

Better Data Better Results

An options appraisal for a national
data and monitoring system for street
homelessness in Scotland



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Centre for
Homelessness Impact



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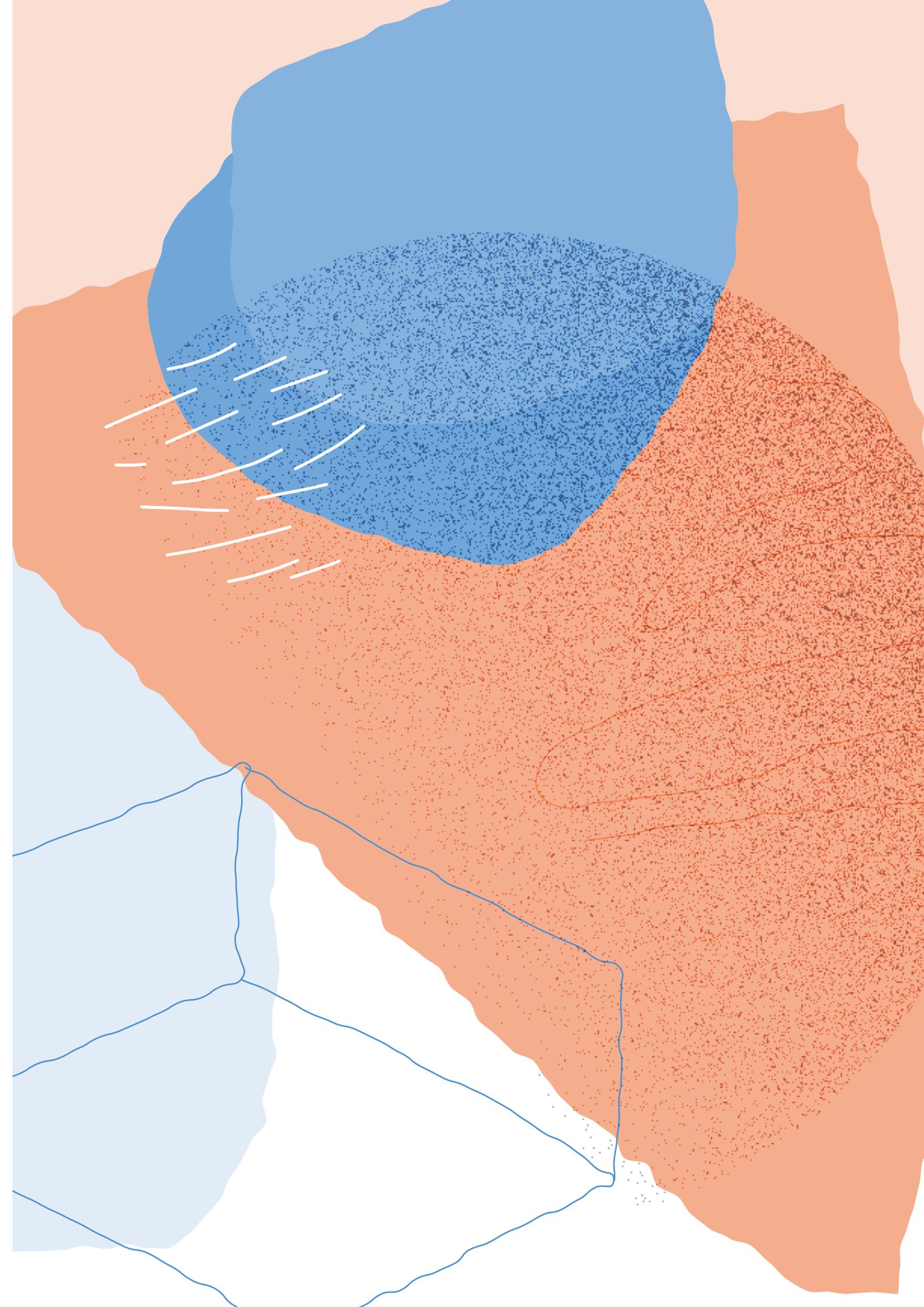
Dave Russell with Dr. Ian Thomas

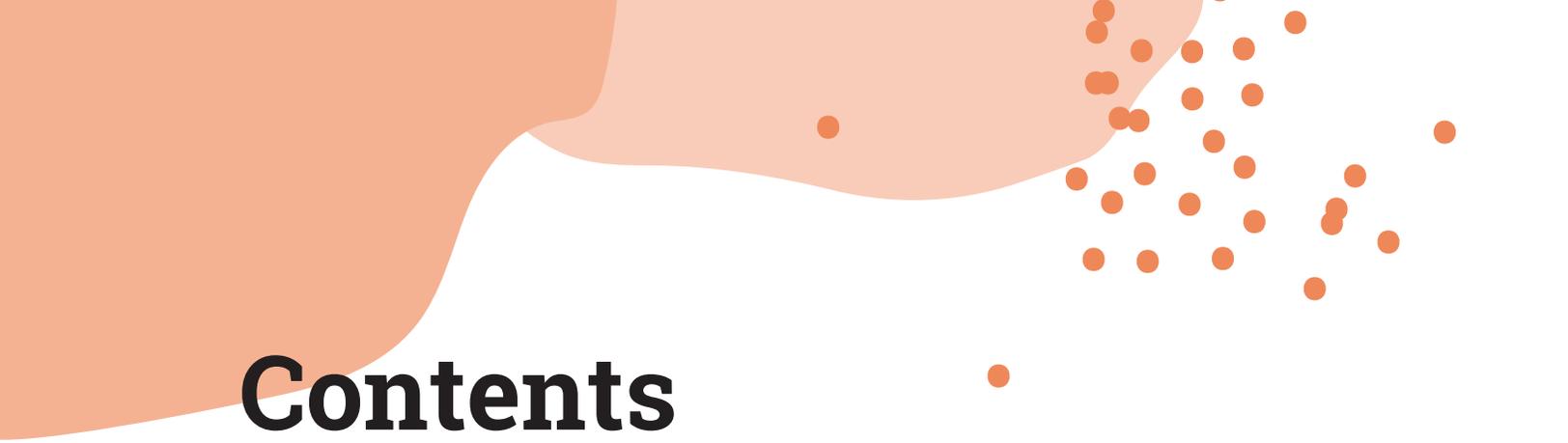
Acknowledgements

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About the Centre for Homelessness Impact

The Centre for Homelessness Impact champions the creation and use of better evidence for a world without homelessness. Our mission is to improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness by ensuring that policy, practice and funding decisions are underpinned by reliable evidence.





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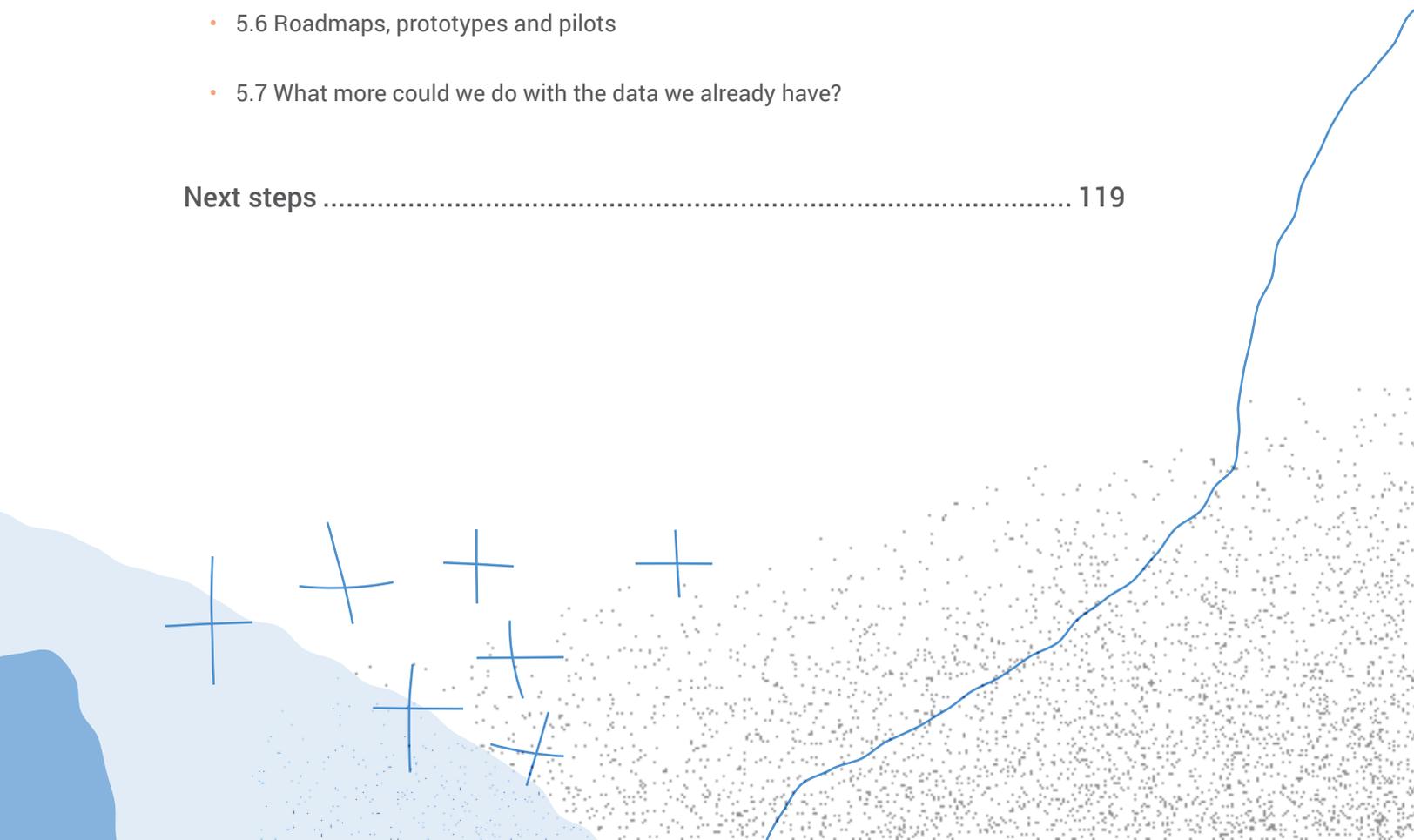
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Foreword

In recent years, there has been a swell of momentum to take action towards ending homelessness across Scotland. From initiatives like the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG), to mass sleep-outs to help raise funds and awareness like Sleep in the Park, to the Housing First Scotland Fund, there is a strong consensus that as a society we must be doing more to prevent people from falling into homelessness.

Ending homelessness for good in Scotland won't be easy, but the renewed focus is helping by creating a sense of urgency and a new sense of what is possible. Past lessons from Scotland and beyond also show that to create the lasting change that we seek we must go further. We must measure our progress so that we can reliably know whether what we're doing is having an impact. We must test, refine, evaluate and improve our efforts over time. We also need to ensure that we put the right systems and structures in place to support those efforts along the way.

The Centre for Homelessness Impact is delighted to have been invited to support the Scottish Government in delivering against the recommendations from HARSAG with this options appraisal for a national data and monitoring system for street homelessness. As an organisation, the Centre believes strongly that homelessness is an

issue that can be solved, and that more reliable and actionable data and evidence will power society's progress towards that end.

A clearer, data-driven picture of the issue of homelessness is a critical piece in the wider puzzle of Scotland's path towards becoming a nation free from homelessness. A new national data system could help significantly with ongoing efforts by improving our understanding of the scope of the challenge and assess progress on a daily basis. It could also enable us to connect people more effectively with the support they need. And making the data publicly available could create added incentive for local areas to keep up, creating a virtuous cycle.

Starting with the conviction that we must treat the systemic causes of homelessness, not just its individual symptoms, the Centre took a broad approach to this options appraisal. In addition to a literature review of similar systems worldwide, and regular meetings with a panel of national and international experts, we spent significant time with future users of a data collection system for homelessness in Scotland. These included front-line workers, service providers, local authority service commissioners, people with experiences of homelessness, data analysts, system administrators and volunteers. Our objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the many

perspectives, challenges, needs, behaviours and motivations that any data collection system would need to address.

The system options presented here are deeply rooted in what we heard – and in many ways, this report is as much about identifying and framing the right questions for ourselves as it is about the possible configurations of a system. It is often said that given an hour to solve a problem, one should spend 40 minutes defining the problem and 20 minutes solving it. A significant part of this process has been to collectively figure out what questions we need this data collection to answer, what direction we want it to take us in, and what success looks like.

The big promise of the new data system extends beyond its ability to help outreach workers in the moment or track levels across local areas over time. The data should also help us to proactively design fixes to problems we wouldn't have otherwise seen. And It should be used to assess how effective different services are at keeping people off the streets. Above all else, it should help us keep our eye on the real goal: delivering permanent and sustained exits from homelessness.

We look forward to the next stage of this process as the Scottish Government begin to test, prototype and pilot new approaches to homelessness data collection, to help us navigate our way towards the long-term goal.



Lúgia Teixeira

Dr Lúgia Teixeira
Director, Centre for Homelessness Impact

Summary

Background

In June 2018, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) published a report outlining 70 recommendations for the Scottish Government to implement in order to end rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland and end homelessness altogether. Among these was a recommendation to improve data collection on street homelessness at a national level.

The Scottish Government has worked with the Centre for Homelessness Impact to develop an options appraisal for a multi-agency, multi-sector data and monitoring system for Scotland, focusing on people who are street homeless or at risk of becoming street homeless.

National statistics for homelessness in Scotland are primarily drawn from a number of local authority data collections. However, this mechanism for calculating street homelessness has limitations. The current count for street homelessness in Scotland is based solely on local authority data returns, meaning that only those who approach their local authority will be counted. Additionally, the data that we currently collect cannot give us a meaningful understanding of how resources are being used and what the impact of our efforts are.

The first part of the HARSAG recommendation proposes that a new data collection system should support multi-agency working, allowing

for 'real-time, by name' data sharing between agencies working with people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. The second area recommends that data collection enables 'frequent and regular reporting of numbers, locations and other data to support monitoring of the reduction in rough sleeping across Scotland'. Finally, the recommendation highlighted the need to use reliable data to improve the ways in which street homelessness is tackled in Scotland. Taken cumulatively, HARSAG's recommendation represents a call to measure the things that are meaningful, rather than simply looking for meaning in the things that are already measured. The options appraisal that follows seeks to outline what this means for a data collection for street homelessness in Scotland.

Homelessness data collection in the UK

Scotland's approach to collecting statutory homelessness data has been quite different to both England and Wales. Until recently (2018), England and Wales adopted aggregate statistical returns to their respective governments, which provided local authority level counts of households assisted under housing legislation. This compares with Scotland, where individual level data have been collected since 2001. The following table outlines the primary mechanisms for homelessness data collection across the UK, with their key benefits and limitations.

Data collection	Benefits	Limitations
<p>CHAIN CHAIN is a predominantly outreach-based multi-agency database for rough sleepers in London. The database allow users to share information about work done with people sleeping rough and about their needs, ensuring that the person receives the most appropriate support and that efforts are not duplicated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It enables the continuous count of rough sleeper observations and the co-ordination of services. • It can be used to speed up interactions with people who are homeless as it can be used as a reference guide for that individual's needs. • The creation of CHAIN led to St Mungo's developing Real Systems as a social enterprise for helping other third-sector organisations to improve their data monitoring systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data are not comparable with rough sleeper counts in rest of England and therefore may be comparatively under-referenced. • Data collection by outreach workers will fluctuate with resource availability, i.e. changes in initiatives which increase street outreach may increase contacts. • Non-participation of some organisations may lead to biases/omissions in the data, particularly individuals who do not engage with or are hidden from street outreach teams. • There is potential for data to be used punitively.
<p>SHIN SHIN follows a similar model to CHAIN but at a national level in Wales. Primarily outreach-based, it is a multi-agency database and network of organisations that supports and records information on people sleeping rough.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has the potential to enable more valid counts of people sleeping rough in Wales – replacing or adding to the existing single-night/week counts. • It brings together detailed information on the support needs and issues faced by people sleeping rough in Wales. • It helps in the coordination of efforts between organisations to end rough sleeping. • It allows for better links to be made between statutory and non-statutory services. • There is potential for it to provide an electronic case management system for smaller organisations who may not have had resources to create their own. • Funding has also been used to introduce SHIN teams across Wales. These are groups of volunteers focusing on areas which do not already have dedicated outreach teams or rough sleeping services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection by outreach workers will fluctuate with resource availability. • The system, in itself, does not address the under-representation of people sleeping rough in rural areas (although SHIN teams are designed to account for this). • Non-participation by some organisations may affect data coverage when attempting to provide national statistics. • There have been concerns raised by the Wallich in the wording of the National Assembly for Wales enquiry into rough sleeping that insinuated that SHIN could be used to verify a person's story and prove they were sleeping rough – this relates to the potential punitive use of these systems.
<p>Point in time counts Point in time counts are conducted on a single night/week in England and Wales to provide a snapshot of the numbers of people sleeping rough in a defined area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The methodology for conducting the count is largely consistent across local areas, allowing for comparisons nationally and internationally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant potential for underestimating numbers of people sleeping rough (counts do not cover people in hostels or other emergency accommodation and there are many reasons why individuals may not be seen on a single night, e.g. walking around, hidden from view, etc.) • Conducting point in time street counts is resource intensive and can be expensive. • Current methodologies in England do not collect any additional supporting information or characteristics about individuals seen sleeping rough.

Data collection	Benefits	Limitations
<p>H-CLIC H-CLIC is a data collection that aggregates local authority homelessness data in England to monitor the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed data on household members will enable intergenerational homelessness to be explored. • The modular nature of the collection should enable future additional collections to be more easily incorporated. • Splitting personal data from main data provides an additional level of data security. • An online version for smaller authorities (fewer than 50 households per quarter) potentially saves them having to invest in complex systems. • Information about consent to share/use data is presented in an easy to read format. • The data collection increases opportunities to undertake ad hoc analysis into the needs of people receiving statutory homelessness assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure of the data is complex. • Each local authority has had to develop its own approach to local data management. This means there has been a cost implication in the form of funds for authorities to redesign their systems to be compliant. • There has potentially been some need for local areas to realign their data collection practices to conform to the new structure.

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<p>MainStay MainStay is an online system for Liverpool that allows services to access a common assessment and related matching facility. The system uses the information inputted by assessors to ensure that persons can be quickly prioritised and suitably accommodated for their needs. The aims of the system are to prevent homelessness, reduce repeat homelessness, and reduce evictions and abandonments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main benefit is one comprehensive assessment for access to all services linked via an IT system, avoiding the need for multiple assessments for service users and accommodation providers. • It is used to assist in the allocation of accommodation and matching to the most appropriate service. • Clients are searchable across the database so the creation of duplicated records can be avoided. • Consent to share data is presented on a single page and easy to read. • The guidance document indicates procedures for handling people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough, in a way that attempts to prevent them from having to continue to sleep out that evening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-participation of some organisations may bias usability of data for statistical purposes.
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Data collection**GMThink**

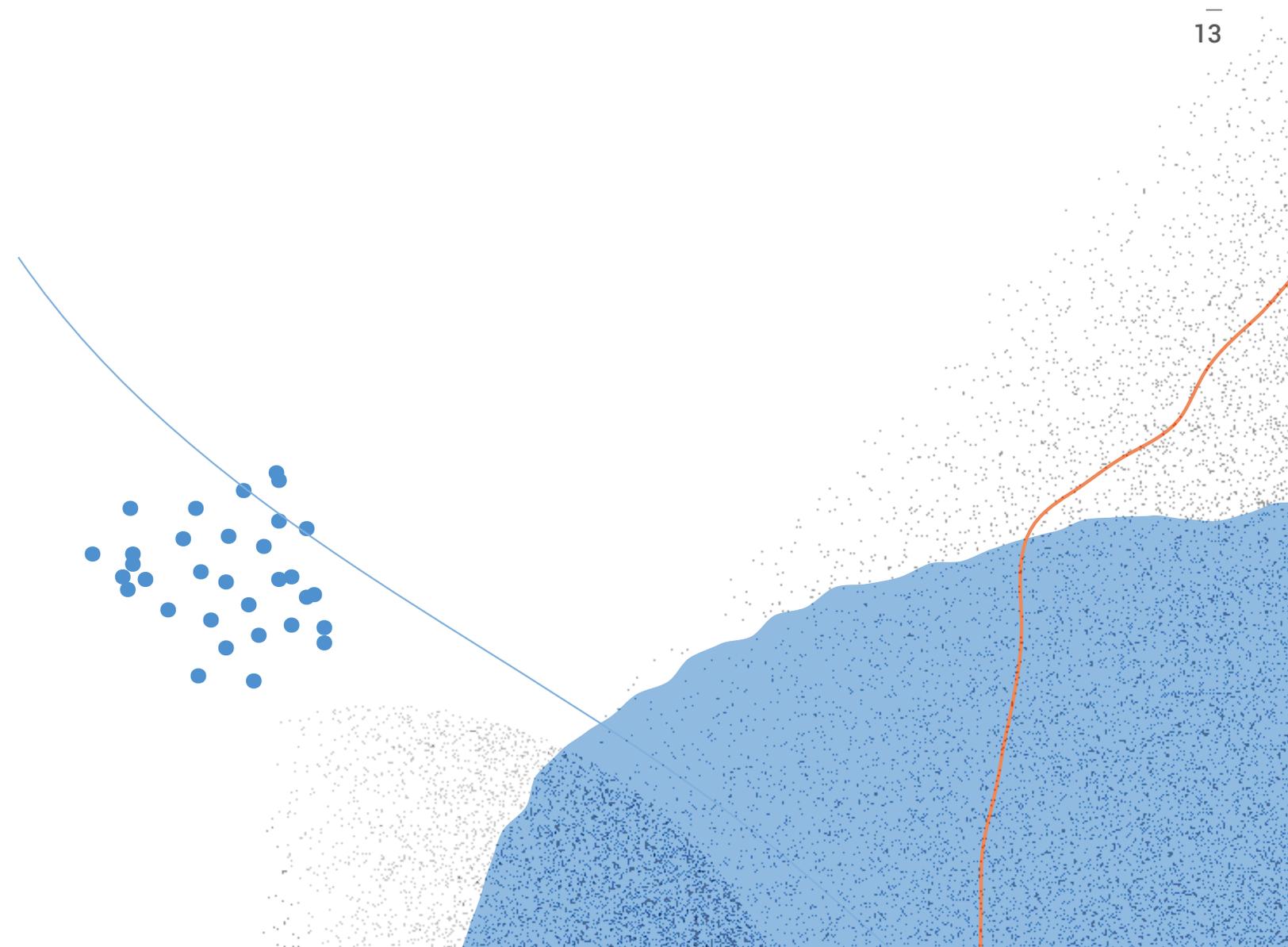
GMThink (or MThink) is a multi-agency database for individuals with multiple complex needs in the Greater Manchester area. It allows for shared case management between outreach teams, engagement workers, peer mentors and other specialist services. Service users are also able to access their own information.

