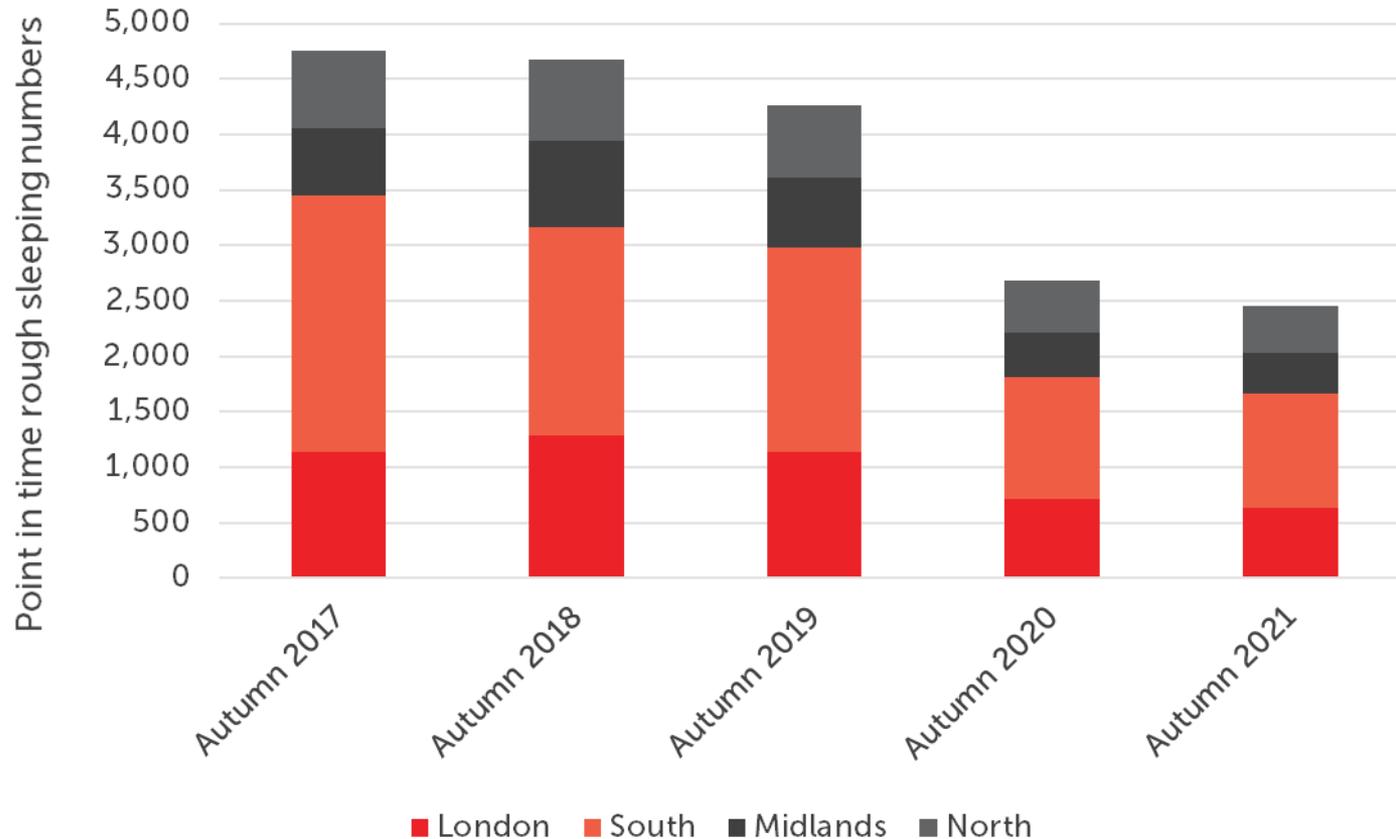
The COVID pandemic

- Pandemic dealt a sharp blow to the UK economy
- Government action prevented big rise in unemployment
- People claiming income related benefits soared but now slowly falling back
- Adverse effects of the crisis have disproportionately fallen on those at risk of poverty – the main risk factor for homelessness in the UK
- But very effective response for those at risk of sleeping rough called 'Everyone In'

The impacts of Everyone In



Rough sleeping estimates, 2017-21



Limitations of Everyone In

- Comprehensiveness and sustainability of joint working gains, especially between homelessness and health
- Quality of accommodation and levels of support in some areas
- Local variation, esp. response to 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) groups
- Securing move-on especially difficult for those with complex needs and NRPF

Return of night shelters?

