

Stark warning from councils of rising homelessness levels in England

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The homelessness monitor: England 2022

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Credit: Heriot-Watt University

Councils across England are warning of a rise in the number of people experiencing homelessness as the impact of the withdrawal of pandemic protections, such as the eviction ban and universal credit uplift, piles pressure on people.

New research led by Heriot-Watt University and commissioned by Crisis, surveyed 155 councils across England. Nearly all (97%) said the end of the eviction ban will lead to an increase in homelessness, while 80% said the recent £20 cut to universal credit will contribute to rising homelessness. The overwhelming majority also warned that other financial policies such as the freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (77%) and the benefit cap (71%) are likely to cause an increase in homelessness in their areas.

These stark predictions were made today in [The Homelessness Monitor: England 2022](#), an in-depth state of the nation report on homelessness trends across the country.

The research also highlights some of the progress made during the last year. Over 37,000 people experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping were helped into emergency accommodation when COVID was at its height, while widespread evictions were prevented.

But with protections now being scaled back, more people are being left at risk of homelessness. This is made even worse by the cost of living crisis with people struggling in the face of spiraling household bills such as [energy costs](#) and soaring inflation, which place further financial pressure on households.

The survey revealed most councils found it more difficult to access private (78%) or social (57%) rented accommodation for [homeless](#) households in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20, a problem that is likely to worsen in the coming months as the effects of the cost of living crisis

are coupled with the impact of the scaling back of pandemic protections.

Matt Downie, Chief Executive at Crisis, said: "The warning from these findings is clear, without action, more people will be forced to live without a place to call home.

"Currently many people fear having the rug pulled out from underneath them as evictions start up again and financial protections are eroded. This is compounded by the cost of living crisis where people already under crippling financial pressure are edging closer to homelessness as they struggle to afford basic necessities like heating, eating and keeping a roof over their heads.

"It doesn't have to be like this. The protections put in place during the pandemic helped thousands of people off the streets and prevented many more from facing homelessness. It would be shameful for this progress to unravel before us, at a huge human cost and financial one for the local councils left to foot the bill.

"To stop these warnings from becoming a reality the government needs to invest in the Local Housing Allowance so it truly covers the cost of rent across the country, alongside a strategy to deliver the genuinely affordable homes needed so everyone has a place to call home."

Beth Watts, from the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University is lead author of the report. She said: "The evidence in the Homelessness Monitor: England 2022 is worrying. The accounts from councils and people who work in the public and voluntary sector across England highlight the pressures that are pushing people into homelessness and provide vivid warnings of what will happen if no action is taken by government. Our analysis of 'core' homelessness trends also shows homelessness levels in England increasing by one third between 2019–2024.

"Councils have clearly outlined the difficulties they're encountering supporting people experiencing homelessness and these issues must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Without improved access to appropriate and affordable housing, people will remain trapped and unable to leave homelessness behind for good."

Provided by Heriot-Watt University

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