Benefits

- The person seeking assistance is involved in their own support planning and updating personal goals.
- The use of simple language makes assistance and plans accessible to the person receiving support.
- The system is aimed at bringing together services to support people.
- At the core of GMThink is the principle of 'telling your story once' – consensual information-sharing between organisations so the individual can get access to the right services, at the right time.

Limitations

- Concerns have been raised by Manchester Housing Providers' Partnership about the limited functionality, visibility and governance of GMThink.



Key learnings

We have been guided by an expert advisory panel throughout this process, with representation from local authorities, service providers, academics, research and frontline staff. We also spent significant time with future stakeholders of the system, including people affected by homelessness, to understand and compare their various perspectives, challenges, good practices, motivations, and attitudes towards homelessness data. Consulting each of these stakeholder groups equally has allowed us to explore the issue from multiple angles and perspectives, including where they may conflict with or contradict each other. Collectively, these learnings start to build a picture of what a Scottish data collection system for street homelessness should look like, how it should function, how it can help the various stakeholders, and what needs to happen to make the data collection successful.

Below is a table of the findings from all of our conversations with stakeholders. These are framed as themes and insights (what we heard) and opportunities (what that means for the data collection).

Theme	Relevant insights	Opportunity for the data collection
<p>Moving towards an everyday culture of collaboration</p> <p>Scotland is making great strides towards closer partnership working between agencies and across silos. However more could be done to adopt a culture of multi-agency collaboration as the everyday norm. In particular, this means breaking down some of the historic divides between statutory and non-statutory services that have prevented information from being shared in support of people affected by homelessness.</p>	<p>Service providers Involvement beyond the homelessness sector (e.g. police, health) feels challenging but even low level collaboration can have a disproportionately positive impact for people.</p> <p>Service partnerships Collaborative partnerships have helped formalise processes for sharing ‘what works’. Service providers know each others’ strengths and work together to ensure the right people are supported in the right way.</p> <p>Service partnerships Increased information sharing has meant improved response times, often at critical moments.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity to scale up some of the good work that is already happening to bring agencies together in support of the people they support. The street homelessness data collection could become a mechanism to accelerate and facilitate the much-needed cultural shift towards closer collaboration across the sector.</p>
<p>Creating a single source of information</p> <p>In the absence of shared, case-level information, people experiencing homelessness are often required to repeat themselves and their story multiple times to different service providers. This causes strain for individuals and leaves providers with incomplete or conflicting information, meaning people may not be getting the right kind of support.</p>	<p>People with lived experience People are required to repeat their story again and again. It is frustrating, demoralising and, at worst, it leaves people feeling trapped in the homelessness system as a result of negative past experiences.</p> <p>People with lived experience People worry that decisions made as a result of assessments will be set in stone, rather than adapting with their changing circumstances. As a result, assessments (especially with the local authority) feel high pressure, which can lead to people feeling misrepresented or even judged.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity for shared case management to ease the pressure on service users to repeatedly share their stories (including past trauma), to give service providers better insight into their clients’ situations, and to more effectively align multiple service providers’ support around individual cases.</p>
<p>Data collection as a jigsaw puzzle, not a snapshot</p> <p>Much of the useful data that is currently collected on homelessness is collected in chunks – during housing options or other assessments. However, this approach presents significant challenges to reliable and thorough individual-level data, especially if people are at a point of crisis. Certain contexts make data collection difficult (e.g. night shelters) and trust between people and service providers is critical if they are to share their information.</p>	<p>Service partnerships Bringing different service providers together has helped fill gaps in knowledge at an individual case level. This has made support more effective across the board.</p> <p>Street outreach Much of their work is triage and brokering. Where outreach workers cannot help directly themselves (e.g. attending appointments with people), the quality and effectiveness of their referrals is critical.</p> <p>Service providers Certain service environments make it difficult for providers to collect information. This needs to be factored into what information it is possible to collect.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity for the system to build a picture of people’s cases over time, from multiple sources. This would also allow for records to be more easily maintained and updated as circumstances change.</p>

Theme	Relevant insights	Opportunity for the data collection
<p>Reframing the role of data</p> <p>Data have historically been used as a means of managing performance – to account for ‘work done’ rather than ‘outcomes achieved’. This approach to data does not always have much bearing on the quality of services delivered or their effectiveness in addressing homelessness.</p>	<p>Data collection systems</p> <p>Contributors to these systems have often historically perceived data as a tool for performance management, which can lead to target chasing. Some of the most effective systems have been able to shift that mindset towards using the data for self-reflection and service improvement.</p> <p>Data collection systems</p> <p>Maintaining quality is a constant job. While there is lots that can be done upfront to mitigate poor data quality, things like quality scorecards, training, and data cleaning are a necessary and ongoing process.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity for the system to encourage a shift in attitudes towards data. If this data collection is to create meaningful impact, we will need to reframe the role of data as something to be learned from and constantly responded to, not simply for setting targets.</p>
<p>From reactive to responsive practice</p> <p>Almost every organisation supporting people experiencing homelessness felt like they were constantly ‘firefighting’. This makes forward planning difficult at both an individual and agency level. Reactive working is blamed on constrained resources, but often these constraints are the result of avoidable bottlenecks and inefficiencies in the way information moves around the system as a whole.</p>	<p>Local authorities</p> <p>Many local authority staff members talked about the reactive nature of their work. Constant firefighting leads to inefficiencies in systems and processes, which prevent them from being able to plan ahead.</p> <p>Service providers</p> <p>Data collection for service providers can be reactive and a little unfocused. They would benefit from being able to see a clearer link between the information they collect and the service improvements it can deliver.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity for the data collection system to enable more effective management of available resources so that service providers can make more informed and timely decisions when responding to client needs, rather than reacting hastily and resorting to emergency measures.</p>
<p>Making progress visible for everyone</p> <p>Data are meaningless until they are used. Those responsible for collecting and inputting data into data collection systems are not always able to see how their work is being used, leading to poor data quality and a feeling of frustration over what is sometimes seen as unnecessary administration. More work is also needed to interpret the data that are collected and use them to drive service improvements and show progress.</p>	<p>Data collection systems</p> <p>Data quality suffers when frontline staff do not have a clear line of sight between their data input work and the improvements it creates. The best systems tap into workers’ genuine desire to help people.</p> <p>Data collection systems</p> <p>No data collection system starts fully formed – most start small and grow steadily. Showing progress along the way is essential to keeping service providers engaged and keeping the data collection useful.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity for the system to make progress more visible – this is important for public accountability, staff morale, and keeping organisations engaged in the higher level purpose of the data collection.</p>



Theme**Relevant insights****Opportunity for the data collection**

Enabling a big-picture view of the homelessness system

Joined up working is not only a challenge at the individual case management level – the homelessness system itself is complex and hard to navigate, even for those working in homelessness. Nobody has a complete overview of available services and resources, of who is being supported and by which agencies, or of longer-term outcomes for individuals. This is true at a national and regional level, but even sometimes at a local level too.

Service providers

Just like service users, service providers also need help navigating the system – particularly knowing who to contact and where to refer people.

Local authorities

HARSAG's focus on rough sleeping has been somewhat alienating to rural local authorities who do not believe the issue is that relevant to them.

Local authorities

The system is designed with the local authority as the 'spine' throughout an experience of homelessness but it lacks clear oversight of people's journeys outside local authority contact.

There is an opportunity to build a clearer picture of the homelessness system itself – the main players, what they do and for whom – so that service providers and people experiencing homelessness can better navigate the system. With a more comprehensive picture it will be possible to establish better connections between agencies, coordinate support, and manage resources more effectively.

Letting the data reflect the voice of the user

People in the homelessness system frequently describe it as a disempowering and depersonalising experience. This can be the result of conflicting priorities – what is important to them is not always seen as important by service providers, leaving them feeling out of control of their situation.

People with lived experience

People's indicators of their situation improving were a mix of concrete goals like tenancies, and softer things like routine, relationships, perception of self. This is not always reflected in the interactions they have with service providers, who offer less support for softer goals.

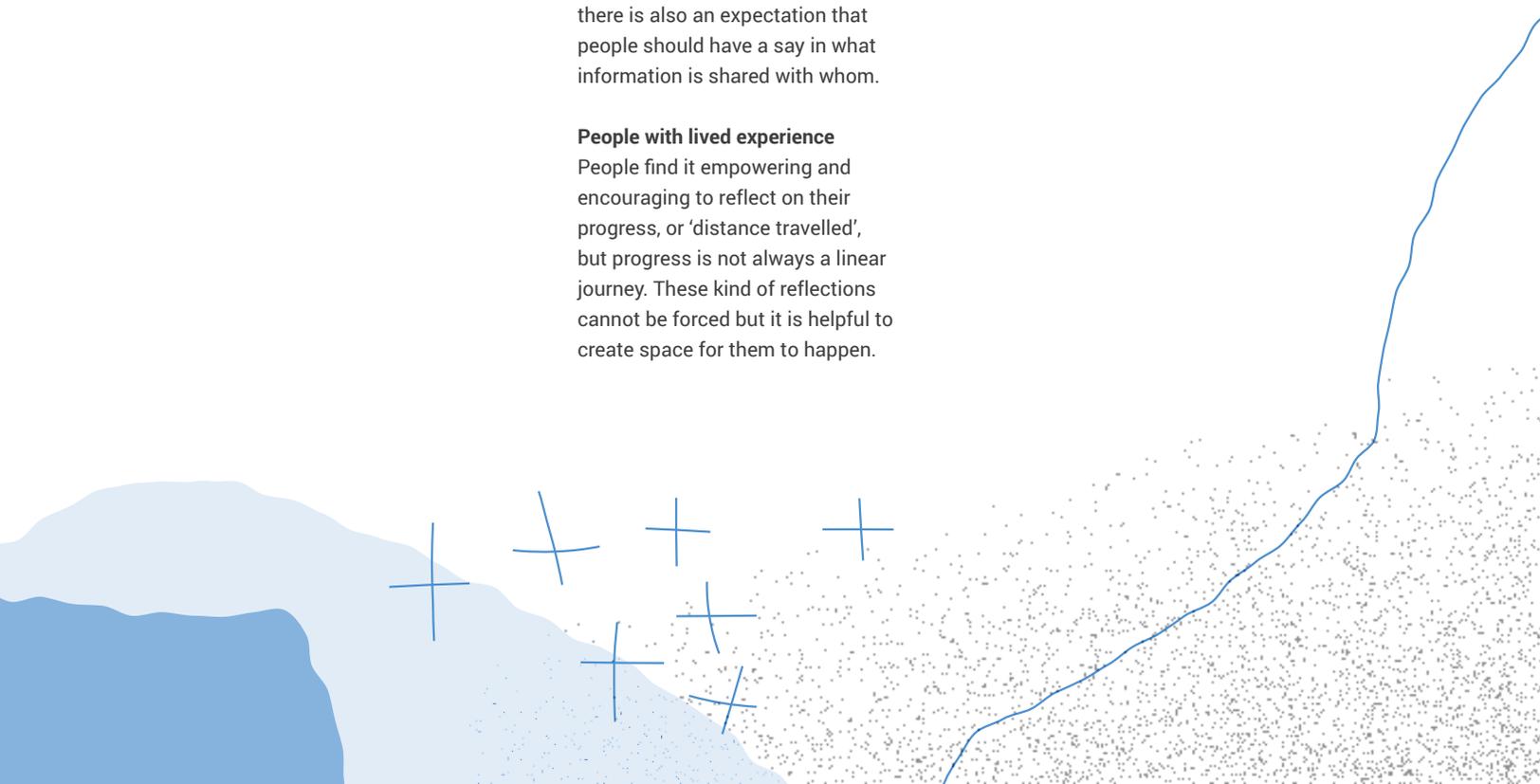
People with lived experience

Data sharing with the appropriate agencies is fully expected and, in most cases, welcomed. However, there is also an expectation that people should have a say in what information is shared with whom.

People with lived experience

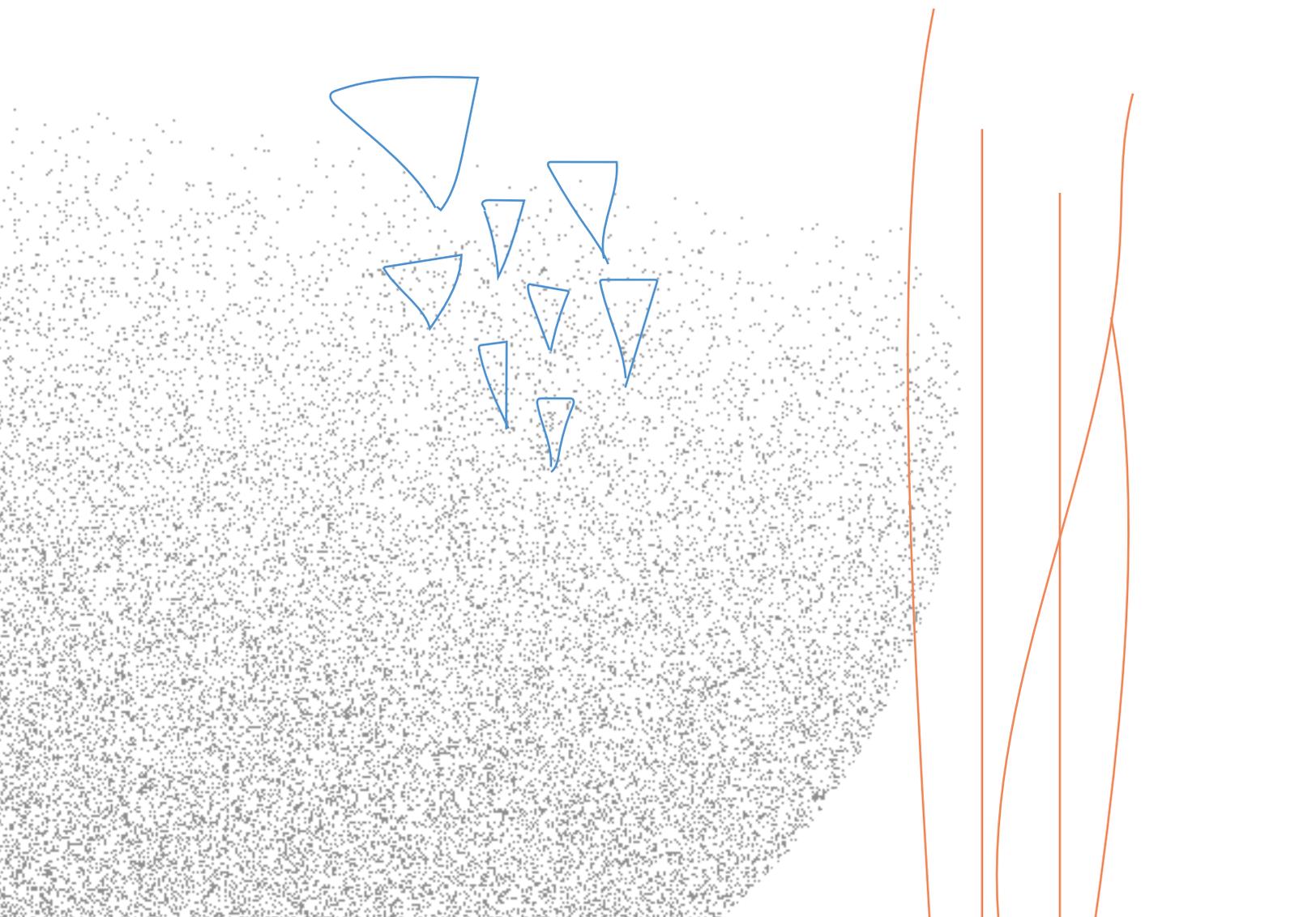
People find it empowering and encouraging to reflect on their progress, or 'distance travelled', but progress is not always a linear journey. These kind of reflections cannot be forced but it is helpful to create space for them to happen.

There is an opportunity to allow the voice of the user to come through in the data collection – to treat service users as experts by experience and bring different stakeholders' definitions of what success looks like closer together. Collecting 'soft' data – as well as statistical and administrative data – could be an empowering way of directly engaging people with the data collection, giving them a greater sense of agency over their journey.



Design principles

Some of the learnings from our research did not directly relate to the configuration of the data collection itself but did reflect relevant concerns or good practice around data collection. We have articulated these as design principles – the things that need to be considered as the system is built in order to make it successful. The table below lists the design principles identified by this research.



Principle	Why is it important?	What does this look like?
<p>Person-centred interactions</p> <p>The system needs to support the needs of individuals first and foremost, before the needs of the data collection. This means information is collected in a way that respects people’s agency, dignity and preferences.</p>	<p>The data collection will seek to take a big picture view of the challenge of homelessness in Scotland but it is essential that in doing so, the data collection does not distract from the concerns of individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection activities do not get in the way of person-to-person interactions. • Processes are transparent to clients. • People are informed about how their data will be captured and used.
<p>Useable tools</p> <p>The system needs to be usable by those inputting data and by those for whom data will be collected. This means it is simple to use, builds on familiar conventions and is useful beyond its core purpose of data collection.</p>	<p>The usability of any tools associated with the data collection must not be overlooked. The reliability of the data for national purposes is contingent on the data being collected in the first place. If the tools are not usable, they will not be used; if they are not used, there will be no data to work with.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It builds on existing processes wherever possible. • It is designed to work on multiple platforms including mobile devices. • It collects the minimum amount of information needed to be useful. • It uses familiar and well-established interaction conventions. • It uses simple, non-technical language wherever possible.
<p>Flexible approaches</p> <p>The system needs a core of consistency for the data collected on it to be useful. However, service providers require a certain amount of flexibility around that core to do their work effectively.</p>	<p>For a national data collection to be reliable and comparable nationwide, the data needs to be collected in a consistent way. However, due to the sometimes chaotic nature of homelessness, workers are sometimes faced with clients in unusual situations that require workarounds. It is better that this information is recorded than for it to be absent from the data collection, or incorrectly recorded as something else.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory fields are used sparingly (for usability reasons) but are necessary to support the collection of the minimum essential information needed to answer core research questions. • Clear guidance is available on how information should be recorded where this cannot be done through the design of tools (e.g. drop-down lists). • Edge cases, workarounds and anomalies are recorded, even if separately from core data.
<p>Sensitivity to context</p> <p>The system needs to account for people’s wider context so that interactions between staff and clients are sensitive to their situations as they change.</p>	<p>The experience of homelessness (and street homelessness in particular) can be chaotic and emotionally traumatic, and many people experiencing homelessness have also experienced past trauma. Psychologically informed environment principles should be applied to data collection, treating information shared with respect and sensitivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection tools support ‘psychologically informed’ interactions (e.g. non-institutional framing of questions, accessible language, offering clients choice and flexibility in interactions).
<p>Private by default</p> <p>The system needs to protect people’s privacy by default, while supporting consensual sharing of information where it benefits individuals.</p>	<p>Not only do people have a basic legal right for their data to be protected but many of the people that this system will collect data on are, or have been, in vulnerable situations. Protecting their privacy also means protecting their safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People understand why information is collected and how it will be used. • Workers responsible for recording client data understand how it will be used and shared, and can articulate that to clients. • Data is stored and transferred securely.

How might the system be used?

During our time spent researching other similar data collection systems for homelessness, we came across a clear message time and time again – that defining the overall purpose of the data collection upfront was the single most important factor in the collection's success.

A defining purpose for the system should not only guide which variables are collected but how those variables are used. Without a clear end goal in mind, data collections can become messy, unwieldy and unfocused. The purpose of this report is not to propose one overarching purpose for the data collection but rather to illustrate how requirements from different stakeholders might be reconciled into cohesive and viable system designs.