“A lot of people don’t want to come in because they’re profoundly unsafe and undignified places... and for those that do come in, it comes with risk” (Health sector key informant)

“one big provider... looks like they’re moving back [to providing communal shelters]... they think that people with a high level of need benefit more from the engagement of a congregate shelter. They also have misgivings about people being behind a door, and what can go on there.” (Independent key informant)

“one organisation... would like to reopen... a communal, rotating model, which ourselves, and understandably... public health professionals are very concerned about that.... We shouldn’t need to do that.” (Statutory sector key informant)

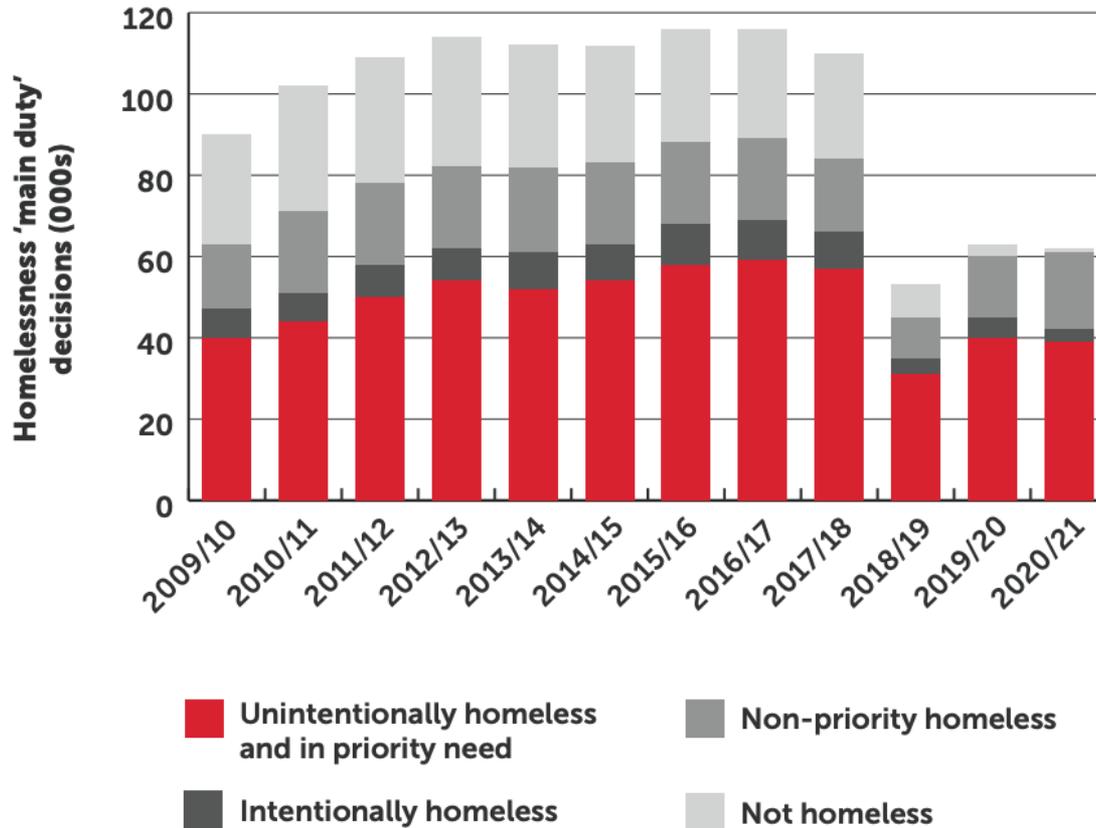
2024 target to end rough sleeping

- In 2018, Government committed to 'end' rough sleeping by 2027; accelerated to 2024 by current administration; backed by central Government funding
- But lack of definition/performance management processes underpinning target
- Acknowledged that Housing First provision required at much greater scale
- Meeting the target depends on addressing tension between with immigration policy (NRPF) and greater focus on prevention