Throughout our consultations with local areas and our advisory panel, we identified a number of benefits that the system could deliver to various users and stakeholders. These ranged from short-term benefits to those experiencing homelessness to infrastructural benefits for academic research. The key benefits identified through our consultations are as follows (in no particular order):

- Build an accurate picture of the numbers of people sleeping rough in Scotland
- Monitor progress towards ending rough sleeping
- Build an accurate picture of pathways in and out of homelessness
- Enable effective shared case management and joined up working between agencies
- Empower frontline staff to make more informed decisions about support
- Empower people experiencing homelessness by giving them greater agency over the support they receive
- Create transparency around service provision around the country
- Enable more efficient management of resources in the provision of homelessness support (including minimising duplication and identifying gaps)
- Monitor the impact of specific policy decisions
- Evaluate the impact of different interventions (i.e. what works for whom)
- Build a broad data repository on homelessness to support academic research

A further consideration for the data collection is how it overlaps with other elements of the national strategy to end homelessness – namely rapid rehousing and Housing First. Housing First in particular is likely to be a significant intervention for reducing street homelessness. Consistent national outcome measures and indicators for Housing First are still in development and the potential to make these datasets comparable, or even directly link them, should be explored in partnership with the Housing First Scotland Pathfinder. Establishing a connection between the two datasets would allow for street homelessness data to feed into outcome monitoring of Housing First projects and start to show whether an increase in the use of Housing First leads to reductions in the overall numbers of people sleeping rough.



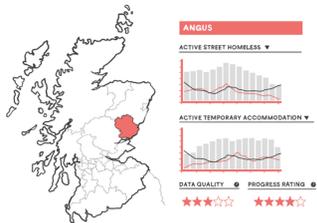
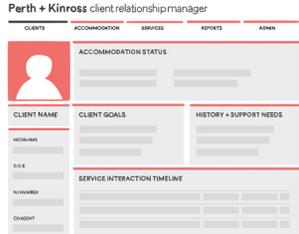
Who should the system collect information on?

Stakeholders throughout our consultations have indicated that limiting the scope of the data collection to people currently experiencing street homeless would restrict its value. While rough sleeping must be a priority in efforts to tackle homelessness, any data collection that's restricted to measuring street homeless in isolation would not be able to provide meaningful insight into the effectiveness of preventative measures, or the longer term sustainability of interventions for people who sleep rough. Additionally, it is assumed that street homeless populations in much of Scotland's more rural areas are small, and the issues that local areas face in tackling homelessness in rural regions are quite different to those in cities with higher street homeless populations.

Broadening the remit to include those in emergency and temporary accommodation or otherwise at imminent risk of rough sleeping would provide hugely useful insights into people's pathways in and out of street homelessness and offer greater opportunity for timely preventative interventions. However, it also has significant implications for the configurations of the system – most notably increasing the number of different types of users required to input records into the data collection (e.g. prisons, hospitals, care institutions, etc.). While not an insurmountable challenge, there is a risk of doing too much too soon and diluting the core objectives of the data collection. The inclusion of at-risk populations should therefore be considered as an important extension of the system later on in the development process.

System options

HARSAG's recommendation highlighted three benefits that a data collection system for street homelessness could provide for Scotland – to enable joined up working, to measure progress towards ending rough sleeping and to evaluate system-level improvements. Each option in this section illustrates how a system could be configured based on different weighting of these approaches. All examples aim to address all three objectives to some extent, but shifting the emphasis differently for each option allows for some focus and prioritisation, following advice from administrators of other similar systems to not 'try and do everything at once'.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Name	Centralised reporting 	Street homelessness register 	Shared case management 
What is it?	<p>A standard for data returns from organisations working with people experiencing street homelessness, used to build a picture of street homelessness and service usage. Client data are collected by a number of organisations and periodically reported back to a central data store.</p>	<p>A simple and focused offline register of people experiencing or at risk of street homelessness in each local area, used for monitoring numbers of rough sleepers and to support information sharing between agencies assisting people experiencing street homelessness. The register is hosted, maintained and managed by a lead organisation but its content is provided in collaboration with other partner agencies via informal knowledge-sharing.</p>	<p>A real-time, person-centred, shared client relationship management software system, used to better coordinate client support across services. The system is structured around client records (rather than organisations), which can be accessed and updated by organisations working with the client.</p>
Emphasis	<p>Primary focus on measuring progress. Secondary focus on evaluating system-level improvements. Minimal focus on enabling joined up working.</p>	<p>Primary focus on enabling joined up working and measuring progress. Secondary focus on evaluating system-level improvements.</p>	<p>Primary focus on enabling joined up working. Secondary focus on measuring progress. Smaller focus on evaluating system-level improvements.</p>
Who is information recorded for?	<p>Initially people experiencing street homelessness. Data collection should be extended to those at risk of street homelessness once new data practices have been established.</p>	<p>Initially people experiencing street homelessness. Data collection should be extended to those at risk of street homelessness once new data practices have been established.</p>	<p>Initially people experiencing street homelessness. Data collection should be extended to those at risk of street homelessness once new data practices have been established.</p>
Who collects the data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities (via HL1, HL3, PREVENT1) Street outreach teams Residential homelessness services Non-residential homelessness services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities Street outreach teams Residential homelessness services Non-residential homelessness services Other locally relevant non-specialist homelessness services (e.g. addiction services, healthcare providers, community police, advice services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities Street outreach teams Residential homelessness services Non-residential homelessness services Other locally relevant non-specialist homelessness services (e.g. addiction services, healthcare providers, community police, advice services)

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Name	Centralised reporting	Street homelessness register	Shared case management
What is the main information recorded?	<p>Client records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic and identifying information Accommodation status <p>Administrative data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrival and departure date from accommodation Street contacts Date of other service interactions 	<p>Client records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic and identifying information Current accommodation status Current support needs 'At risk' measure Warning flags <p>Administrative data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caseworker information (e.g. which organisations have been working with each client) Actions taken to support individuals 	<p>Client records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic and identifying information Current accommodation status Assessments People's 'story' – the information about their background and situation that they choose to share with providers Current support needs Referrals Warning flags <p>Administrative data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrival and departure dates from accommodation Interactions with non-residential services Actions taken to support individuals Resource information (e.g. accommodation project occupancy, cost of support)
What is the main information it can provide?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A figure for the number of people affected by street homelessness nationally Indication of how the figure varies by local area and how it changes over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A figure for the number of people affected by street homelessness nationally Indication of how the figure varies by local area and how it changes over time Indication of the duration of different types of homelessness for individuals More complete information about outcomes from support for people experiencing street homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A figure for the number of people affected by street homelessness nationally Indication of how the figure varies by local area and how it changes over time Indication of the duration of different types of homelessness for individuals More complete information about outcomes from support provided to people who are street homelessness Demographic and support needs data about people experiencing street homelessness nationally Potential to measure resource usage relative to outcomes (e.g. where is money being spent most effectively)
Data update frequency	Periodic	Periodic	Continuous

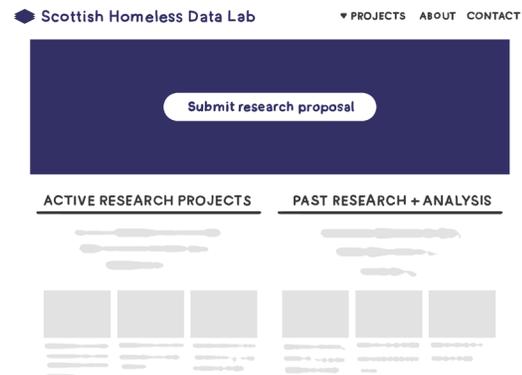
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Name	Centralised reporting	Street homelessness register	Shared case management
Key benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very focused collection • Lightest burden on service providers and local authorities • Lower update frequency is probably more palatable for providers and reduces technical barriers • Fewer requirements for data security – contributing agencies will be responsible for their own data security until they submit their returns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively focused collection. • Potential for quick impact (thanks to minimal technology requirements) • Potential to develop this collection into a broader shared case management system once it has been fully established • Strongly supports joined up working • Continuous quality improvement approach builds in a mechanism that holds everyone accountable for progress collectively • Does not require national scale buy-in to be useful (i.e. is useful at a local level) • Can be done at very low cost without much resource investment from participating organisations • Simple for local areas to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built on the idea of joined up working and closer case-level collaboration between services • Case-level collaboration is being called for by service providers, service users and the advisory panel • Potential for quick impact where systems are well adopted • Does not require national scale buy-in to be useful (i.e. is useful at a local level)
Key limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No real-time case management benefits • Requires lots of data sharing protocols • Less clear feedback loop, meaning less clear benefit to users • Will likely require significant data cleaning in order to make the records matchable • Requires new data to be collected with some providers – this could take time to build momentum and reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-participation from services may create blind spots in the data • May not be able to provide the same richness of data as some of the other options • Reliability of the data for reporting purposes is heavily dependent on which services are represented at multi-agency meetings • Unable to capture information about service use or resource management • Careful consideration needed for the privacy requirements around multi-agency meetings • The basic premise of reductions in street homelessness does not necessarily take into account the longer term sustainability of accommodation placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to be challenging to establish due to the complexity of the data sharing protocols and navigating different organisational priorities, and the potential need for service providers to duplicate or replace existing case management systems • Currently no obvious mechanisms in place to incentivise participation from services (e.g. funding). Scottish government is unlikely to be able to require participation

Homelessness data lab layer

An additional layer that could be applied to any of these options would be the creation of a permanent and accessible research resource that collates various administrative data relevant to homelessness. This would enable government, local authorities and third-sector organisations to undertake analysis on a broad pool of linked administrative data.

This resource could take two forms:

- An organisation like the Administrative Data Research Partnership acts as data guardian, providing a review and governance function over projects wishing to use administrative data, and ensure safe access to linked administrative data.
- A 'Data Lab' could be commissioned with the capacity to undertake analysis on behalf of the Scottish Government, local authorities, and others. Organisations would submit secure client data to the lab, which would then be linked to statutory homelessness data in order to explore the incidence of statutory homelessness post-intervention, and compare this to a matched comparison group based on basic demographic characteristics. A standard report is then provided back to the submitting organisation which summarises, for a non-technical audience, whether the intervention had any significant effects.



Next steps

The process for developing any of the data collection systems above will not be a linear one. The number and diversity of stakeholders means that if the data collection is to be successful, it will require ongoing consultation, engagement and learning with stakeholders to ensure the system works for them. Additionally, a number of questions remain for each option, and for the data collection more generally. These questions can be addressed through prototyping, piloting and testing before the data collection system is further developed and scaled across the country.

Option 1: Centralised reporting

- How should findings from the data collection be shared and published?
- What is the mechanism for feeding analysis back to local areas?
- What are the consistent variables required from each provider?
- Is it possible to identify those who are not currently engaging with local authorities?
- What are the requirements for data matching and de-duplication?
- How can identifying data be captured in low threshold environments?
- Is it possible to create automated data exchanges?
- What is the overlap of service use? What is the smallest number of organisations that can be required to submit returns to build an accurate picture based on a fuller understanding of service usage in local areas (this could be an analysis exercise from a pilot)?

Option 2: Street homelessness register

- Is there a need for a data collection system for outreach work (e.g. CHAIN)?
- What is the right indicator of progress for local areas?
- How should prioritisation of cases work, if at all? How can this be done fairly (i.e. without returning to a priority need model)?
- What is the right frequency for local areas to meet? Is there a minimum required representation from organisations for it to be useful? To produce reliable data?

- What is the right frequency for national returns?
- How are lead organisations to be identified?
If this is not the responsibility of local authorities, what needs to happen to ensure lead organisations' neutrality?
- What structures need to be in place to ensure consistency across the country?
How is data quality maintained?

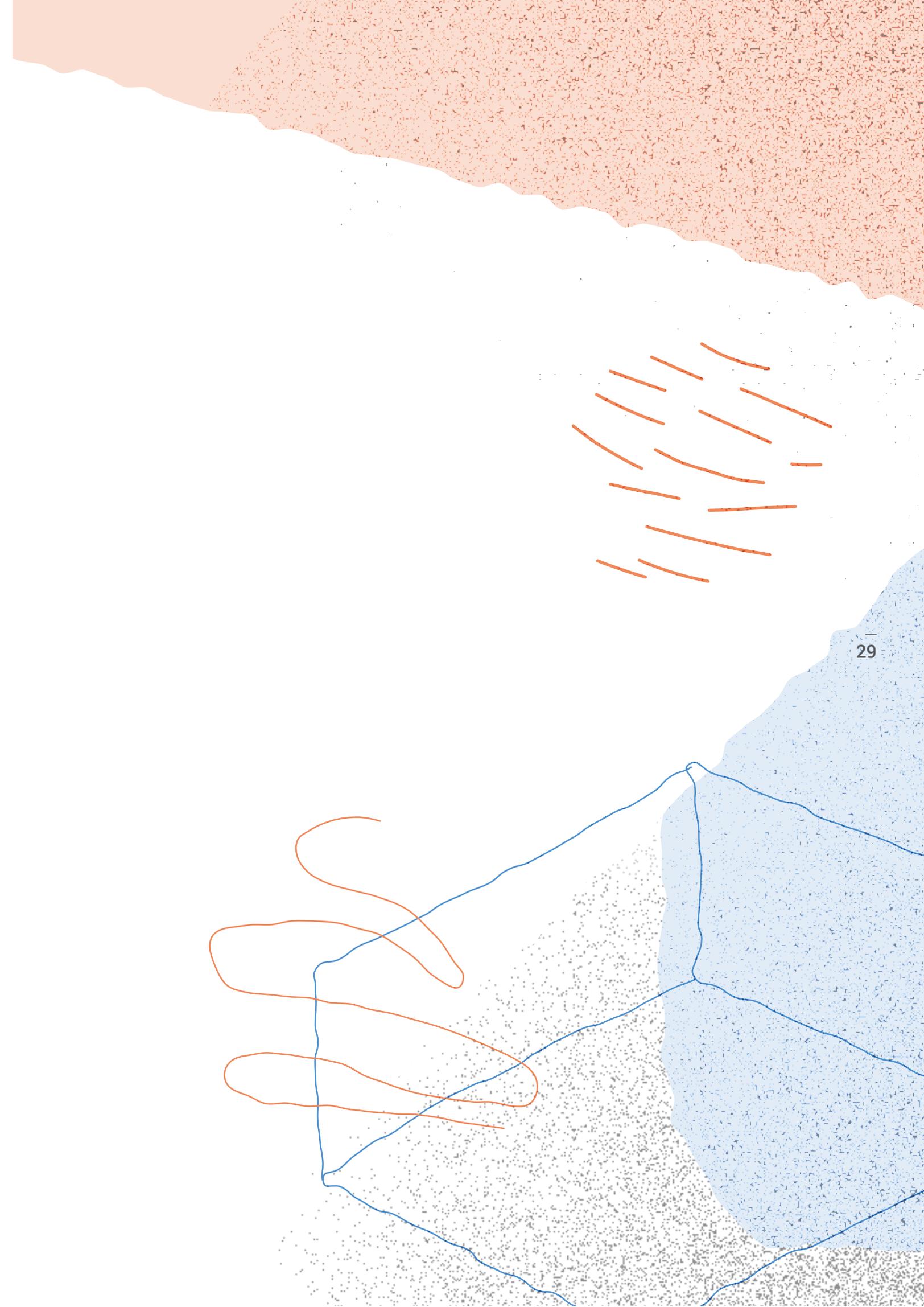
Option 3: Shared case management

- What is the right progress indicator for local areas?
- Where is the critical mass point for a shared case management system in terms of contributing organisations?
- What is the minimum amount of consistent information needed on the system for it to be useful to organisations inputting data (e.g. client record + service usage + story)?
- What is the minimum consistent level of information needed for the data to be reliable once aggregated at a national level?
- How should local areas be divided up (e.g. along local authority borders may not always make sense in more rural areas)?

Additional prototype questions

- How might we engage the public and non-professionals in homelessness data collection?
- How could an alert system provide better/quicker support for people who are otherwise hidden from mainstream services?
- How can geographically dispersed services (e.g. those in rural areas) record reliable real-time data?
- How might we collect meaningful and useful data in low threshold service contexts, where service users might be less willing to engage with staff?
- How might we give individuals more ownership of their data?
- How might we prevent individuals from having to repeat their story?

Building a data collection for street homelessness in Scotland will not be a straightforward task, but it is clear that fully understanding the scale of the challenge of street homelessness and working together more effectively to address it has huge potential benefits for those affected by homelessness, as well as society more broadly. Additionally, the current conditions are right for this kind of change – with momentum from HARSAG, a clear mandate from the Scottish Government, nationally coordinated change from local authorities via rapid rehousing transition plans, and a great deal of public awareness and concern around the issue. Establishing an effective system for measuring progress towards ending rough sleeping will be a crucial component in national efforts to end homelessness altogether.



PART 1

Background

1.1 The challenge

In June 2018, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) published a report outlining 70 recommendations for the Scottish Government to implement in order to end rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland, and end homelessness altogether. Among these was a recommendation to improve data collection on street homelessness at a national level. HARSAG was clear that current data collection and recording on street homelessness does not support joint working, and is not effective in assisting service or policy planning, tracking trends or measuring the impacts of policy and practice. An interim report in March 2018 recommended that the implementation of a multi-agency monitoring system for Scotland 'builds on the work being undertaken by the Centre for Homelessness Impact to develop an outcomes framework' (recommendation 18). This is now known as the SHARE framework.

As a result, the Scottish Government has worked with the Centre for Homelessness Impact to develop an options appraisal for a multi-agency, multi-sector data and monitoring system for Scotland, focusing on single people who are street homeless or at risk of becoming street homeless.

The HARSAG recommendations framed the problem of rough sleeping and homelessness in Scotland as a systems issue, with an understanding that there are multiple things that need to change at all levels in order to truly and sustainably 'move the needle' on homelessness. It is for this reason that we have approached this options appraisal from the perspective of the Centre for Homelessness Impact's SHARE framework and the Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan. Both frameworks provide a birds-eye view of what it takes to achieve better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, and aims to guide efforts towards a future where any experience of homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurrent. This systemic view of the challenge of ending homelessness is critical to long-term success, and provides a valuable model for guiding decisions throughout this important piece of work.

1.2 The situation today

National statistics for homelessness in Scotland are primarily drawn from a number of local authority data collections. These include: HL1, the main case-level source of administrative homelessness data, extracted from homelessness assessments; HL3, a dataset used to monitor households in temporary accommodation; and PREVENT1, used to monitor homelessness

prevention activities undertaken by local authority housing options. However, these mechanism for calculating street homelessness have limitations. The current count for street homelessness in Scotland is based solely on local authority data returns, therefore only those who approach their local authority will be counted. However, a recent exercise to cross reference HL1 data on homeless applications with data from the Scottish Household Survey suggests that as much as 30% of people who have experienced homelessness did not report themselves as homeless to their local authority. We believe many of them will have engaged with non-commissioned homelessness services but data sharing across agencies is often done manually and therefore subject to delay. delay which puts vulnerable people at risk and leads to inefficient use of resources. Additionally, the data that we currently collect cannot give us a meaningful understanding of how resources are being used and what the impact of our efforts are.

The HARSAG recommendation calls for improved data collection on street homelessness specifically. However, from the beginning of our consultations and engagements with the sector, we have heard that focusing only on street homelessness will limit the value of the data that are collected. While rough sleeping must be a priority in efforts to tackle homelessness, any data collection that is restricted to measuring street homeless in isolation would not be able to provide meaningful insight into the effectiveness of preventative measures or the longer-term sustainability of interventions for people who sleep rough. Additionally, it is assumed that street homeless populations in much of Scotland's more rural areas are small, and the issues that local areas face in tackling homelessness in rural regions are quite different to those in cities with higher street homeless populations. Broadening the remit of the data collection system to include those at risk of rough sleeping, for example, would have significant advantages for any case management, analysis and progress monitoring for street homelessness.

1.3 What we have been asked to do

What is meant by HARSAG's recommendation to 'improve the approach to data collection for people sleeping rough'? The March 2018 interim report for ending rough sleeping breaks this idea down into three broad areas.

The first part of the recommendation proposes that a new data collection system should support multi-agency working, allowing for 'real-time, by name' data sharing between agencies working with people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. This is founded on the knowledge that better management of information can lead to 'a more efficient and less traumatic passage through the system', and joined up working between agencies is key to this. The second area recommends that data collection enables 'frequent and regular reporting of numbers, locations and other data to support monitoring of the reduction in rough sleeping across Scotland'. Current data are incomplete, with 'single sector data sets skewing our understanding and potentially misleading us into poor policy choices'. The first step towards being able to track progress is to build a clearer picture of the issue. Finally, the recommendation highlighted the need to use reliable data to improve the ways in which street homelessness is tackled in Scotland. Beyond simply monitoring progress, data collected on street homelessness has the potential to form a 'suite of evidence which can be used by system designers and policy advisors in many different areas across the public and voluntary sectors'.

Taken cumulatively, HARSAG's recommendation represents a call to measure the things that are meaningful, rather than simply looking for meaning in the things that are already measured. The options appraisal that follows seeks to outline what this means for a data collection for street homelessness in Scotland.