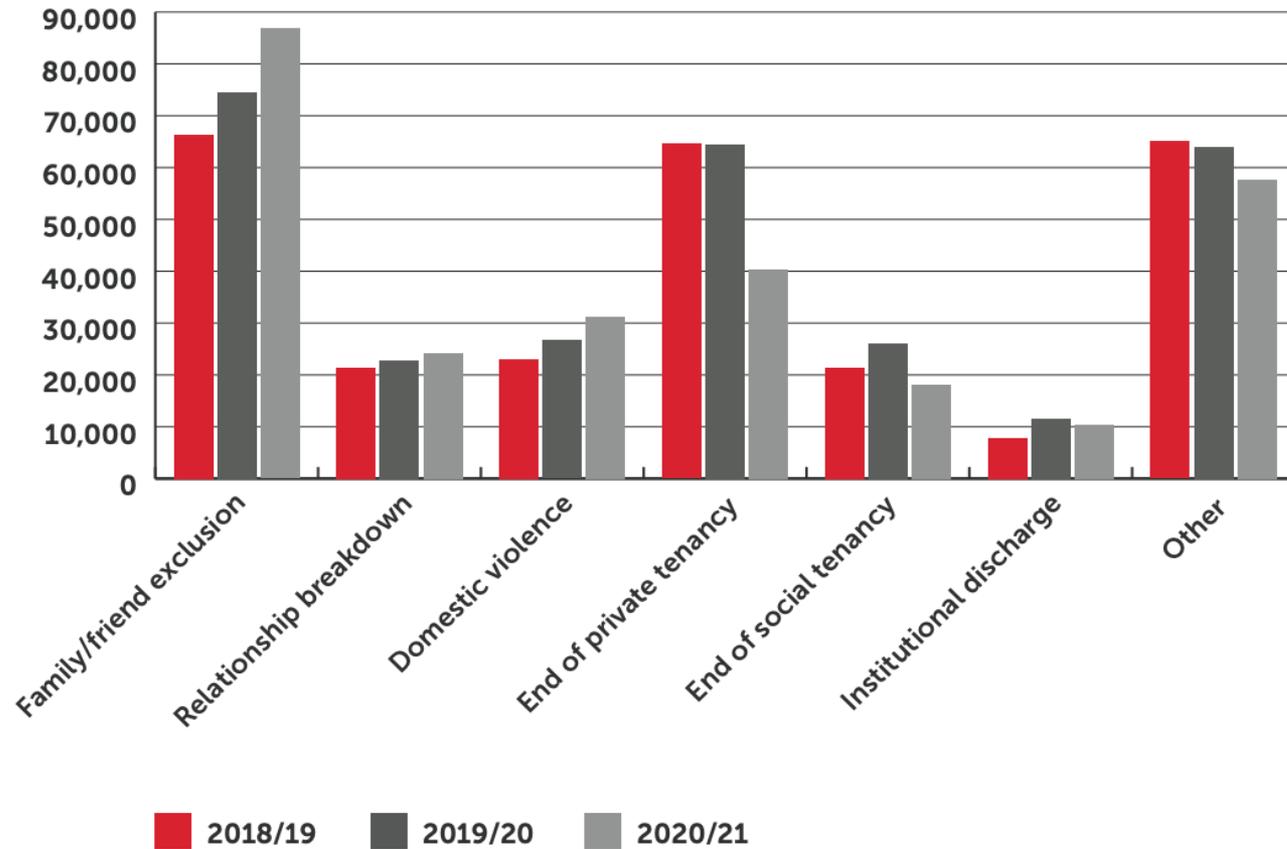
'Statutory' homelessness

- Since 1977, local authorities have a duty to **permanently rehouse** certain homeless households (mainly allocated social housing)
 - very wide definition of homelessness
 - 'priority need' = mainly families with children helped
- In 2017, the Homelessness Reduction Act
 - strengthened homelessness prevention duties
 - single people now get more help

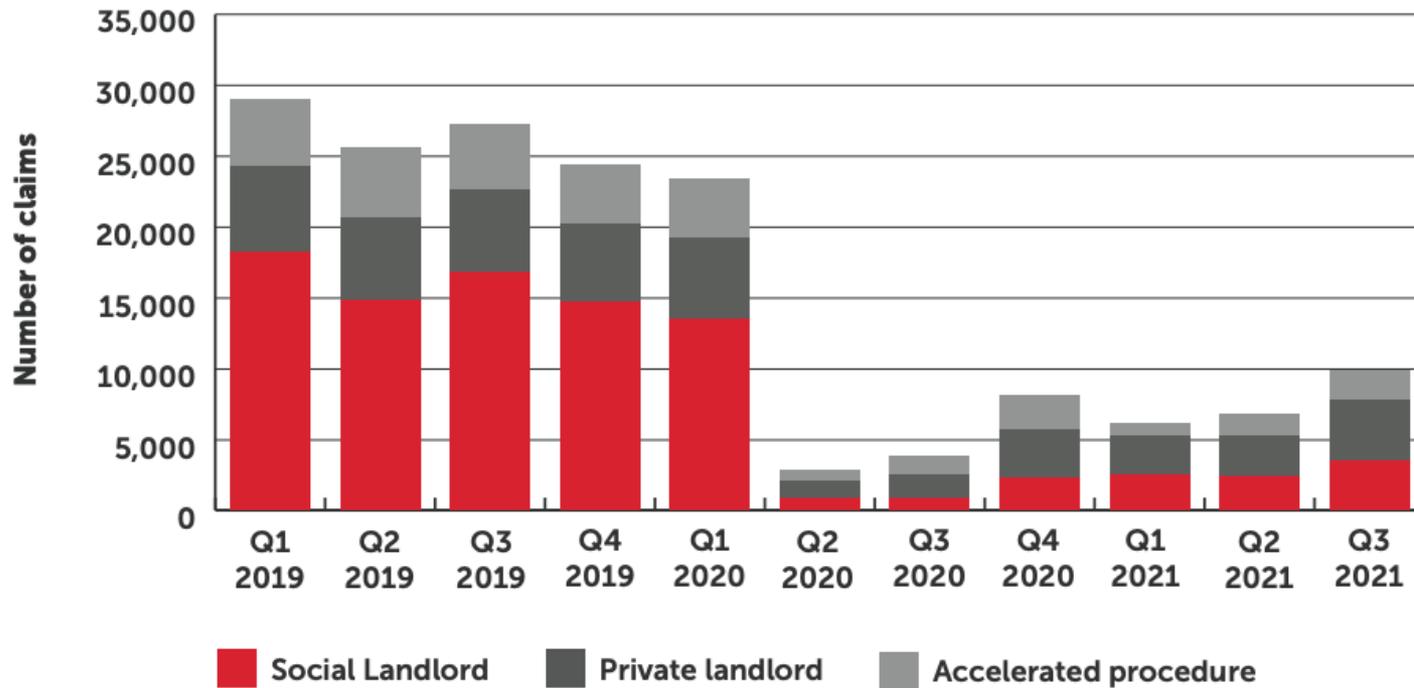
Impact of HRA: fewer people becoming 'statutorily homeless'