PART 2

Homelessness data today

2.1 The current landscape of homelessness data in Scotland

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National statistics for homelessness in Scotland are drawn from a number of local authority data collections. These include: HL1, the main case-level source of administrative homelessness data, extracted from homelessness assessments; HL3, a dataset used to monitor households in temporary accommodation; and PREVENT1, used to monitor homelessness prevention activities undertaken by local authority housing options.

HL1 is particularly useful as it captures an overview of the applicant's situation, including their reason for presenting as homeless, previous accommodation arrangements, a high-level assessment of support needs, and ultimate housing outcome. The only official statistic on rough sleeping in Scotland comes from the HL1 collection, which asks households whether a member of the applying household slept rough during the three months preceding their homelessness application or the night immediately preceding the date of application. However, PREVENT1 also asks for the previous or current settled property type of the applicant, with long-term rooflessness being an available option.

In combination, these data sources build a useful picture of the people that approach and receive support from their local authority during a period of homelessness. As HL1 and HL3 returns are required by the Scottish Government, data are collected consistently across the country. PREVENT1 (housing options) data are collected on a consistent basis; however, local authorities have flexibility around how and when they use housing options, meaning that local authority figures are not necessarily directly comparable. The collection of key identifying information (name, date of birth, and national insurance number) also means these datasets have the potential to be linked to other data sources for research and statistical purposes, provided they align with the current agreed use of these central data collections by Scottish Government, or new administrative data agreements are established with local authorities for these data collections to be used more broadly. This in itself puts Scotland in a stronger position for understanding the scale and nature of homelessness than most countries. Critically, however, these datasets only represent a partial picture of those who experience homelessness in Scotland because those who do not present to their local authority are not reflected in the statistics.

As noted by the HARSAG group, 'outside HL1, local authorities already collect significant amounts of information about homeless and rough sleeping individuals, for use in their own case management processes'. The quality and

nature of this case-level data will vary by local authority. Alongside local authority data, some third- sector organisations have relatively rich case-level data which are collected throughout their engagements with clients. Some of these data collections – Streetwork’s BRYAN system, for example – function as a day-to-day client relationship management (CRM) system. These record service use and individual support needs, as well as data for operational use such as risk assessments and support planning. Where these services are commissioned by local authorities or funded by other organisations, they will be required to submit periodic reports back to commissioners and funders. The content of these reports is decided locally.

During this options appraisal we heard repeatedly from local authorities, people experiencing homelessness, and service providers themselves that relationships between service users and staff tend to be more positive in the third-sector than with local authority staff. People also have a degree of choice in the third-sector services they use, and tend to gravitate towards service providers with whom they can build a trusting relationship. These more trusting relationships mean that in many cases, workers in the third-sector are having richer conversations with people about their situations and are able to spend more time with them than local authority counterparts, which has an impact on the depth and richness of the information they collect on their CRM systems.

Where street outreach teams operate in Scotland, data collection on the street homeless population is minimal. Workers will try to gather identifying information such as name and date of birth (where people are not already known to them), as well as whether or not they have an open homeless application with the local authority or a tenancy. However, if they do get the opportunity to have a more in-depth conversation with people, the focus will typically be on building the relationship and understanding what support they might be able to provide. This contrasts with somewhere like

London, where the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) system anchors any street outreach interaction. Street outreach teams using CHAIN will, wherever possible, use a client’s identifying information (typically name and date of birth) to look up their records on the system via a smartphone. If they do not have a record, the worker will create one; if they do have a record, it means the client has previously met an outreach team. The worker is then able to view the client’s ‘action plan’ (contacts, key worker, appointments) and use it to inform the interaction with that individual and record onward referrals. The integration of CHAIN records into street outreach practice in London is partly due to the importance of CHAIN in informing referrals to ‘No Second Night Out’ assessments – a rapid response mechanism for street homelessness that aims to identify people who are new to street homelessness (i.e. not already registered on CHAIN) and provide an offer to them that means they do not need to spend a second night on the street. Each interaction, whether it is a first contact or otherwise, is then recorded on the system. This approach is generally well received by service users, particularly because it prevents them from having to repeat themselves each time they meet an outreach worker.

Many service providers mentioned that people using ‘low threshold’ services (such as night shelters and soup kitchens) do so partly because they are not required to provide any personal information or engage in any discussions about their situation. This dynamic will be covered later in our research learnings, but it is worth noting here that it creates quite a high barrier to data collection in these environments, even though knowing who is using which services would contribute to building a clearer picture of street homelessness. We need to be sensitive to this dynamic, not least because individuals who are missing from local authority data may well be using low threshold services specifically because they are not required to engage with staff. There is a risk that asking too much of users of these services may push them away and make them even more hidden.

2.2 Homelessness data in the rest of the UK

Scotland's approach to collecting statutory homelessness data has been quite different to that in both England and Wales. Until recently (2018), both England and Wales adopted aggregate statistical returns to their respective governments, which provided local authority level counts of households assisted under housing legislation. This compares with Scotland, where individual level data have been collected since 2001. However, the homelessness data landscape in Great Britain is changing. The Welsh Government has part-funded a project with the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence to explore a new individual-level data collection for statutory homelessness in Wales. Furthermore, in 2018, with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in England, local authority reporting of households/people assisted under the Act has changed to individual-level reporting as part of the Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC). H-CLIC brings England's homelessness data more in line with the Scottish approach.

As with Scotland, each local authority in England determines how individual/household-level data are collected for their areas, giving them autonomy in creating their own case management systems. Data from these systems are then exported on a quarterly basis to the Ministry of Housing Community and Local Government (MHCLG) via a validation software known as DELTA. However, unlike Scotland, where personal data are not routinely sent to central government, the transfer of personal identifiers to MHCLG has been built into the data collection. Furthermore, MHCLG will be in receipt of personal identifiers, which is in contrast to the Health and Homelessness data linkage project in Scotland,¹ where personal data were sent directly to the Trusted Third Party for linkage, bypassing Scottish Government. MHCLG has

explicitly stated that the new data collection will be used for data linkage research in order to examine the wider impacts of the Act on other public service areas.

Though Scotland has been ahead of the curve in terms of statutory data for those seeking assistance for homelessness, rough sleeping data have been lacking in comparison to the rest of Great Britain. In both England and Wales, some form of point-in-time street count is used in order to provide official statistics on the number of people who are street homeless. In England, this takes the form of a single night count – either an actual count or an estimated count of people sleeping rough on a 'typical night' between the 1st October and 30th November. Within the Greater London Authority (GLA) area, the CHAIN system also provides a continuous count of people sleeping rough. However, as the single night count and the continuous count of CHAIN are not comparable, single night counts are still undertaken within the GLA area in order to make comparisons with the rest of England.

Though the Welsh Government also adopts a single night count/estimate, in 2016 and 2017 this was complemented by a two-week data gathering exercise which took place prior to the one-night count. The two-week data gathering exercise used information from a range of services including faith groups, outreach workers, the police, and health agencies, in order to provide evidence of levels of rough sleeping over a longer-term period. The Welsh Government has also funded a new form of rough sleeping data collection to bring together data encompassing all 22 local authorities in Wales: the Street Homelessness Information Network.

¹ *Waugh et al (2018), Health and Homelessness in Scotland*

2.3 The administrative data boom in Great Britain

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the use of administrative data for research and policy analysis, as evidenced by the formation of the Administrative Data Taskforce in 2011, and the subsequent funding of the Administrative Data Research Network based on the taskforce's recommendations for a series of centres across the UK to help improve access to administrative data sources. Organisations generate huge amounts of data – for example in relation to the people they support and the services they provide – however, this data is often underutilised, either due to resource issues with the data controller or a lack of interest in sharing data out of fear of data security. There are, however, huge gains for public services and the people they serve in the use of administrative data and data linkage.

Administrative data represent a reservoir of untapped knowledge which can be used to improve monitoring and the delivery of services. They enable policy-relevant research to be conducted into sensitive topics with people who are usually hidden and hard to reach. The US was an early adopter of the use of administrative data for homelessness research, despite having a complex mix of State and Federal laws guiding information protection and privacy, with Dennis Culhane being active in the field for over two decades. As an example, Kuhn and Culhane (1998) used administrative data from homelessness shelters in New York in order to create a typology of how shelters were used. Successive years of shelter data were linked together to give a longitudinal perspective of how beds were used, generating the often-cited groups of transitional, episodic, and chronic homeless. People who were chronically homeless represented a small proportion of the total clients in shelters (10%), but used services more regularly. The realisation that a small number

of people were resulting in a high demand for services, and therefore an increased cost, led to changes in how services were targeted towards these people (Culhane 2008). Kuhn and Culhane's study therefore shows the potential of using a single data source to undertake longitudinal analysis.

Where people have complex needs and therefore interact with a number of public services, including people experiencing homelessness, the sharing of data has the potential to generate the greatest gains in terms of their outcomes (Culhane 2016). Sharing information to benefit service users is not a new practice by any means – informal sharing of information already takes place between local authority housing services and third-sector organisations in many local areas. Inter-departmental sharing of information was also found, usually on a by-person-basis between social care and housing services, given the high level of overlap in their work areas. The extent to which this sharing is now automated and augmented by technology is increasing in prominence as data controllers become more familiar and comfortable with sharing their data.

Though organisations may share data from time to time, specifically in relation to a single case, there are two very general ways in which sharing and linking data sources can be achieved in an ongoing way for a large number of cases: through live shared systems or through data integration. Many organisations already utilise case management systems in order to manage their workloads. A variant of this is simply to allow multiple users, i.e. departments within an authority or other organisations, to view data relating to people using their services. CRM systems being adopted by the Street Homeless Information Network (SHIN) under development in Wales, and CHAIN in London, enable multiple users to view data relating to individuals from within the same live, shared software system. In the case of both

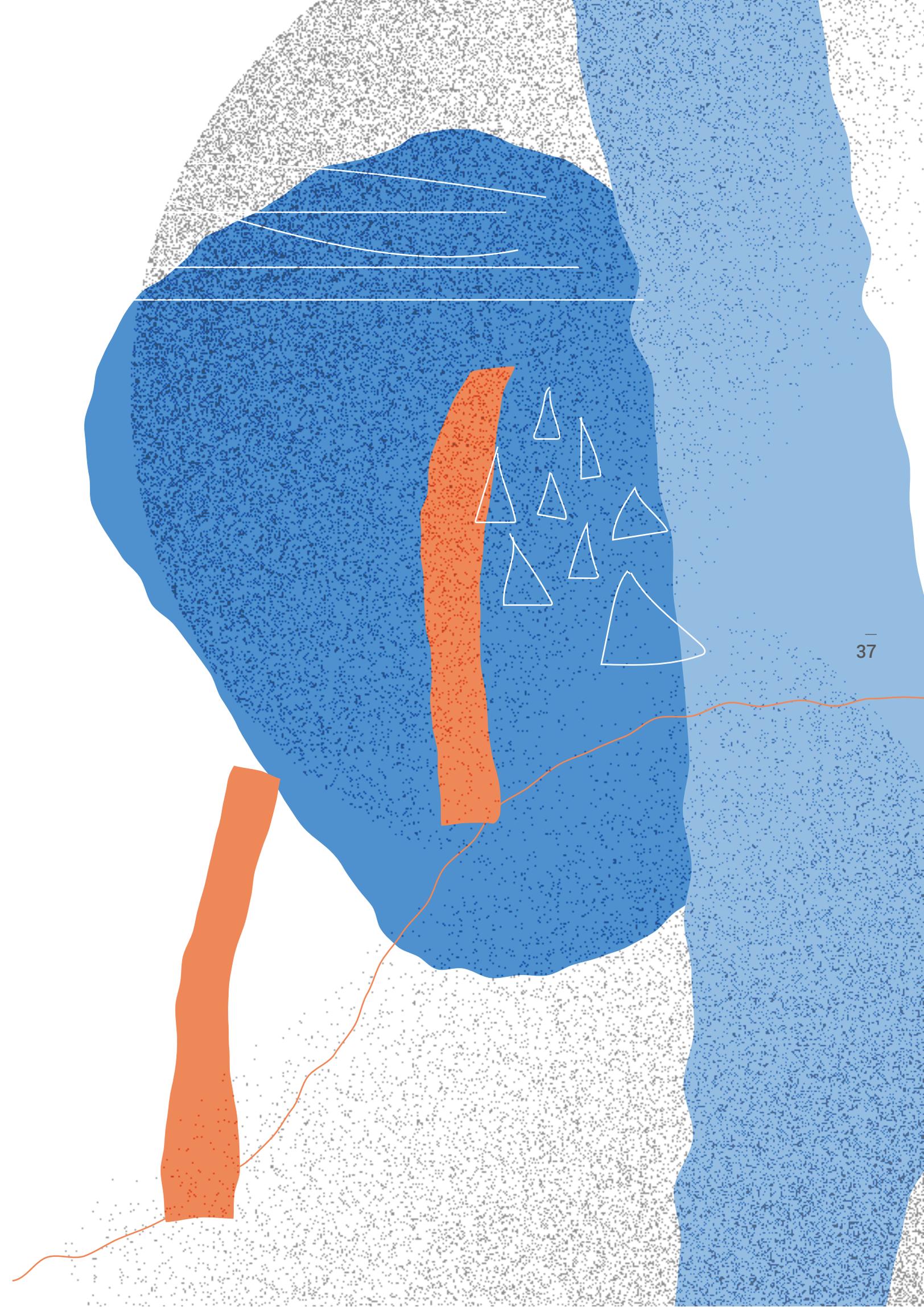
SHIN and CHAIN, these systems enable outreach workers and other third-sector organisations to share information relating to their clients who sleep rough. Other such systems are in operation at a city level in Manchester (GMThink) and Liverpool (MainStay), among others. Similarly, this framework is also being adopted by some of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs across England, their aim being to bring together multiple services in order to improve the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults (Home Office, 2014).

In addition to live data sharing, Integrated Data Systems (IDS) make use of administrative data for research purposes. The Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) databank in Wales is an example of an IDS, where data from multiple sources are de-identified (meaning that the data do not identify individuals, either through the removal of direct identifiers like name or national insurance number, or generalisation of indirect identifiers like date of birth) but made linkable before being deposited in a centralised secure data repository. The use of de-identification reduces the risk of data breaches and identifying individuals, while still retaining the ability to link different data sources together. The Welsh Government has used the SAIL databank to undertake a feasibility study into data linkage as a means of evaluating their Supporting People (SP) programme. The study linked SP client data to multiple health data sets held in SAIL, in order to explore the effects of SP services on healthcare usage. The study found that SP did have a significant effect on healthcare usage, and that a data linkage evaluation was feasible, which has since led to a full scale evaluation of the SP programme in Wales.

A recent example of innovative data linkage from Scotland comes from the Health and Homelessness data linkage project published by the Scottish Government in 2018. The project explored the relationship between health and homelessness in Scotland by linking over 15 years

of local authority data for homeless applications with six NHS Scotland datasets (including A&E attendance, prescriptions, outpatient appointments, drug misuse and mental health admissions). This exercise confirmed the connection between homelessness and poor health, as well as revealing a number of insights into the nature of that connection, including the observation of a marked increase in health service interactions immediately preceding homeless applications.

The benefit of adopting an IDS approach to data linkage is that they can be used for research purposes to evaluate policies and their effects on other areas of public service utilisation in the longer term – at low cost and without disclosing individual identities. Conversely, the downside of IDS are that because the data are effectively de-identified, they cannot be used to make operational decisions about individuals. Despite their different emphases, both Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub-type systems and IDS acknowledge that any data which flow to where they are most needed are also important in effective policy decision-making and service delivery.



PART 3

Learnings from fieldwork

3.1 Understanding the Scottish context

Any new data collection system for homelessness must work for the Scottish context. This means understanding the things that might help or hinder efforts to establish a new system – where current good practice can be built upon and scaled, and which constraints we need to work within.

We have been guided by an expert advisory panel throughout this process, with representation from local authorities, service providers, academics, research and frontline staff. Through intensive workshops and ongoing conversations, the panel has provided invaluable input, feedback, suggestions, and guidance on the development of this options appraisal. We also spent significant time with future stakeholders of the system – to understand and compare their various perspectives, challenges, good practices, motivations, and attitudes towards homelessness data.

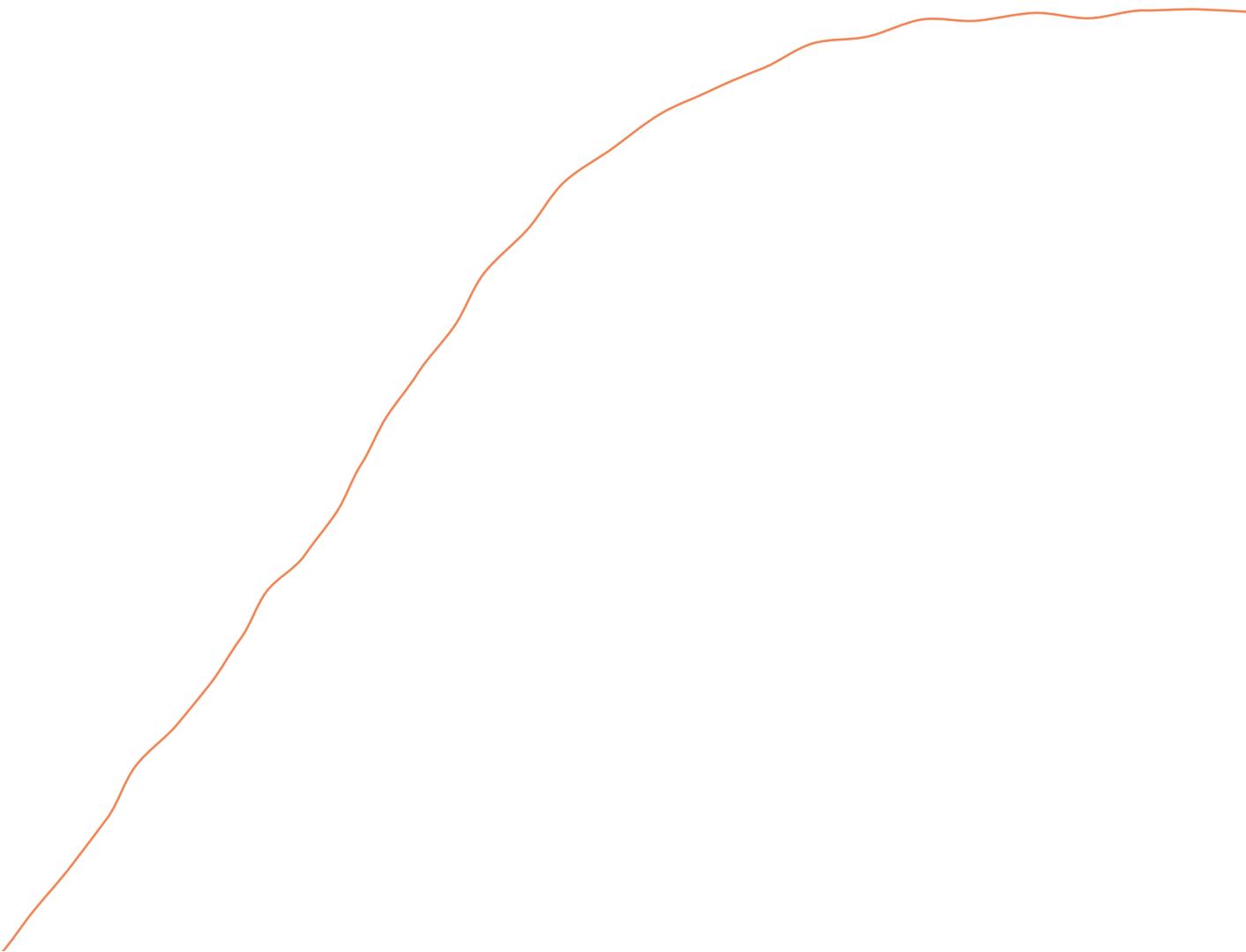
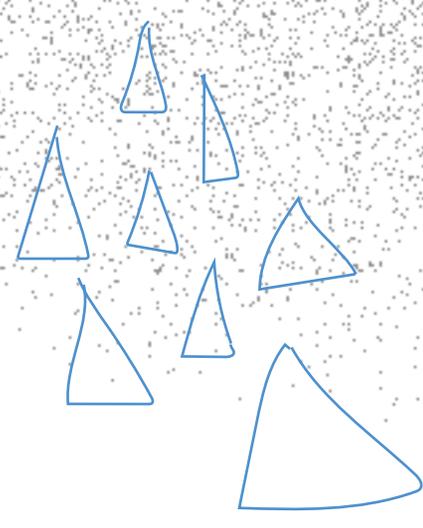
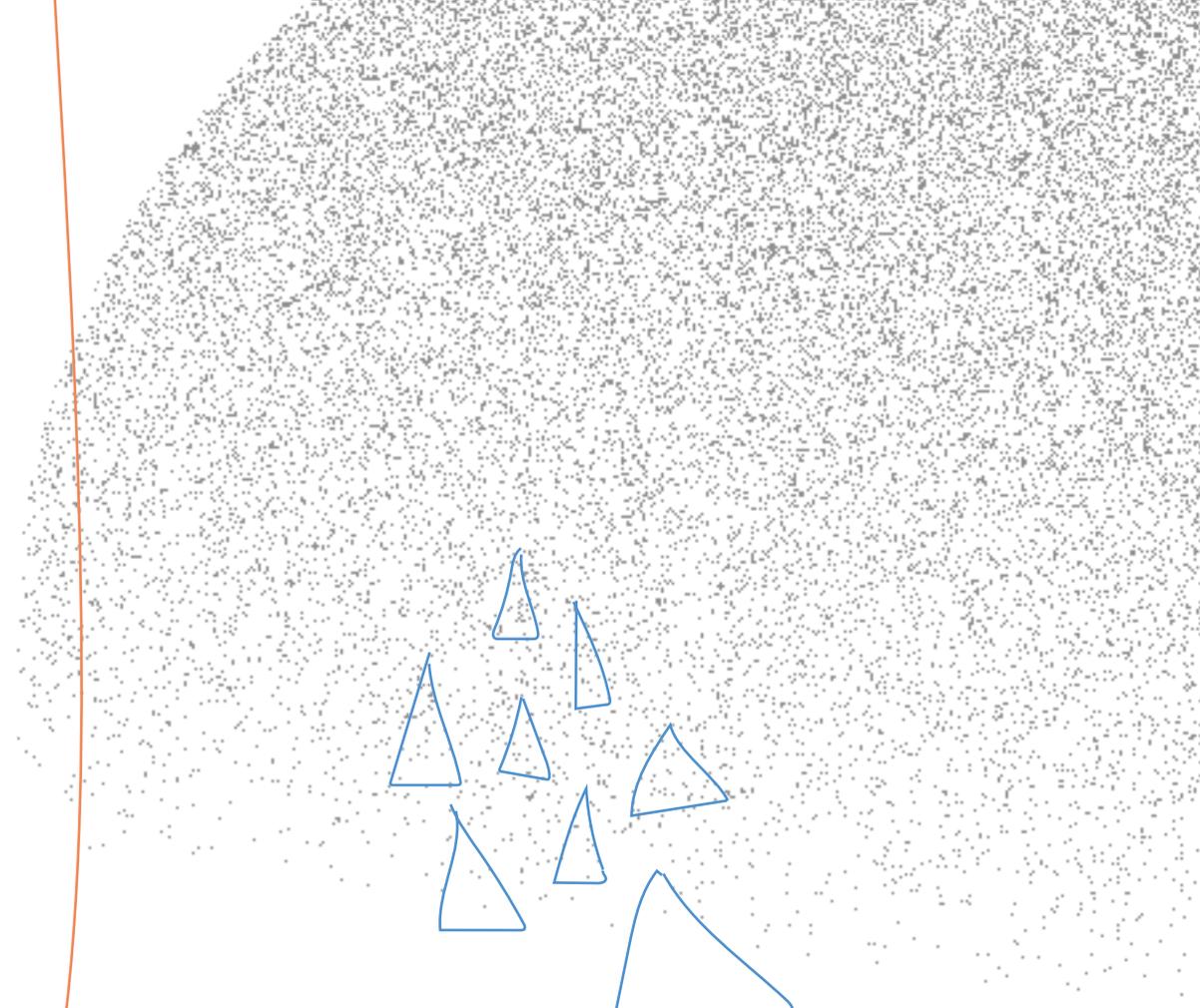
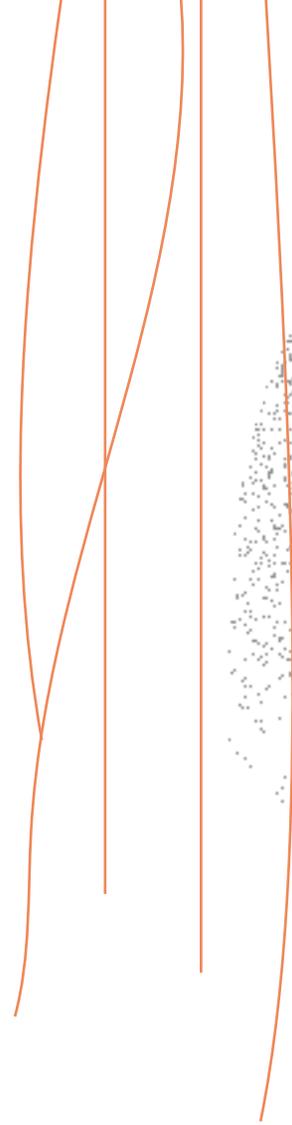
This has taken the form of qualitative research – including in-depth interviews (with local authorities, service providers, data collection systems and providers), small focus groups (with people experiencing homelessness) and shadowing (with outreach workers). Maintaining a qualitative research mindset has given us broad insight into potential stakeholder's contexts and their expectations for a new system.