Impact of COVID: changing reasons for homelessness

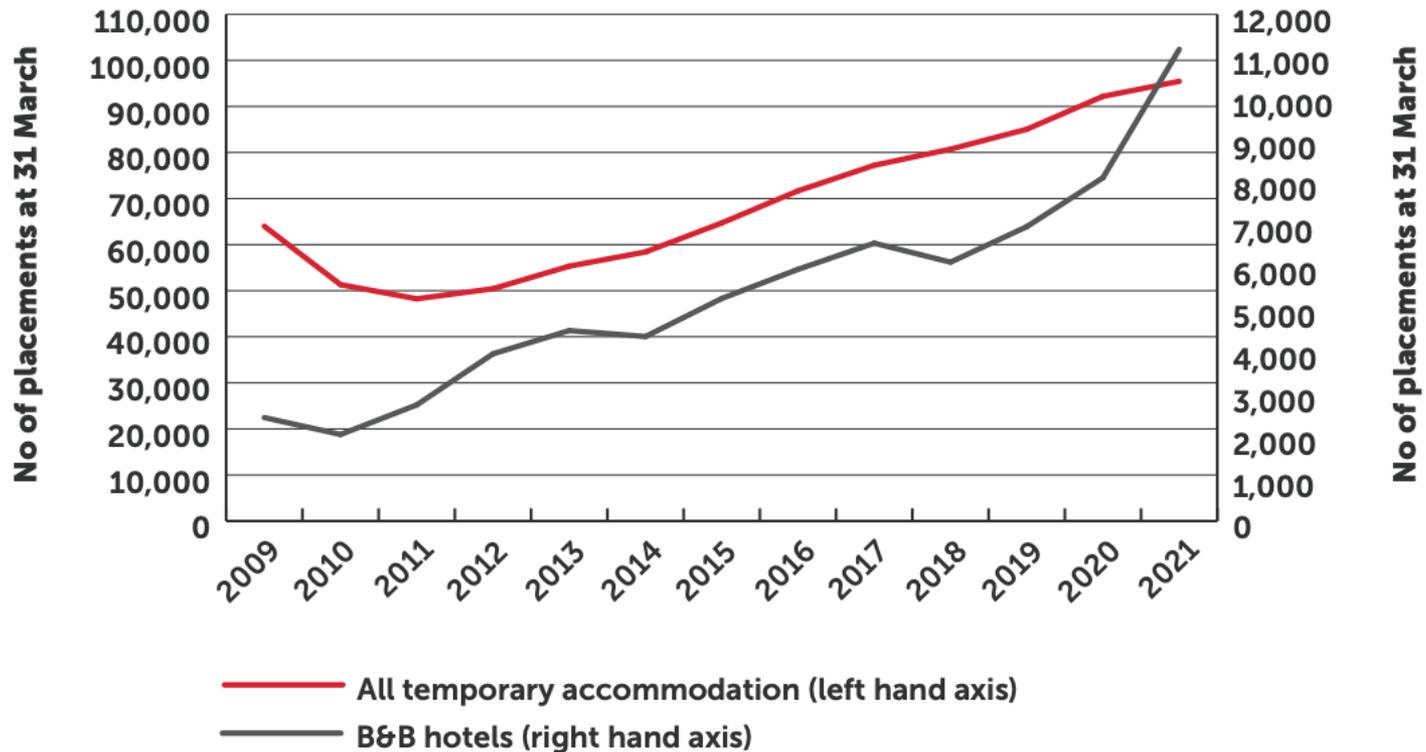


Impact of COVID: evictions plummet

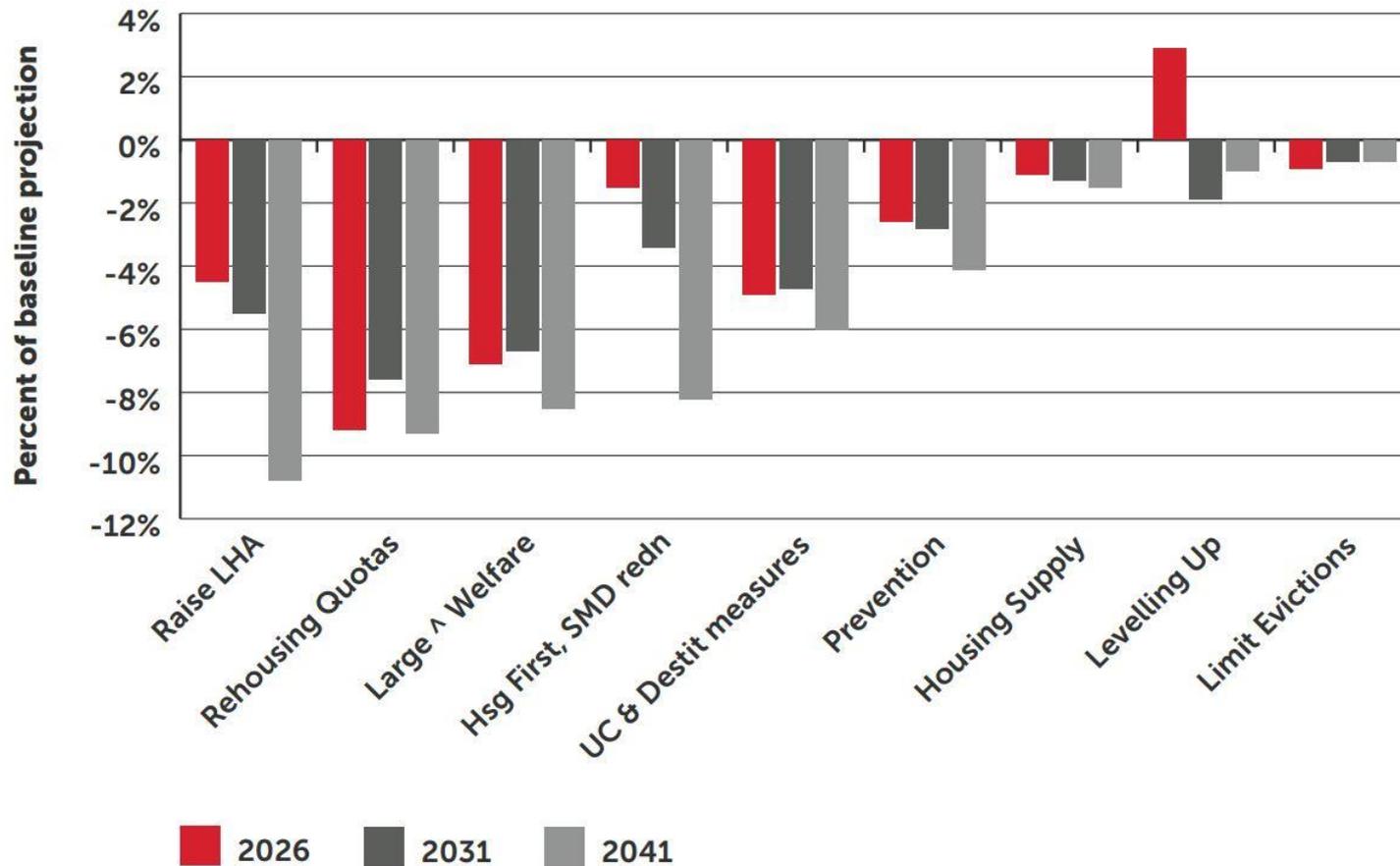


Source: Ministry of Justice, Mortgage and Landlord Possession Statistics Quarterly, Table 8

But temporary accommodation continues to rise



Projecting policy impacts



EEA citizens in the UK

- EEA citizens exposed to higher risk of homelessness than the general population
- Some of this may be due to their demographics (younger, single) and geographical location (London, south/east)
- But the most striking feature is their very low incomes, reflecting weak position in the job market and vulnerability to loss of employment (esp during Covid)
- A key factor here is that many do not have full or any access to the UK welfare benefits system
- This is clearly linked to their frequent lack of clearly established residency
- While initially well protected under 'Everyone In', now policies are locally-based and much less inclusive

Conclusions

- UK (England) has some very strong (legal and policy) support systems in place to address homelessness
- But numbers in temporary accommodation are high, and rising; and, shamefully, there is still some use made of communal shelters
- The most important policy levers in reducing homelessness are a) access quotas for social housing, b) enhanced welfare benefits
- But Government target to end rough sleeping in 2024 will not be met unless issue of vulnerable NRPF groups (including EEA nationals without residency) who cannot access UK welfare benefits is dealt with