Speaking to this broad cross-section of stakeholders has provided us with a rich and deep understanding of the complexities and huge potential that a new data-monitoring system design represents for the Scottish homelessness sector. Consulting each of these stakeholder groups equally has allowed us to explore the issue from multiple angles and perspectives, including where they may conflict with or contradict each other.

A full list of stakeholders can be found in an appendix to this document.

3.2 Key learnings

Throughout our discussions with stakeholders, we collected stories, quotes, and observations about how things are today and how they could be in the future. Collectively, these learnings start to build a picture of what a Scottish data collection system for street homelessness should look like, how it should function, how it can help the various stakeholders and what needs to happen to make the data collection successful. The following pages represent a synthesis of the findings from all of our conversations with stakeholders. These are framed as observations (what we heard) and opportunities (what that means for the data collection). Each observation and opportunity is supported by stakeholder-specific insights.



THEME

Moving towards an everyday culture of collaboration

OBSERVATIONS

Scotland is making great strides towards closer partnership working between agencies and across silos. However, more could be done to adopt a culture of multi-agency collaboration as the everyday norm. In particular, this means breaking down some of the historic divides between statutory and non-statutory services that have prevented information from being shared in support of people affected by homelessness.

While cross-sector groups have existed for years in many areas, new collaborative groups are emerging focused on sharing knowledge and learnings at a case level. The City Ambition Network (CAN) in Glasgow and Interagency Street Network (ISN) meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh convene members from homelessness agencies and other statutory services to share information about their clients and coordinate efforts to support them. This has gone some way to speed up response times for time-sensitive issues – having a more reliable and up-to-date picture of an individual's situation, and knowing who is providing what support and when, has allowed the group's members to provide more timely and effective support.

These groups have also shown the value of even low-level engagement from outside the sector, including other statutory services like community policing, health, and prisons. Community police in Glasgow have been working with service providers

to demystify their role within the homeless community: 'If the police can help people as opposed to criminalising people, they will – it's working well.' Meanwhile Fife have started an A&E in-reach programme in collaboration with staff from Shelter Scotland. In both examples, there is an exchange of knowledge that flows in both directions: helping homelessness specialists do their work more effectively and bringing greater awareness of the needs of people experiencing homelessness to other statutory services.

We heard some discussion about the need to break down some of the historical competitiveness that exists within the system, in favour of closer alignment of goals and closer collaboration. One participant at an ISN meeting acknowledged that 'We can't do everything ourselves. The culture of competitiveness isn't helping, we're all fighting for small pots of money and it's making us inefficient.' Fife recently established a public social partnership (PSP) for housing and homelessness, comprising 12 organisations across the local authority. The group acknowledged that, while this partnership has not been without its difficulties to set up, their newly streamlined funding (in which grant funding is awarded to the partnership collectively and administered by a lead organisation) and shared vision is providing clear benefits to service users. 'The PSP are not precious any more, it's about working out what's best for [each individual].'

Beyond their clients, the partnership model has put them in a better position to make more radical, structural changes to the way homelessness is tackled and prevented in Fife, including enabling the partnership to collectively contribute their expertise to the development of the council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and homelessness strategy.

Finally, most people with experience of homelessness fully expected their information to be shared between relevant service providers: 'If you get an X-ray in Glasgow, the doctor will be able to look at it in Edinburgh. It follows me.' This was not just about the kind of support that service providers were able to give, but also the hassle of having information in different places, with different providers: 'It should all be in one place. They should be able to type my name and date of birth in and pull up everything about me. I shouldn't have to go to a different place for every different service.'

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity to scale some of the good work that's already happening to bring agencies together in support of the people they support. The street homelessness data collection could become a mechanism to accelerate and facilitate the much-needed cultural shift towards closer collaboration across the sector.

INSIGHTS

Service providers

Involvement beyond the homelessness sector (e.g. police, health) feels challenging but even low-level collaboration can have a disproportionately positive impact for people.

Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships have helped formalise processes for sharing 'what works'. Service providers know each others' strengths and work together to ensure the right people are supported in the right way.

Partnerships

Increased information sharing has meant improved response times, often at critical moments.



THEME

Creating a single source of information

OBSERVATIONS

In the absence of shared, case-level information, people experiencing homelessness are often required to repeat themselves and their story multiple times to different service providers. This causes strain for individuals and leaves providers with incomplete or conflicting information, meaning people may not be getting the right kind of support.

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Almost every person we spoke to who was affected by homelessness told us about the strain of having to repeat their story: 'It's important to tell, but you're bringing it all back up and drudging through all the old feelings. It's not healthy to keep going through it every time you tell your story.' Just as problematic is the idea that traumatic experiences might become normalised through repetition. One man in Glasgow said, 'I don't know how many times I have told my story to different workers, different agencies... It loses its impact by the fifth and sixth time you've told it.' One woman explained, 'You get so tired of it that it takes the impact off it. And then because you're so nonchalant you sound like you don't care. So the person listening thinks, "Well that can't be a big issue because they're not crying." Did you not think that maybe we're sick of telling our story?'

Additionally, people who interact with multiple services may have different conversations with different service providers. This happens for a number of reasons – including having different personal relationships with workers or changing circumstances. As a result, different services may have an incomplete picture of someone's situation, or slightly different versions of the same story. A shared, single source of information is unlikely to change the way people share their information with providers but there is currently no mechanism for managing these gaps and inconsistencies either.

People also pointed to a general feeling of 'assessment fatigue', although this is being addressed in some services, where workers have been able to summarise case histories. A worker at Tomorrow's Women told us she 'takes their story and checks it back with them'. A woman in Glasgow suggested that being given the time and opportunity to write her story down once for future reference would be valuable. 'If somebody said: "what you tell me about your story just now is going to be passed on to whoever you want it to, so tell me what you think is important," – I would want to be prepared for it. Then I'd go into depth about why things happened, and what could have prevented it instead of just skipping it.'

Local authority assessments were viewed as particularly and high pressure, especially because people feared the answers they gave would become 'set in stone' and affect the support they receive, without consideration for how their situation might change. People were also aware that they needed to cover certain details in order to receive services: 'You're saying to yourself, am I telling them the things they're looking for? Have I told them the important stuff, because I don't know what they're wanting here?'

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity for shared case management to ease the pressure on service users to repeatedly share their stories (including past trauma), to give service providers better insight into their clients' situations, and to more effectively align multiple service providers' support around individual cases.

INSIGHTS

Lived experience

People are required to repeat their story again and again. It is frustrating, demoralising and, at worst, it leaves people feeling trapped in the homelessness system as a result of negative past experiences.

Lived experience

People worry that decisions made as a result of assessments will be set in stone, rather than adapting with their changing circumstances. As a result, assessments (especially with the local authority) feel high pressure, which can lead to people feeling misrepresented or even judged.

THEME

Data collection as a jigsaw puzzle, not a snapshot

OBSERVATIONS

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Much of the useful data currently collected on homelessness is collected in batches – during housing options or other assessments. However, this approach presents significant challenges to reliable and thorough individual-level data, especially if people are at a point of crisis. Certain contexts make data collection difficult (e.g. night shelters) and trust between people and service providers is critical if they are to share their information.

Where effective partnership working is taking place, e.g. in Interagency Street Network (ISN) meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh and the Public Social Partnership (PSP) in Fife, providers working together are able to fill gaps in knowledge about individuals and their circumstances. As Glasgow City Council demonstrated through their the ISN, 'it's about everybody having a piece of that jigsaw to help people move from A to B'. There is a positive 'two heads are better than one' mindset and an acknowledgment that 'sharing ideas here gives them space to develop' (PSP, Fife).

The City Ambition Network (CAN) in Glasgow was set up as a pilot to engage the most hard to reach individuals who are mostly street homeless. Its success has been in informally sharing information ('how frontline workers have always worked'),

piecing stories together and recognising that people present at different services for different reasons: 'not everyone that's rough sleeping uses the night shelter and not everyone that uses the night shelter is known to the street team.' The potential of this informal network 'might mean not repeating the same failures over and over again' and gaining a greater understanding of which relationships are positive for individuals, and in what ways. The CAN pilot now uses Better Futures' outcome monitoring tool as a longer term multi-agency effort and has led to the ISNs being established in Edinburgh and Glasgow to extend the formal structures around multi-agency working.

Outreach workers face some barriers to data collection when interacting with people on the street. Relationship and trust building is often their priority: 'You don't want to have to ask people their name, date of birth and ethnicity before speaking to them.'

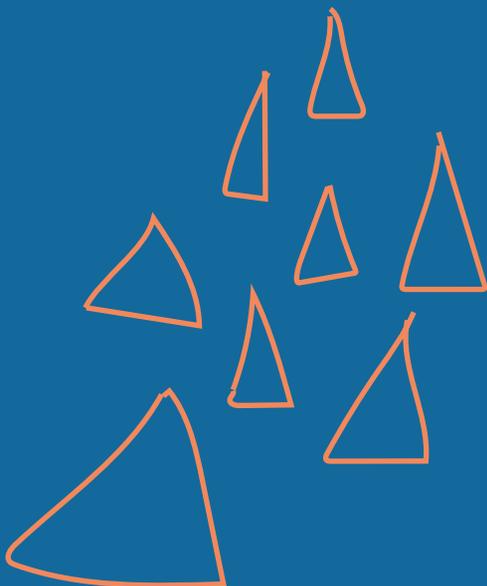
Environment and context are also important considerations for successful interactions. Collecting information while working with people on the street is seen as particularly challenging so outreach workers in Edinburgh often take people to the Hub (Streetwork) to chat: 'People are more communicative after having a shower,

cup of tea – they know we're legitimate too'. Similarly, we heard that the chaotic environment of night shelter doorways makes data collection challenging: 'When snow is blowing in the door and we're searching for needles, it creates inconsistency around data entry.'

At a system level, SHIN's manager suggested that the value of the data collection will grow steadily as more detail is captured: 'SHIN is not a short term thing. The picture of individuals will be built up over time and it could take a while before the dataset is useful.'

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity for the system to build a picture of people's case over time, from multiple sources. This would also allow for records to be more easily maintained and updated as circumstances change.



INSIGHTS

Partnerships

Bringing different service providers together has helped fill gaps in knowledge at a case level. This has made support more effective across the board.

Outreach

Street outreach is a unique type of interaction in that workers approach people, and not the other way around. Workers feel the need to tread carefully, prioritising building trust over capturing information.

Outreach

Much of their work is triage and brokering. Where outreach workers cannot help directly themselves (e.g. attending appointments with people), the quality and effectiveness of their referrals are critical.

Service providers

Certain service environments make it difficult for providers to collect information. This needs to be factored into what information it is possible to collect.

THEME

Reframing the role of data

OBSERVATIONS

Data has historically been used as a means of managing performance – to account for ‘work done’ rather than ‘outcomes achieved’. This approach to data does not always have much bearing on the quality of services delivered or their effectiveness in addressing homelessness.

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A number of system administrators for similar data collections mentioned the importance of clearly showing the value of collecting the data to their users. This came from the discovery that local authorities and service providers are inclined to resist systems if their focus is explicitly on data collection without a clear purpose. Data quality suffers when front-line staff do not have a clear line of sight between their data input work and the improvements it creates. However, communicating the benefits of data collection to service users (e.g. reducing homelessness, accessing services, not having to repeat stories) in turn motivates front-line workers to get on board with the system and data entry. This is evidenced in Ireland’s PASS system, which sees a surge in data input after training days because staff see the value: ‘if you don’t put in the data, you can’t see the work that you’re doing.’

CHAIN in London believe that a ‘clear sense of purpose trickles down from leadership... the commissioners who are most bought in to the use of CHAIN have the best quality data.’ Where data are primarily used for performance management, it can lead to a culture of target chasing, but some of the most effective systems have been able to promote a culture shift towards using the data for self-reflection and service improvement. The new SHIN system in Wales is acknowledging this dynamic upfront: ‘The gains to be had are long-term, not short-term. We need them to buy into the reality of the data (it might temporarily look bad), not the promise of looking good.’

We also heard some reservations about the idea of services’ outcome data being shared – e.g. figures about the number of street homeless individuals in a local area, or average duration of time spent in a particular temporary accommodation project. Service providers worried that these figures might not represent the nuances of the challenges they face and could ultimately make them look bad without the appropriate context. While this is a valid concern, it is also quite revealing about the current approach to outcome data – that it is more likely to be used punitively than as a tool for improvement.

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity for the system to encourage a shift in attitudes towards data. If this data collection is to create meaningful impact, we will need to reframe the role of data as something to be learned from and constantly responded to, not simply for setting targets.

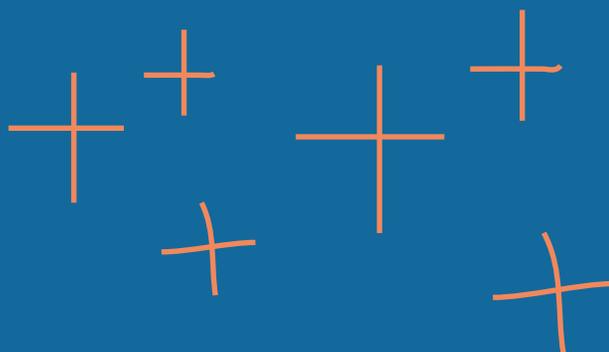
INSIGHTS

Data collection systems

Contributors to these systems have often historically perceived data as a tool for performance management, which can lead to target chasing. Some of the most effective systems have been able to shift that mindset towards using the data for self-reflection and service improvement.

Data collection systems

Maintaining quality is a constant job. While there is lots that can be done upfront to mitigate poor data quality, things like quality scorecards, training, and data cleaning are a necessary and ongoing process.



THEME

From reactive to responsive practice

OBSERVATIONS

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48

Almost every organisation supporting people experiencing homelessness felt like they were constantly ‘firefighting’. This makes forward planning difficult at both an individual and agency level. Reactive working is blamed on constrained resources, but often these constraints are the result of avoidable bottlenecks and inefficiencies in the way information moves around the system as a whole.

At the moment, the data that service providers collect do not necessarily provide value to those organisations for their own planning and analysis, or it is not driven by a clear purpose. One provider told us, ‘If I could go back and [build our CRM system] again, I would focus on the ability to get trustworthy information out of it...There’s a lot of data in there that’s really interesting but it’s not easily accessible.’

Equally, we heard examples of organisations using their data to understand inefficiencies in their systems and respond accordingly. One local authority explained how homelessness had historically been thought to be a supply side issue in their local area, i.e. not enough social rents. However, no one could prove or disprove this hypothesis as no one had an overview of housing

association rents. Bringing together data on housing association rents from across the sector, they realised that there was more than enough accommodation, but looking at referrals for housing showed that, while offers were being made, many of them were being refused, and these refusals were not being recorded in the ‘official’ data. In Glasgow, the night shelter operators have analysed their last three years of data and identified the number of people who have used the shelter for several years in a row. This has helped them prioritise these individuals for Housing First schemes.

Additionally, there are too few mechanisms to allow important information to be shared between organisations, particularly beyond homelessness-specialist services. This can leave front-line workers scrambling to secure temporary accommodation at the end of the working day, chasing contacts for referrals or simply multiple agencies duplicating each others’ work. One local authority housing team told us, ‘Health, drugs, mental health – these services should always be looking at the housing, so we can get involved, plan ahead and know that somebody is supporting them. We’re not there yet.’ Often the linkages happen too late and are reactive: ‘It would be great if we could come together [with other service

providers] when it's not at the crisis point.' However, case conferencing meetings like the ISNs have gone some way to demonstrating how smart information sharing can support better planning: 'The end of the working day is difficult, and that's where knowledge shared at the ISN is helpful. It can mean the difference between a night out and a night in accommodation.'

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity for the data collection system to enable more effective management of available resources so that service providers can make more informed and timely decisions when responding to client needs, rather than reacting hastily and resorting to emergency measures.

INSIGHTS

Local authorities

Many local authority staff talked about the reactive nature of their work. Constant firefighting leads to inefficiencies in systems and processes, which prevent them from being able to plan ahead.

Service providers

Data collection by service providers can be reactive and a little unfocused. They would benefit from being able to see a clearer link between the information they collect and the service improvements it can deliver.

THEME

Making progress visible for everyone

OBSERVATIONS

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Data are meaningless until they are used. Those responsible for collecting and inputting data into data collection systems are not always able to see how their work is being used, leading to poor data quality and a feeling of frustration over what is sometimes seen as unnecessary administration. More work is also needed to interpret the data that are collected and use them to drive service improvements and show progress.

We heard repeatedly from the administrators of similar homelessness data collection systems that front-line workers need to see the clear links between their work inputting data and the difference it can make to people's lives. This can be achieved by ensuring that insights from data analysis are shared and transparent, and any action taken to address those insights is grounded in data.

One of many examples of this approach came from a service provider in a rural area. They had been looking into the reasons behind the high numbers of tenancy failures in the local area and found that people in new tenancies were not always receiving the right kind of support because a lack of reliable public transport made travelling to service providers difficult. This led them to develop a resettlement team who could provide floating support for independent living to a geographically

dispersed client group. Client outcomes were measured using Better Futures, which gave the service provider data to take to the local authority to secure additional funding. This process of using their data to recognise a need, respond accordingly and measure the impact of the new service created a clear and transparent feedback loop for the local area, and helped establish a quick and flexible approach to service improvements.

When data are widely understood as building blocks for service-level improvements, open data can be a powerful mechanism for driving larger-scale change. As an example, Built for Zero publishes data from all of the local areas connected to the campaign to a shared dashboard. This allows local areas to see their progress against others and share knowledge with other local areas facing similar challenges. Over time this has also helped to foster a collective sense of pride in their achievements.

SHIN advised that a similar mindset might be necessary for the data collection system as it is developed: 'SHIN will be quite fluid in the first few years; we'll be learning a lot. Most of the learnings will come after the thing is live and in people's hands. The outreach teams will be feeding back a lot. Until you start using it, you won't know.'

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity for the system to make progress more visible – this is important for public accountability, staff morale, and keeping organisations engaged in the higher level purpose of the data collection.

INSIGHTS

Data collection systems

Data quality suffers when front-line staff do not have a clear line of sight between their data input work and the improvements it creates. The best systems tap into workers' genuine desire to help people.

Data collection systems

No data collection system starts fully formed – most start small and grow steadily. Showing progress along the way is essential to keeping service providers engaged and keeping the data collection useful.



THEME

Enabling a big-picture view of the homelessness system

OBSERVATIONS

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Joined up working is not only a challenge at the individual case management level – the homelessness system itself is complex and hard to navigate, even for those working in homelessness. Nobody has a complete overview of available services and resources, of who is being supported and by which agencies, or of longer term outcomes for individuals. This is true at a national and regional level but even sometimes at a local level too.

Lots of service providers talked about the difficulties they face in navigating local homelessness service landscapes because ‘it changes so frequently.’ One local authority talked about a project to develop a service map that ran into trouble because it was so hard to keep up to date. People experiencing homelessness, in turn, struggle to keep up with changes. One person we met explained that ‘Nobody tells you what help there is out there. Not everybody has the confidence to pick up the phone so it pisses me off that there is no way of tapping in one place, telling you which services there are, and what they do.’

For local authorities, not having a clear oversight of the whole system presents inevitable challenges. A local authority told us: ‘There’s a need for a centralised allocations team with an overview of the whole city, even if the actual delivery of those

allocations is decentralised’. For local authorities, having an overview of the entire current caseload is hugely important in that, ‘often the cases that look the most complex can be the most simple and the ones that look simple are the most complex.’ Caseload oversight helps to manage frontline staff resourcing, making sure they have enough time to dedicate to building relationships.

Local authorities also mentioned that they frequently do not have a view into which services people are interacting with outside their own. More effective collaboration across statutory services in particular has huge potential to offer more holistic support. Glasgow’s integration of housing services into the health and social care partnership is an example of where this is starting to happen, both from a data-sharing infrastructure perspective but also a cultural perspective (closer collaborative working practices). Another concrete example of this way of working is a local authority who have started flagging reasons for losing contact with service users, having previously closed applications when contact was lost. In many instances, people were simply untraceable, but in the cases where they were – prison sentences, for example – flagging the reason for lost contact helped coordinate with other services to pick up the support.

There is also a need for a clearer picture at a national level. We know that when individuals move from one local authority to another, the transfer of information creates challenges for workers, and rarely happens quickly, at a time when people are in most need of support. We were also told by the more rural authorities that HARSAG's emphasis on street homelessness has not felt completely relevant when their own challenges, e.g. 'children stuck in temporary accommodation' represent more urgent concerns.

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity to build a clearer picture of the homelessness system itself – the main players, what they do and for whom – so that service providers and people experiencing homelessness can better navigate the system. With a more comprehensive picture it will be possible to establish better connections between agencies, coordinate support, and manage resources more effectively.

INSIGHTS

Service providers

Just like service users, service providers also need help navigating the system – particularly knowing who to contact and where to refer people.

Local authorities

HARSAG's focus on rough sleeping has been somewhat alienating to rural local authorities who do not believe the issue is that relevant to them.

Local authorities

The system is designed with the local authority as the 'spine' throughout an experience of homelessness but they lack clear oversight of people's journeys outside local authority contact.

THEME

Letting the data reflect the voice of the user

OBSERVATIONS

People in the homelessness system frequently describe it as a disempowering and depersonalising experience. This can be the result of conflicting priorities – what is important to them is not always seen as important by service providers, leaving them feeling out of control of their situation.

A common complaint from people experiencing homelessness was that they didn't always feel listened to by service providers, or feel empowered to make change. One man told us "I had a worker... all he did was talk to me rather than let me speak and talk and tell him about my problem... They're not used to people wanting to engage with them and to want to get well and get better."

People told us that there are a number of indicators that signal their situation is improving – from concrete goals like tenancies to softer indicators like routines, relationships and mental health. People would like these to be included in the dialogue they have with services. For example, one man wants to have, 'conversations about what progress I'm making with my drinking, making sure that I'm not just filling the days wandering about.' Another person told us: 'I went through Bethany's alcohol recovery programme. My goal was never to have a house, it was about rebuilding my social connections.' One individual's primary goal was to

be able to fill out his own forms and paperwork, 'to become more independent, get back to the way things used to be.'

Being able to reflect on the journey can be an empowering and encouraging experience but it has to come from individuals themselves. We heard that 'the Outcomes Star [assessment tool] is helpful because it shows you what progress you've made' and opens up more of a two-way conversation, 'about me [and] how I'm getting on'. Another person explained that they want workers to 'use my information to progress me.' Better Futures' multi-agency outcome monitoring tool has functionality to produce visual representations of people's journeys: 'This is particularly helpful for showing clients the progress that they've made. Sometimes they don't realise how much progress they've made until they see it.' Importantly, we were told by outreach workers that progress monitoring should be done with the person present: 'It's only a success if we're reflecting with the client and if they're assessing how far they've come. Even if people have gone backwards in their journey, it's a useful model to open up an honest conversation.'

OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity to allow the voice of the user to come through in the data collection – to treat service users as experts by experience and bring different stakeholders' definitions of what success looks like closer together. Collecting 'soft' data – as well as statistical and administrative data – could be an empowering way of directly engaging people with the data collection, giving them a greater sense of agency over their journey.

INSIGHTS

Lived experience

People's indicators that their situation was improving were a mix of concrete goals like tenancies, and softer things like routine, relationships, perception of self. This is not always reflected in the interactions they have with service providers, who offer less support for softer goals.

Lived experience

Data sharing with the appropriate agencies is fully expected and, in most cases, welcomed. However, there is also an expectation that people should have a say in what information is shared with whom.

Lived experience

People find it empowering and encouraging to reflect on their progress, or 'distance travelled', but progress is not always a linear journey. Such reflections cannot be forced but it is helpful to create space for them to happen.

PART 4

Learnings from data collection systems

4.1 Summary of homelessness data collections

Approaches to homelessness data fall within two very broad types: case management and reporting/monitoring. However, within these types there is significant variation in how the systems are configured. The two approaches to data collection are also not mutually exclusive within the same homelessness system. As an example, in the US, local areas have adopted systems of case management covering large populations, which are designed to then feed into larger, national collections. This is currently also the situation in Scotland and most other UK countries – local authorities have their own systems of local case management, which then feed into the national reporting system.

Not all instances of homelessness data collections fall rigidly into these two categories but they do serve as a useful way to compare different approaches to collecting homelessness data. Case management systems take a person-centred approach, where the individual is the linkage point to which different service interactions are linked. Though reporting tools can take individuals as their unit of measurement, their defining feature is that they monitor service usage rather than coordinate active services. So, for example, the H-CLIC system in England has elements of being

person-centred (in that personal information is shared and the same person can be identified) but this is secondary to the main aim of the collection which is to monitor activity under the Homelessness Reduction Act. In order to illustrate how data collection systems can be brought together to gain greater insight into homelessness, the following sections draw on international examples that each reflect the strengths and weaknesses of different configurations. The emphasis across this discussion is that data collections are variable and work in specific contexts. For example, they depend on how homelessness is defined and what type of homelessness is of greatest concern to policymakers and funders, and/or are shaped by how official statistics are generally collected in each country (as in the case of Denmark).

Denmark

In Denmark, statistics on the geographic and demographic profiles of people affected by homelessness are derived from a survey completed by social services and local government agencies that have contact with people experiencing homelessness. These could include agencies with a direct homelessness remit, but also those who may work with clients experiencing homelessness – for example, job centres, police and the prosecution service. The definition of homelessness used as the basis for mapping out services to contact includes, for example: staying on the streets, emergency accommodation (e.g. hostels), living in temporary

housing without a permanent contract, and attending hospital but without a housing solution. Each service is asked to provide information on the clients with whom they have had contact in a given week, either filling in a per-person form on behalf of the client, or by the clients filling it in themselves. Double-counted individuals are removed by using personal identification numbers (Central Population Register (CPR) number) or other identifiable information such as date of birth and initials where the CPR is not known. This survey methodology has been conducted every other year since 2007. The population of people who are homeless covered by this survey is broad, given that any service which has contact with 'people who are homeless' can be included.

In addition to this point-in-time count, Denmark also draws upon a database of client registrations at homeless hostels funded under Social Services legislation. Hostel data relate to periods of stays in hostels, providing both stock and flow statistics. When accessing hostel services, people are asked to provide their CPR number, which enables linkage to other data sources. Originally the data set was collected by the Social Appeals Board; however, in 2016 responsibility was transferred to Statistics Denmark. This transfer meant that data linkage could more readily augment the collection, thereby reducing the need to ask background information from people when they use the hostel service.

The main strength of this system of collection is the use of a unique identifier, which reduces double counting and enables linkage to other data sources such as client hostel registration. The inclusion of hostel information also provides entry and exit dates from accommodation rather than relying entirely on single point-in-time observations via outreach. Furthermore, the use of point-in-time surveys enables statistics to be produced on a wider range of homeless people when compared to the use of administrative sources from the client registration system.

The client registration system's reliance on the CPR and data linkage would present a difficulty were the adoption of such an approach attempted in Scotland. Denmark has a well-established system of national registers of social and health-related information, which makes data linkage feasible (Thygesen et al. 2010). In the UK, national insurance (NI) and NHS numbers (CHI numbers in Scotland) could be classed as personal identifiers but there is no central register which provides the same level of basic information for individuals as Statistics Denmark's social registers. The only equivalent to a central register in Scotland would be the population spine held by National Records of Scotland. This contains name, date of birth, gender, and postcode for everyone in Scotland at given points in time and is already used to facilitate data linkage in other fields. While the UK has made strides towards the development of data linkage infrastructures, current systems available for data linkage lack the immediacy of the Danish approach.²

United States

In the US, homelessness organisations funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development are required to form 'Continuums of Care' in order to manage activities across the local areas they service. Continuums of Care are usually composed of a number of different organisations covering the spectrum of homelessness care, e.g. non-profit-making homelessness providers, faith-based organisations, mental health agencies, hospitals, and affordable housing providers. They are responsible for promoting community-wide commitments to end homelessness. This includes managing Homelessness Management Information Systems that bring together data from across all organisations within the Continuums of Care area. Continuums of Care share some similarities to local authorities in that they act as hubs for funding provision and coordination, but the extent to which this coordination is mandated and monitored by central government diverges significantly from current UK practice.

Data collected by Homelessness Management Information Systems primarily relate to periods of assistance and the demographic and needs profiles of people affected by homelessness. Yearly aggregate counts of people experiencing homelessness are derived from the systems' data and are submitted by each Continuum of Care to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Double-counted individuals are removed from these aggregate counts. Continuums of Care also submit counts related to homelessness and service provision: (1) point-in-time counts of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night, (2) housing inventory counts which collect information on all of the beds and bed units across the Continuum of Care. These counts are either derived from Homelessness Information Management Systems data, or can be augmented by physical street counts.

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The strength of the US approach is its consistency in data collection practices, due to clear direction from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. A further benefit of the Continuum of Care approach is that, while a core set of data are collected on all clients by all services, local areas have the flexibility to tailor and adapt their data systems to meet local needs and practices. A final strength of the approach adopted in the United States is that some Continuums of Care actively encourage research using Homelessness Management Information Systems data, meaning analysis can be undertaken where individual organisations may lack the resources to conduct analysis themselves. Independent researchers potentially have greater freedom to undertake research that may be politically sensitive, but nonetheless impacts on people experiencing homelessness.

The weakness of adopting America's approach to data collection and organisation in Scotland relates mainly to the greater scope of influence that the Department of Housing and Urban Development exerts. Continuums of Care cover all services being funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and there is the expectation that data must be shared in order to receive funds. This same leverage cannot be exerted in the UK to the same extent, as third-sector organisations are not solely funded by government. This means that participation in any system covering the third-sector will be somewhat dependent on the cooperation of individual organisations. Mandating involvement in the system means that tensions between organisations working within the homelessness sector will not impact on overall coverage.

However, if mandated participation in the system is chosen, this must be conducted in consultation with the sector and meet a defined need by the Scottish Government in order to be lawful and maintain good relations with the sector. As an example of how mandating data can lead to unintended consequences, in 2016, the Ministry of Social Development in New Zealand changed funding contracts with non-government organisations to include a requirement that they disclose their clients' personal data to them. However, after being approached by several organisations, the Privacy Commissioner began a review of the demand by the Ministry for client-level data. The review found that the purpose of the data collection was unclear, and that the lack of sufficient evidence and consultation on why the new data collection was needed and could not be met through other means was 'a serious deficit in the policy development process'.

A further weakness of this approach in Scotland may be the relative difference between the cost of setting up and running a Homelessness Management Information System. There may

be fewer people experiencing homelessness in rural areas compared with urban areas but both systems have the same basic starting and running costs in terms of system support. Homelessness Management Information Systems in the US are defined more by the organisations engaging in a Continuum of Care than by census areas. The interest in forming a Continuum of Care therefore guides the development of a Homelessness Management Information Systems. Rather than building Homelessness Management Information Systems around local authority boundaries, a 'Continuum of Care approach' could be adopted in Scotland. This would allow neighbouring rural local authorities to form a 'Continuum of Care' and spread the infrastructural costs of running Homelessness Management Information Systems.

The aggregate nature of data submission to the Department of Housing and Urban Development is not necessarily a weakness of the system. In lieu of infrastructure to enable linkage of individual level data, a centralised data collection in America would pose an increasing burden for very little additional analytical value. Aggregate returns are therefore an appropriate solution when the uses of the data by central government are limited; the Homelessness Management Information Systems data are utilised for operational functions within Continuums of Care and therefore data at the appropriate level are available to the organisations that need it.

Canada

The Canadian system of homelessness data collection shares similarities to the US in that there is a centralised collection intended to monitor provision being funded under their national homelessness strategy (the Homelessness Partnering Strategy) along with a point-in-time count. Administrative data relating to shelter utilisation is collected through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). The unique aspect of this system is that HIFIS operates as a free-to-use software

designed to help organisations to support people who are homeless. HIFIS can be downloaded by organisations and used as their local information management systems. In exchange for free use of the software, organisations agree to share their data with the larger national homelessness data collection.

In addition to administrative data from the HIFIS collection, in 2016 the Canadian Government undertook a point-in-time count. Though several communities had been undertaking their own, a national count was conducted in order to produce a nationwide picture of homelessness and replace estimates based on shelter utilisation as part of the National Shelter Study 2005–2014 (Employment and Social Development Canada 2016). The count took place on a single night and covered sheltered and unsheltered people. However, like the Danish approach, the count also used a survey approach which sought detailed information on the demographics and needs of the individuals counted. The aim of the count was to provide an estimate of how many people were homeless on any given night.

Alongside these national collections, there are also regional approaches to collecting and sharing data about people who are homeless. Calgary has adopted an approach similar to the US Continuum of Care systems in creating a Homelessness Management Information System. The Homelessness Management Information Systems allow agencies to track, in real time, key indicators on homelessness as well as improve service coordination. The use of Homelessness Management Information Systems therefore complements Calgary's joined-up approach to homelessness services under the System of Care (Calgary Homeless Foundation 2014) by bringing together data from multiple services to provide greater coordination.

The strength of Canada's national approach to homelessness data collection is the use of the HIFIS software. Built in consultation with the community of end users, HIFIS provides homelessness organisations with a tool which they can use for their day-to-day information management, while also consistently collecting and feeding back data to central government which is necessary to monitor activities under the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The software has evolved over time in order to incorporate additional features to fit in with end users' working practices and is now on version 4. Making the HIFIS software relevant to the end user has increased the likelihood that organisations will adopt the HIFIS software and therefore contribute data to the national monitoring system.

The strength of having a regional approach, as in the case of Calgary, is that data collection can be shared between organisations working across a community in order to coordinate services to better meet the needs of people. The HIFIS can also form the cornerstone for a community-level 'by name list', enabling the real-time tracking of homeless individuals into and out of homelessness.

The HIFIS shares the same weakness as the US Continuum of Care systems in that the burden of creating a shared platform may be disproportionate for rural authorities. Another limitation is that personal information is collected on a consent basis, as opposed to any other lawful basis (see section 4.2, Data protection). Non-consent may come to affect the person's outcomes by preventing referrals and sharing of information. Furthermore, non-consent can conceivably affect the calculation of metrics of community progress towards ending homelessness.

4.2 Considerations for data collection systems

Beyond a straightforward count of people experiencing street homelessness, other data collection systems for homelessness look at a number of indicators to measure the progress that local areas are making towards ending street homelessness. It should be noted that the HARSAG recommendation was clear that a data collection for street homelessness in Scotland should avoid targets, as these can often lead to a culture of target chasing and incentivise the wrong kinds of behaviour. No single indicator should be pursued in isolation, and careful consideration needs to go into decisions around indicators for the system to ensure they are in service of the best possible outcomes for people affected by homelessness.

Table: Summary of indicators from homelessness data collections

Measure	What can it tell us?
Stock and flow analysis	How many people are street homeless at a particular point in time? What factors might be affecting any change in those numbers (i.e. are more people becoming street homeless or are more people leaving street homelessness)?
Duration of homelessness	How long are people experiencing homelessness for? What is the nature of their situation and for how long? Are people moving between street homelessness and emergency accommodation?
New to rough sleeping / returns to rough sleeping	How many people are sleeping rough for the first time compared with people experiencing repeat instances of street homelessness? Both measures are useful context for understanding the effectiveness of preventative interventions.
Reasons for particular outcomes	Why are certain outcomes more or less prevalent than others (e.g. refusal of accommodation offer, return to rough sleeping from accommodation, leaving temporary accommodation) and what can this tell us about the effectiveness of the interventions those individuals have received?
Tenancy sustainment	How long have people retained a settled tenancy after being affected by homelessness? Ideally, this measure would be complemented by other data points to analyse the journey to that point as well, e.g. which interventions did the person receive?
Contextual indicators (health, wellbeing, social integration)	These indicators provide a more complete picture of whether or not particular outcomes are sustainable.

One of the more established methods for measuring success is to analyse stock, flow and returns. 'Stock' represents the number of people sleeping rough at any given time. This can be layered over figures on 'flow' – both inflow (new to street homelessness) and outflow (exits from street homelessness) – to understand how the picture of street homelessness is changing. Flow figures provide a useful dimension to figures on street homelessness. As an example, a city might record 20 people sleeping rough consistently over a period

of a year. But taking this 'stock' figure in isolation does not tell you if these are the same 20 people or a cycle of different people moving through street homelessness. These two scenarios would represent two very different challenges for service providers.

Community Solutions' Built for Zero campaign is structured around local areas working towards a state of 'functional zero', defined as the ability to 'demonstrate it has fewer people experiencing

homelessness than it has proven it can house in a routine month'.³ This is achieved through a stock and flow analysis, with emphasis on developing strategies to increase outflow (i.e. housing placements) and reduce inflow (i.e. prevention activities). The benefit of this approach is that it 'accommodates the dynamic nature of homelessness in many communities without being overly prescriptive or immune to local context', and '[privileges] an outcome metric – the number of people experiencing homelessness – over process metrics like whether a community has implemented particular best practices'.

Another approach that may be particularly relevant to some of the challenges that Scotland is facing, such as long periods spent in temporary accommodation, is to measure the duration of a period of homelessness. The duration of a given household's stay in temporary accommodation could be calculated using the current HL3 data, and HL1 data could be used to identify periods of homelessness and instances of repeat homelessness (in cases where individuals present to their local authority). However, duration of homelessness should be a particularly important indicator for street homelessness given how dangerous rough sleeping can be. CHAIN is able to record multiple contacts with outreach workers against a single client record – more contacts with outreach workers suggests a longer period of homelessness, whereas fewer contacts suggests a shorter period. However, this data alone are not enough to draw concrete conclusions about duration as there are a number of factors that could lead to people not being seen by outreach workers (e.g. lost contact, someone leaving the area), and other data sources such as housing placements would be needed to provide meaningful insights into the duration of homelessness.

Beyond street homelessness, Ireland's PASS system has made a commitment to ensuring nobody spends more than six months in temporary

accommodation. Measuring progress towards this goal is made possible by the fact that all temporary accommodation providers use the PASS system to manage their allocations, so client records can be matched to entry and exit dates for any stays in temporary accommodation across the country.

A number of indicators from existing homelessness data collections speak to a prevention agenda. Any system that maintains a by-name list of people experiencing street homelessness will be able to record inflow at the point a new client record is created (as opposed to anyone that has returned to street homelessness with prior experiences of rough sleeping). This measure is only useful insofar as it is able to guide prevention efforts. In London, CHAIN data has been used in the development of the No First Night Out project, an initiative that seeks to target intensive support towards individuals who are deemed to be at the greatest risk of sleeping out that night. CHAIN data has been used to analyse the scale and nature of 'flow' for people who are new to rough sleeping in a local area over time, as well as helping to identify individuals new to rough sleeping to learn more about the current gaps in the system that lead people to sleep out for the first time. Examining trends in numbers of new rough sleepers has been essential to the evaluation of the project.⁴

Some indicators seek to build a greater understanding of known tension points in the system. CHAIN captures data on people leaving hostels, including people's reasons for leaving and where they go. This is valuable information for commissioners, both as a measure of successes (where people have moved to permanent settled accommodation) but also failures. Especially relevant is understanding the reasons people may have returned to rough sleeping following stays in temporary accommodation. Collecting more detailed case-level data and information about support needs also allows for some degree of cohort analysis, making it possible to compare data from individuals with similar levels of complexity in

³ *Community Solutions (2018) Getting to Proof Points*

⁴ *Rice, B (2016) No First Night Out - Help for Single Homeless People evaluation: interim summary report*

their situation. One example is a measure as part of CHAIN's quarterly reports to monitor individuals 'living on the street'.

There are fewer examples of indicators that measure success over longer periods of time. Most data collections aim to measure instances of repeat homelessness to some degree (and has been measured in Scotland as part of the health and homelessness data linkage project), although this inherently requires identifiable client data to be stored for long periods of time. CHAIN stores client records for 15 years, after which point they are anonymised in line with GDPR principles. By comparison, Ireland's PASS system administrators have made the decision to purge client records after two years of inactivity, making it impossible to monitor returns to homelessness after periods of two years using that data set. More broadly, of all of the data collections reviewed as part of this options appraisal, none were able to provide reliable indicators for the longer-term sustainability of outcomes for people receiving homelessness support (e.g. retention of tenancies). This is a clear gap that Scotland's street homelessness data and monitoring system should seek to address.

In Scotland, local authorities will be required to account for their progress towards a rapid rehousing model over the next five years as part of their Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. Although consistent progress indicators are not required as part of the rapid rehousing transition process, the published guidance defines the national vision for rapid rehousing, including a set of distinct, measurable outcomes. Progress indicators for these outcomes might include 'reduced time from homeless application to settled accommodation', 'reduced time spent in temporary accommodation' with 'reduced number of transfers', and an 'increased proportion of temporary accommodation that is mainstream, furnished and located within a community'. No outcome indicators are explicitly required for the Housing First component of

the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans but the Housing First Europe Hub recommends a number of indicators to be used in evaluations of Housing First including housing sustainment (e.g. length of time a Housing First service user has lived in the same home; time spent in an apartment compared with time spent sleeping and living in other situations), health and wellbeing (e.g. health assessments), and social integration (e.g. quality of social networks, civic participation, structured activity and employment). The extent to which a street homeless data collection can feed into these measures, or for the data to be made comparable, is something that should be explored further to prevent duplication of data collection efforts and provide a richer picture of people's experience of the homelessness system in Scotland.

Governance and operating models

Our review of systems (see appendix) has highlighted that the governance structure of any given system has an impact on how it functions, how well it is received by the sector, the type of information that can be collected and the value that data can provide in contributing towards ending homelessness. In this sense, it is hard to separate the ownership and management of the data collection from the type of value that can be extracted from it. However, with the right execution, any of the following structures have the potential to deliver on the aims of a data collection for street homelessness in Scotland.

National data collections such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development's in the US and H-CLIC in England are managed by government agencies and contributions from local areas are mandated. Their status gives greater potential for leverage, including financial leverage through funding in the case of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Government bodies may also have privileged access to data, giving them greater analytical capabilities than non-government organisations. However, there is always a tension

to be managed between national and local government. Anything that is mandated by national government would also need to be mindful of local contexts, and would need to be able to demonstrate that any analysis is independent and impartial.

Ireland's PASS system is an example of a government body acting as system administrator from a local perspective. PASS is hosted by and administered from within Dublin City Council (via nomination from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) but the system itself is divided into nine regions, with a lead local authority managing activity for their region. This provides a degree of autonomy for the regions while administrative tasks can be handled centrally, with the resource efficiency of being hosted within Dublin City Council. As a local authority, it also has privileged access to data, giving it greater analytical capabilities than non-government organisations.

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CHAIN, SHIN, GMThink and Mainstay are all examples of systems hosted by third-sector organisations (CHAIN is hosted by St Mungo's, SHIN is hosted by the Wallich and GMThink by Shelter). In these examples, the administration of the system sits outside the hosting organisation's day-to-day work but benefits from some degree of resource efficiency. In the case of CHAIN and SHIN, the system itself is a partitioned extension of the host's own client relationship management system. However, neutrality is a concern that all of these data collections have had to address. Where the service is commissioned by another body (as is the case with CHAIN, commissioned by the Greater London Authority), the management responsibilities will periodically be put to tender. Hosts may deem it necessary to publish a neutrality policy to provide transparency on the role of their organisation in the management of the system and its funding sources.

Almost every data collection system we spoke to emphasised the importance of having a cross-sectoral steering committee or similar mechanism to draw on the expertise and experience of the

system's stakeholders. Additionally, several system administrators mentioned the value of taking an iterative learning approach to establishing their data collections. They acknowledged that it took time to build the momentum behind their systems and advised us to be responsive to user feedback, particularly to begin with.

Data protection

From the review of systems (see appendix), and with reference to the data protection legislation within the UK (Data Protection Act, 1998, 2018 and General Data Protection Register, 2018), there are two main approaches to legally sharing data: informed consent, or finding another legal basis on which to share. Of the systems reviewed, informed consent was by far the most common method of legally sharing personal information within and outside of organisations. In the case of the US, most, if not all Homelessness Management Information Systems ask for consent from the person using the service to share their data. However, many Homelessness Management Information Systems adopt a nuanced approach to consent by providing the person with several options for consenting which they can choose from. For example, this might include locking their file completely, allowing only the identifier details to be visible to all users of a system, or allowing their full case history to be accessible. The ability to view identifiers (to allow for records to be looked up and remove double counting) is therefore the minimum level of visibility a system needs.

Finding another lawful basis is the approach adopted by administrative systems in Great Britain. Within the General Data Protection Register (GDPR) there are several lawful bases for processing data which do not relate to consent, including: entering into a contract with the person; legal obligation under common or statutory law; vital interests in order to protect someone's life; performing a public task in the exercise of an official duty; and legitimate interests (Information Commissioner's Office, 2018).

Table: Summary of governance and operating models

Data collection	Commissioned by	Managed by	Data input by
HMIS (US) Mandated based on funding	Department of Housing and Urban Development	Nationally: Department of Housing and Urban Development Locally: Continuum of Care groups	Statutory and voluntary partners (outreach, accommodation providers, specialist services) providing services as part of a Continuum of Care.
PASS (Ireland) Mandated based on funding	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Nationally: Dublin Region Homelessness Executive (based in Dublin City Council) Locally: Regional managers based in lead local authorities	Statutory and voluntary partners (outreach, accommodation providers)
H-CLIC (England) Mandated	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	Local authorities
HIFIS (Canada) Optional	Employment and Social Development Canada	Employment and Social Development Canada	Organisations working with homeless people, across a range of services
CHAIN (London) Mandated based on funding	Greater London Authority	St Mungo's	Outreach teams and some service providers
SHIN (Wales) Partially mandated, with some voluntary users	Welsh Government	The Wallich	Voluntary and statutory homelessness service providers who have contact with people who sleep rough
GMTHINK (Manchester) Mandated based on funding	Manchester City Council and Shelter	Shelter	Voluntary and public sector organisations providing services to the Council under the Homeless Prevention Grant

The new H-CLIC system in England adopts the basis of undertaking a public task under Article 6 of the GDPR and/or Article 9(2) of the GDPR in the case of 'special category data' – being more sensitive personal data, which someone's status as homeless could be considered. The public task in this case being the need to monitor homelessness provision in order to inform policy.

If a lawful basis outside of consent is used to share information as part of the Scottish system, then firstly the data controllers (i.e. local authorities and third-sector organisations) must satisfy themselves that they have the power to share data, before sharing for a specific purpose as defined by the General Data Protection Register (2018) and Data Protection Acts (1998, 2018). As data have been shared by authorities for Waugh et al.'s (2018) health and homelessness data linkage project then they should be familiar with the relevant lawful basis they can draw on. Third-sector organisations are less likely to have engaged in routine data sharing, and may therefore need advice on which lawful basis is appropriate.

The choice of approach to sharing information has implications for the rights of the subject, which then has implications for data collection. If the option of consent is chosen, in order for this to be considered fully informed and freely given under the GDPR, then the person must have the right to remove their consent. Removal of consent requires further processes and systems to be put in place in order to remove the person's data from any system, should they withdraw consent. The process of removing people's data may have implications for any statistical outputs that are produced. Furthermore, if the person does not consent to having their information shared in the first place, removal of double counted individuals is no longer possible. Not being able to share data also means that services cannot work in a coordinated fashion, which may undo some of the purpose of having a shared system.

The Information Commissioner's Office has suggested that public authorities in a position of power over individuals should avoid relying on consent as the legal basis for sharing/processing data. When it comes to access to services and assistance, the question of whether consent is freely given or is in some way pressured in order to access a service/assistance is debatable.

Regardless of which lawful basis for data sharing is adopted, the processing of personal information must be fair and transparent. Where consent is obtained, information is usually provided to the person which outlines the processing in order to gain consent. Where other lawful bases for processing/sharing data are drawn on, such as in the case of the H-CLIC system, then the Information Commissioner has suggested that privacy notices be provided to people using housing options services. Privacy notices must be jargon free and outline what data will be collected, who will be processing the data, how it will be processed, and why the processing is necessary. A two-tiered approach has been suggested in the case of the H-CLIC system, whereby notices are provided either in person to the client, and/or in public places such as GP surgeries and housing options offices, and also placed on the council's website.

Movement building

Campaigns and movements have been used to support homelessness data collections in a number of ways. These include focused activities like individual city street counts (the Paris Nuit de la Solidarité is one successful example, as part of the Mayor of Paris' wider campaign against exclusion); national, multi-regional movements like the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness; and movements involving multiple cities across a number of countries like the European Campaign to End Street Homelessness (with participation from 13 cities across Europe). In each example, the purpose of the movement is to unite contributors around a shared objective, with clear, shared steps

to progress towards that goal and tools to support them to get there.

Perhaps the most well established example is the Built for Zero campaign in the US. The campaign brings local areas together around a shared goal of reaching ‘functional zero homelessness’ by maintaining and learning from data on the homeless populations in their area. Local efforts are connected to the movement nationally – via a shared dashboard (where users can compare progress with other regions), and regular events to share learnings and work on local challenges collaboratively.

The movement building element of the Built for Zero initiative has been integral to its growth and success. At a meeting of the advisory panel for this options appraisal, Community Solutions – the organisation responsible for running the campaign – described a number of ways in which the movement building component of the initiative had been important. Firstly, it helped establish a sense of belonging among local areas as the initiative was gaining momentum, so that they did not feel they were alone in working differently. Early activities associated with the campaign also helped to highlight, accelerate and spread good practice and innovation. While this continues to happen today via events and with the tools provided by Community Solutions, to begin with best practice was simply shared via a Facebook group for the campaign.

An open and sharing culture has been important for encouraging the right behaviours and maintaining a high quality of data. One example of this is the ‘rooster rundowns’, which are published to show the progress of the campaign as a whole, based on the number of local areas that have reached key milestones in their progress locally. Community Solutions have found that openness around this progress has had the effect of energising lower performing communities (with practical support from the Community Solutions team) and providing

encouragement to campaign participants as a whole. Community Solutions have been careful to ensure this positively reinforces good practice rather than reprimanding the local areas that have not met certain milestones. This is, in part, due to the collective sense of responsibility that local areas feel they have to reaching the campaign’s target of functional zero homelessness. Finally, the collective actions of participating local areas have given the movement greater influence than they would have had as individual organisations and helped consolidate the voice for change.

4.3 Design principles for a Scottish data collection system

Some of the learnings from our research did not directly relate to the configuration of the data collection itself but did reflect relevant concerns or good practice around data collection. We have articulated these as design principles – the things that need to be considered as the system is built in order to make it successful.

PRINCIPLE

Person-centred interactions

OBSERVATION

The system needs to support the needs of individuals first and foremost, before the needs of the data collection. This means information is collected in a way that respects people's agency, dignity and preferences.

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Why is this important?

The data collection will seek to take a big picture view of the challenge of homelessness in Scotland but it is essential that in doing so, the data collection does not distract from the concerns of individuals.

People experiencing homelessness frequently talked about negative experiences with services where they felt like they were being 'processed' through the system. This happened when organisational processes got in the way of person-to-person interactions. One man in Edinburgh told us: 'I need people to listen, not just hear. I need to feel like people are invested in me, not just getting spoken at.' Another said 'you may as well be talking to a computer at the council.'

What does a person-centred system look like?

- Data collection activities do not get in the way of person to person interactions.
- Processes are transparent to clients.
- People are informed about how their data is captured and used.

Equally, many frontline workers told us how important it is to them to maintain a sympathetic dynamic with their clients, and expressed concerns that additional data collection requirements would distract from that dynamic. Where this has been working well, staff have made efforts to make their processes as transparent as possible to their clients. One man in Inverness told us about a positive experience going through a supported accommodation assessment with his caseworker: 'Everything she was doing, she was doing in front of me, so I could see and be involved. Her attitude was "we're not having any more of this, we're going to get things sorted for you".'

INSIGHTS

Service providers

The importance of usability in any data input system must not be underestimated. Poor usability leads to tools not being used at all (or used in ways they were not intended). Staff will use tools most effectively if they are simple and familiar.

Data collection systems

There is a constant balancing act between capturing enough data to be useful and not too much to be burdensome. This will be an ongoing dialogue with system users.

Partnerships

These partnerships work because they augment existing processes and workloads rather than trying to replace them.

PRINCIPLE

Useable tools

OBSERVATION

The system needs to be usable for those inputting data and those for whom data are being collected. This means it is simple to use, builds on familiar conventions and is useful beyond its core purpose of data collection.

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Why is this important?

The usability of any tools associated with the data collection must not be overlooked. The reliability of the data for national purposes is contingent on the data being collected in the first place. If the tools are not usable, they will not be used; if they are not used, there will be no data to work with.

One consideration for usability is balancing the type and volume of information that workers are required to collect. This was flagged as an ongoing challenge by other system administrators including CHAIN and CDPSoft. This extends to duplication of data entry and how data are entered into a system if it is not input directly to a system in the moment. Generally speaking lots of case-level information is recorded on paper then transferred to digital records, which creates a lot of work. Anything that builds on current practices and processes, rather than seeking to establish new ones, is likely to be well received.

However, the usability of any data collection tools is also important. A number of systems we saw were not built according to responsive design principles (i.e. usable on multiple platforms and screen sizes), which could cause

What does a useable system look like?

- It builds on existing processes wherever possible.
- It is designed to work on multiple platforms including mobile devices.
- It collects the minimum amount of information needed to be useful.
- It uses familiar and well-established interaction conventions.
- It uses simple, non-technical language wherever possible.

usability issues for workers using unconventional devices. We also heard anecdotally, and often by their own admission, that frontline staff are often not always completely comfortable with technology: 'To be a fantastic outreach worker you have to be able to speak to anyone about anything – computers usually are not our strong point.'

We also heard a few examples of interesting workarounds for systems that people struggled to use. One service provider showed us their client relationship management system, which had an extensive feature set for staff to manage their cases. However, over time, they realised that most of the work was happening via a chat function (similar to a Facebook feed). This was working well for staff because the interaction paradigm of 'chat' was familiar and easy to use.

Finally, consideration should be given to usability from the perspective of people experiencing homelessness. Some systems (such as GMThink in Manchester) offer a 'client access' portal, where people can see their information and how it is being used. In this instance, the design of the system would need to apply the same usability principles as those used for staff. However, consideration would also need to be given to the language used to represent this information, to ensure that it is simple and easily understandable for non-professionals.

INSIGHTS

Lived Experience

People talked about how service interactions can feel very one-sided, like they are being processed through a system. Taking the time to listen and build relationships is key to avoiding this.

Outreach

Outreach workers like to give their full attention to the people they are speaking to. They understand the importance of writing notes in the moment but worry it feels depersonalising.

Outreach

Collecting core identifying information (i.e. name and D.O.B.) on the street is not always easy. People are often not in a good state of mind, or might not be completely trusting of outreach workers at first.

PRINCIPLE

Flexible approaches

OBSERVATION

The system needs a core of consistency for the data collected on it to be useful. However, service providers require a certain amount of flexibility around that core to do their work effectively.

72

Why is this important?

For a national data collection to be reliable and comparable nationwide, the data need to be collected in a consistent way but due to the sometimes chaotic nature of homelessness, workers are occasionally faced with clients in unusual situations that require workarounds. It is better that this information is recorded than for it to be absent from the data collection or incorrectly recorded as something else.

One such example is the flexible personal budgets that have been made available to frontline workers this year. These funds have been used to pay for everything from new identity documents to haircuts for people experiencing homelessness, and have been broadly well received. However, they are by their nature flexible, discretionary and designed to be used in unconventional situations, which could make it difficult to record their use in a consistent format. Understanding how these funds are used could lead to some interesting insights about the types of support people need and receive, but this data might be difficult to collect currently (nowhere for it to be recorded consistently) and hard to analyse at scale due to the variability of how the funds are used (categorisation might be possible but might not cover every application of the funds).

What does a flexible system look like?

- Mandatory fields should be used sparingly (for usability reasons), but when used they should support the collection of the minimum essential information needed to answer core research questions.
- Clear guidance on how information should be recorded where this cannot be done through the design of tools (e.g. drop-down lists).
- Edge cases, workarounds and anomalies should be recorded, even if separately from core data.

Some of the people we met who were experiencing homelessness also expressed concern that information recorded about their situation would be 'set in stone', particularly around assessments or service restrictions – even though there was a general acknowledgment that the experience of homelessness is not a linear one and people go through ups and downs. A service user in Glasgow told us: 'Somebody that doesn't have the experience [with homelessness], they put you down as non-compliant. And as soon as you've got non-compliant on your record, that's you, you are thrown to the bottom of the pile.' Conversely, one service provider described their policy of 'elastic tolerance', which encourages 'creative and flexible approaches to dealing with issues which normally result in a warning or eviction'. Any data system that also acts as a shared case-management tool will need to provide allowances for people's ups and downs without compromising the consistency of the core data.

INSIGHTS

Service providers

There is a tension between the need for data collection to be consistent and service provision to be flexible. This means considering how data might be recorded when service providers have to make decisions outside of the norm.

Outreach

Pen and paper notes are still preferred by many outreach workers when they are out on the streets working with individuals. Written notes allow them to capture broad information, which they can filter and add detail to later in a more appropriate setting.

PRINCIPLE

Sensitivity to context

OBSERVATION

The system needs to account for people's wider context so that interactions between staff and clients are sensitive to their situations as they change.

74

Why is this important?

The experience of homelessness (and street homelessness in particular) can be chaotic and emotionally traumatic, and many people experiencing homelessness have also experienced past trauma. Psychologically informed environment principles should apply to data collection, treating information shared with respect and sensitivity.

One of the great benefits of shared case level data for people experiencing homelessness is in removing the need for them to repeat their story, and allowing space for that story to be told in the right way. A woman in Glasgow talked about how she imagined this working in the future: 'If somebody said "what you tell me just now is going on file and will be passed onto anyone that you want it to" – I would want to be prepared for it and go into depth about why things happened, and what could have prevented it instead of just skipping it.' Later in the conversation she suggested that her circumstances might affect her ability to talk about certain elements of her story at different times – 'I might be going through an anniversary of something that has happened and I don't want to talk about that

What does a sensitive system look like?

- Data collection tools support psychologically informed interactions (e.g. non-institutional framing of questions, accessible language, offering clients choice and flexibility in interactions).

specific thing on that day. I should be able to say, see number 5, I don't want to talk about it. Make it simple. Otherwise you're bringing it all back again.'

Sensitivity to context is also an important element in safeguarding service users and service providers. The managers of existing shared case management systems like PASS and CHAIN have talked about how information sharing has played a role in protecting staff by allowing them to share concerns about changes in clients' circumstances or behaviour that could put them (or clients themselves) at risk. This is especially true for women's services and organisations supporting people fleeing violence. This information needs to be shared in a sensitive way – to protect people and support care provision.

INSIGHTS

Service providers

Service providers highlighted the need to be sensitive (i.e psychologically informed) in the way certain information is collected to protect service users.

Partnerships

An unexpected positive benefit to information sharing has been the ability to share concerns about situations that might put workers at risk (e.g. increase in aggressive behaviour).

PRINCIPLE

Private by default

OBSERVATION

The system needs to protect people's privacy by default, while supporting consensual sharing of information where it benefits individuals.

76

Why is this important?

Not only do people have a basic legal right for their data to be protected but many of the people that this system will collect data on are, or have been, in vulnerable situations. Protecting their privacy also means protecting their safety.

Privacy can be looked at in two ways – practice and infrastructure. One of the first considerations for good practice around privacy is informed consent. While informed consent is not the only basis on which homelessness data can be collected, ensuring people understand clearly why their information is recorded and how it will be used is important in maintaining positive and trusting relationships between service providers and their clients. As mentioned earlier in the key learnings section of this report, people using homelessness services generally understand the benefits of their case information being collected and shared, but had some apprehensions around how it might be misused. A woman in Glasgow said, 'maybe I don't want my data shared with future employers for example... you need to fully understand what are the benefits and consequences. Absolute transparency.' Clearly explaining how information will be shared and used in plain, accessible

What does a 'private by default' system look like?

- People understand why information is collected and how it will be used.
- Workers responsible for recording client data understand how they will be used and shared, and can articulate that to clients.
- Data are stored and transferred securely.

language will help to ease these concerns. The same person suggested that this could be done via ‘a checklist, a case study or a discussion group.’

People experiencing homelessness are not the only group who expressed concern – service providers have their own reservations around the data protection implications of homelessness data collection. Staff will also need clarity around how clients’ information is kept secure, particularly in a shared case management context.

It is possible to build flexible data sharing capacity into data collection systems, allowing clients or caseworkers to identify which parts of a client record should be shared with whom. This is especially relevant for shared case management environments, where certain case-level information may be particularly pertinent between two service providers, but the full case file does not need to be shared.

Infrastructurally, client data need to be stored securely, made accessible only to relevant caseworkers and suitably encrypted when transferred. When aggregated at a regional or national level, identifiable client data can be pseudo-anonymised without compromising their usefulness for analysis.

INSIGHTS

Lived experience

People have some apprehensions around how their information is used – specifically information being used against them. This is often based on negative past experiences.

Service providers

There is a difference between sharing data and sharing knowledge. Knowledge sharing between service providers already happens informally (i.e. verbally) but there was some hesitation about formalising these processes due to client privacy concerns.

PART 5

Options for the system design

5.1 Introduction to system options

As we have seen from other examples of homelessness data collections from around the world, there are many ways to achieve the goal of improving data on street homelessness. The configuration of different systems – what information is collected, about whom, and by which agencies – significantly shapes the reporting capabilities of the system, as well as other potential capabilities like case management, system improvement and resource management.

Bearing this in mind, it is critical to define the overarching purpose of a Scottish data collection for street homelessness. HARSAG recommended that the data system should build on the Centre for Homelessness Impact's SHARE framework, which proposes a vision for ending homelessness and shapes a path towards a future where homelessness is only ever rare, brief and non-recurrent.⁵ This also aligns closely with the Scottish Government's 'Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan'.⁶ Both visions for ending homelessness emphasise the importance of reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness and preventing it from happening in the first place (rare), ensuring effective and rapid responses if people do become homeless (brief),

and ensuring that the support provided to people experiencing homelessness is comprehensive and integrated across agencies, and the positive impact of that support is sustainable in the long-term (non-recurrent). The Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan proposes an additional goal that 'nobody sleeps rough'. This means eliminating street homelessness and sustaining a state of zero street homelessness nationwide.

The specific measures that will be used to monitor progress towards this vision are yet to be defined but a system that monitors street homelessness will undoubtedly play a core role in measuring progress. The Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan outlines five actions towards its vision:

- Embed a person-centred approach
- Prevent homelessness from happening in the first place
- Join up planning and resources to tackle homelessness
- Respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens
- Prioritise settled homes for all

Depending on the configuration of the data collection for street homelessness, it has potential to support measurements against these actions, including the degree of choice and control individuals have in their support, the availability and

⁵ Centre for Homelessness Impact (2018) *The SHARE framework: a smarter way to end homelessness*

⁶ Scottish Government (2018) *Ending homelessness and rough sleeping: action plan*

ease of access to services and support, response times to homeless situations, the extent and nature of multi-agency collaboration and the sustainability of outcomes from homelessness support services.

This chapter will outline a number of 'options' for the data collection. While the end goal remains the same for all of the options outlined in this section, each version places a slightly different emphasis on each of the core tenets of HARSAG's recommendation – to enable joined up working, to measure progress towards ending rough sleeping and to evaluate system-level improvements.

Accompanying each option is a high level roadmap for how the system could be developed and established in Scotland. This includes immediate next steps and suggestions for small-scale pilots that might help to answer specific questions about how the system should function, medium-term steps for establishing the data collection across the nation and longer-term features that may take time to develop but could extend the value of the data collection.

5.2 How might the system be used? What should its defining purpose be?

During our time spent researching other similar data collection systems for homelessness, we came across a clear message time and time again – that defining the overall purpose of the data collection upfront was the single most important factor in the collection's success.

A defining purpose for the system should not only guide which variables are collected but how those variables are used. Without a clear end goal in mind, data collections can become messy, unwieldy and unfocused. The purpose of this report is not to propose one overarching purpose for the data

collection but rather to illustrate how requirements from different stakeholders might be reconciled into cohesive and viable system designs.

Throughout our consultations with local areas and our advisory panel, we identified a number of benefits that the system could deliver to various users and stakeholders. These ranged from short-term benefits to those experiencing homelessness to infrastructural benefits for academic research. The key benefits identified through our consultations are as follows (in no particular order):

- Build an accurate picture of the number of people sleeping rough in Scotland
- Monitor progress towards ending rough sleeping
- Build an accurate picture of pathways in and out of homelessness
- Enable effective shared case management and joined up working between agencies
- Empower frontline staff to make more informed decisions about support
- Empower people experiencing homelessness by giving them greater agency over the support they receive
- Create transparency around service provision across the country
- Enable more efficient management of resources in the provision of homelessness support (including minimising duplication and identifying gaps)
- Monitor the impact of specific policy decisions
- Evaluate the impact of different interventions (i.e. what works for whom)
- Build a broad data repository on homelessness to support academic research

A further consideration for the data collection is how it overlaps with other elements of the national strategy to end homelessness – namely rapid rehousing and Housing First. Housing First in particular is likely to be a significant intervention for reducing street homelessness. Consistent national outcome measures and indicators for Housing

First are still in development and the potential to make these datasets comparable, or even directly link them, should be explored in partnership with the Housing First Scotland Pathfinder. Establishing a connection between the two datasets would allow for street homelessness data to feed into outcome monitoring of Housing First projects and start to show whether an increase in the use of Housing First leads to reductions in the overall numbers of people sleeping rough.

5.3 Who should the system collect information on?

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, stakeholders throughout our consultations have indicated that limiting the scope of the data collection to people currently experiencing street homelessness would restrict its value. While rough sleeping must be a priority in efforts to tackle homelessness, any data collection that is restricted to measuring street homelessness in isolation would not be able to provide meaningful insight into the effectiveness of preventative measures or the longer term sustainability of interventions for people who sleep rough. Additionally, it is assumed that street homeless populations in much of Scotland's more rural areas are small, and the issues that local areas face in tackling homelessness in rural regions are quite different to those in cities with higher street homeless populations.

One solution to these challenges would be to broaden the remit of the data collection to include those in temporary accommodation (hostels, B&Bs, temporary furnished flats, etc.). This would allow for more interaction points between people who may have experienced street homelessness and service providers where data can be collected. It would allow for a more comprehensive picture to be built of people's journeys in and out of street

homelessness over time, rather than relying heavily on street interactions. It has been noted that in major cities like Glasgow, the number of households in temporary accommodation is quite high, and many of these households have low or no additional support needs, allowing for them to move on to settled accommodation relatively quickly. A further filter on this population may therefore be those in temporary accommodation with additional support needs or other risk factors that may make the transition to settled accommodation more challenging.

Beyond those who are street homeless and those in temporary accommodation, the advisory panel emphasised the potential value in capturing data about people at imminent risk of street homelessness, both for the value this would bring for data analysis but also as an opportunity for preventative interventions. This might include (but is not limited to) people leaving institutions such as prison or armed forces, people with no recourse to public funds, people facing eviction from the private rented sector or social rented sector, people with dual diagnoses of mental health and substance misuse, people engaged in 'street lifestyles' like begging and sex work, women fleeing domestic violence and people who have a history of street homelessness.

One of the challenges faced by street homelessness data collections that are based on street outreach (such as CHAIN) is that outreach workers may be interacting with people who are not entitled to certain types of support. This might be because they have a tenancy (but may be engaged in street activity), recently moved from another local authority, are deemed intentionally homeless or have no recourse to public funds because of their citizenship status. Verifying people's statuses and eligibility for support can be difficult and may not be possible in a street environment. However, these individuals are likely to also be at some risk of street homelessness or otherwise vulnerable.

A potentially valuable feature of the system would be to provide greater insight into the scale of hidden homelessness in Scotland. Hidden homelessness (e.g. sofa surfing, squatting, makeshift shelters) is by its very nature difficult to measure. However, it represents a population group that are often at significant risk of becoming street homeless due to the highly insecure nature of their accommodation.⁷ This is not a challenge that has been widely addressed by other similar homelessness data collections, although there are examples of groups such as emergency services being encouraged to input data to local data collection systems where they encounter 'hidden' people in the course of their daily work, as well as self-referral systems like Streetlink. In order to have a truly representative and comprehensive picture of homelessness in Scotland, we will need to find new ways to capture this population in our data collections.

Broadening the remit to include those at imminent risk of rough sleeping would provide hugely useful insights into people's pathways in and out of street homelessness and offer greater opportunity for timely preventative interventions. However, it also has significant implications for the configurations of the system – most notably increasing the number of different types of users required to input records into the data collection (e.g. prisons, hospitals, care institutions, etc.). While not an insurmountable challenge, there is a risk of doing too much too soon and diluting the core objectives of the data collection. The inclusion of at-risk populations should therefore be considered as an important extension of the system later on in the development process.

⁷ Reeve (2011) *The hidden truth about homelessness*

5.4 Defining the spectrum of the data variables

There is a minimum level of data that needs to be collected in order to meet the Scottish Government's requirements to measure progress towards ending rough sleeping. These primarily relate to identifying demographic information (to prevent duplication of records) and records of accommodation status. The table below outlines the key variables needed to provide a functional data collection for street homelessness.

Table: Key variables for a street homelessness data collection

Type of data	Key variables	Why are these required?
Demographic	Name Date of birth Gender	A unique client reference number will need to be generated for each client. This would be an automated process that combines elements of the client's name, birthdate and gender as a coded number. Collecting national insurance numbers would add a higher level of reliability but we have heard anecdotally that national insurance numbers can be difficult to collect accurately (either not known by the client or incorrectly input). A unique identifier would also be necessary to record instances of repeat homelessness.
Current accommodation status	Previous night accommodation Forthcoming night accommodation Date Service provider ID (if applicable)	Key service interactions should provide information on people's accommodation status for the previous night and the coming night. For some service providers, this information will be implicit (e.g. checking someone in to a hostel). For other contacts like street outreach, this information may need to be requested from clients. These data are needed for street homelessness counts but would also provide data to complement other datasets for accommodation allocations (such as HL2/3).

Beyond these core variables, the type of information that is collected is heavily dependent on the configuration of the system. However, they can be broken down into a few broad categories:

Client records

Beyond basic identifying demographic data (name, date of birth, national insurance number), client records might include contact details, accommodation history and data consent restrictions. Client records would also include an ID number to allow for records to be matched.

Case management

Case management data include anything pertaining to people's circumstances. This might include needs assessments and support needs, care plans, personal goals and objectives, caseworker contacts and risk assessments.

Service use

Service use data would keep a date-stamped record of any interactions with services. This might include arrival/departure dates from accommodation, referrals, appointments, street contacts and any changes to client records or case management records.

Resource management

Resource data could include anything from beds or rooms in accommodation projects to staff hours allocated to casework. These data points are likely to already be recorded by service providers as part of their own administrative data but there is potential value in collating them for the purposes of resource management.

Incomplete or unverified records

There are many reasons why incomplete or unverified records might exist in a database, and this can largely be avoided if data inputters have adequate training and data input tools are sufficiently useable. However, due to the transitory nature of homelessness – and street homelessness in particular – some consideration

needs to be given to how incomplete records are handled. De-duplication is not possible where individuals cannot be identified at least by name, meaning that incomplete and unverified records would not count towards any official figures. One of the key learnings from the research for this options appraisal was the idea of data collection as a jigsaw puzzle, and this is relevant here. The hope is that workers will be able to build trust with individuals over time or make contact in a different context where collecting identifiable information is more feasible, in order to complete the client record. However, where this is not possible, similar systems such as SHIN and CHAIN have functionality to allow incomplete records to be input to the system based primarily on physical appearance and location. Down the line, if these individuals are further identified, it is possible to merge the unidentified and identified records.

5.5 System options

HARSAG's recommendation highlighted three benefits that a data collection system for street homelessness could provide for Scotland – to enable joined up working, to measure progress towards ending rough sleeping and to evaluate system-level improvements. Throughout our consultations and review of other similar systems, we have identified a number of system qualities that need to be in place to support these objectives.

To enable joined up working, the system should:

- Build the data infrastructure needed to share data across agencies, to better coordinate efforts to prevent and tackle street homelessness.
- Formalise and record current collaborative working practices (that may currently only happen informally or not be recorded).
- Support collaborative working practice and establish data sharing as the norm.
- Be co-designed with the sector to suit their working practices and information needs
- Be able to provide a holistic view of people's support needs beyond immediate crisis relief.
- Enable real-time information sharing to support timely intervention activity.
- Prevent people from having to repeat their story multiple times.

To measure progress in tackling street homelessness, the system should:

- Be capable of producing rigorous statistics – either through consistent data entry across data inputting organisations or through the use of core mandatory fields.
- Function as a by-name list, to allow for the merging and de-duplication of client records.
- Seek participation from as many organisations that interact with people experiencing homelessness as possible to maximise service coverage (e.g. Built for Zero

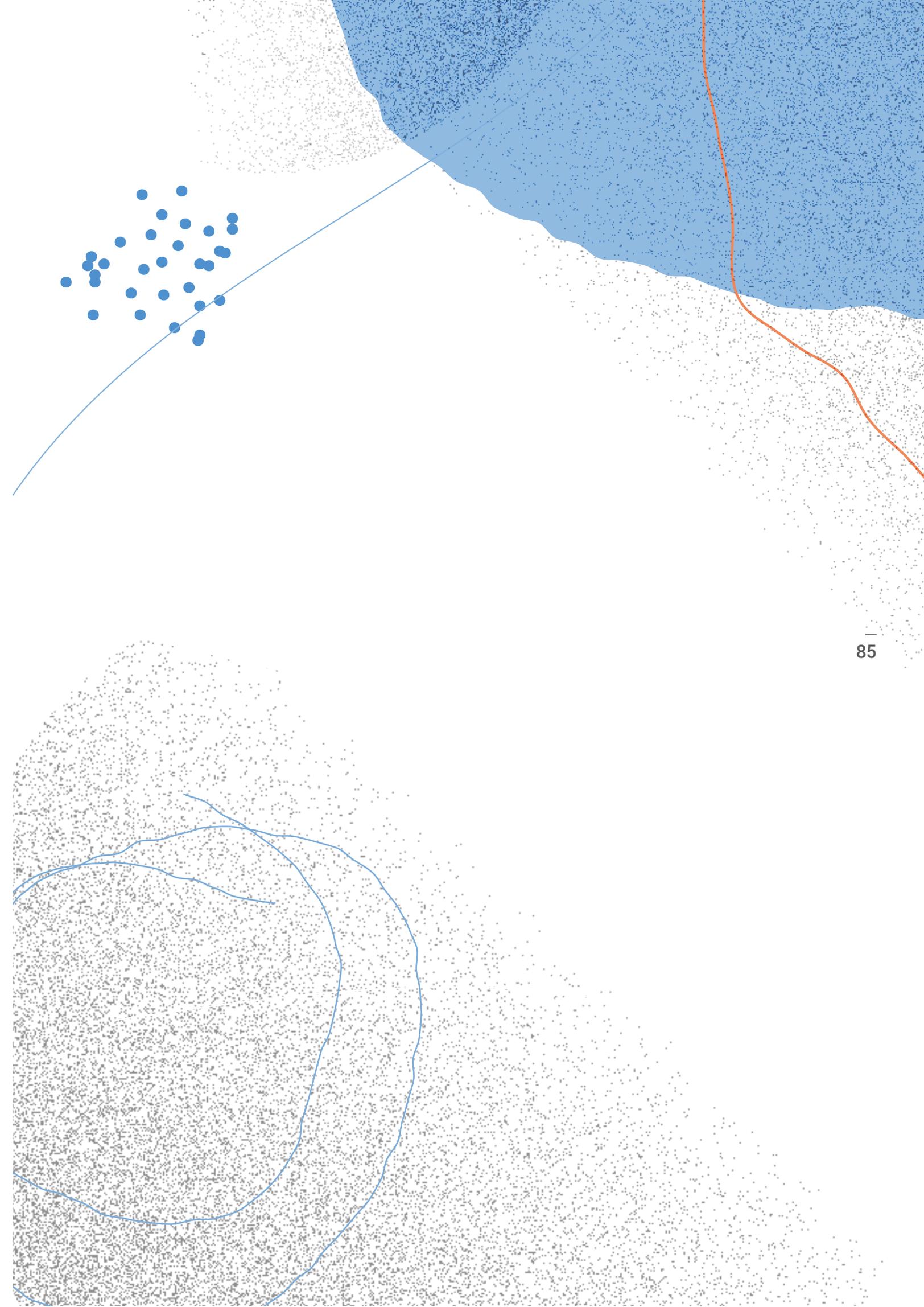
requires 90% of organisations within the Continuum of Care to participate in order to meet data quality requirements).

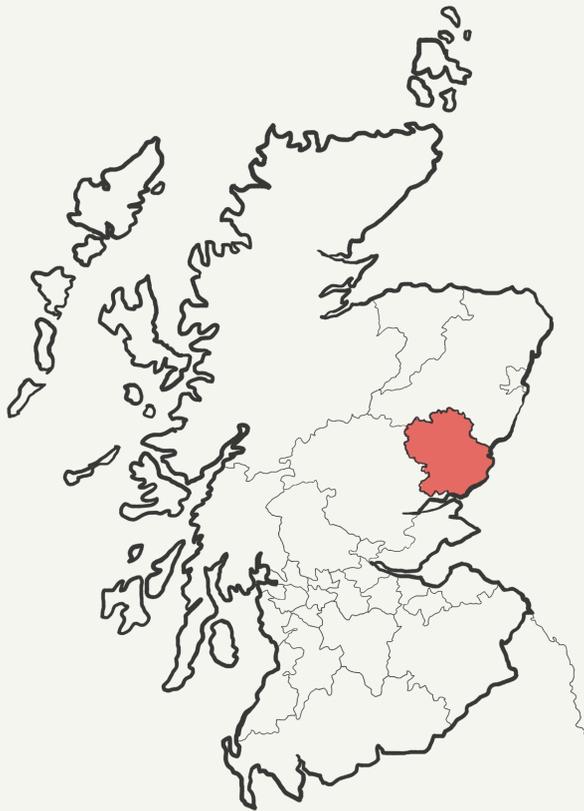
- Minimise the burden of data entry for organisations – by virtue of simplicity of data entry processes, adaptability for organisations' needs (while maintaining a core of consistency), or both.

To evaluate system-level improvements, the system should:

- Produce non-duplicated counts of people who are homeless to enable reliable regional, national and international comparisons.
- Allow for research uses of the data, including linkage to other sources, to assess the longer-term and wider impacts of homelessness assistance.
- Capture data around service usage and resources.
- Have participation from all homelessness services working within a local authority; the greater the number of homelessness organisations there are using the system, the higher the likelihood that a person will become re-identified should they become homeless again.

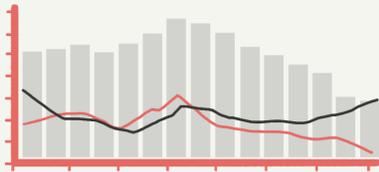
Each option in this section illustrates how a system could be configured based on different weighting of these approaches. All examples aim to address all three objectives to some extent, but shifting the emphasis differently for each option allows for some focus and prioritisation, following advice from administrators of other similar systems to not 'try and do everything at once'.



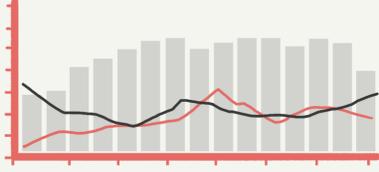


ANGUS

ACTIVE STREET HOMELESS ▼



ACTIVE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ▼



DATA QUALITY ⓘ PROGRESS RATING ⓘ

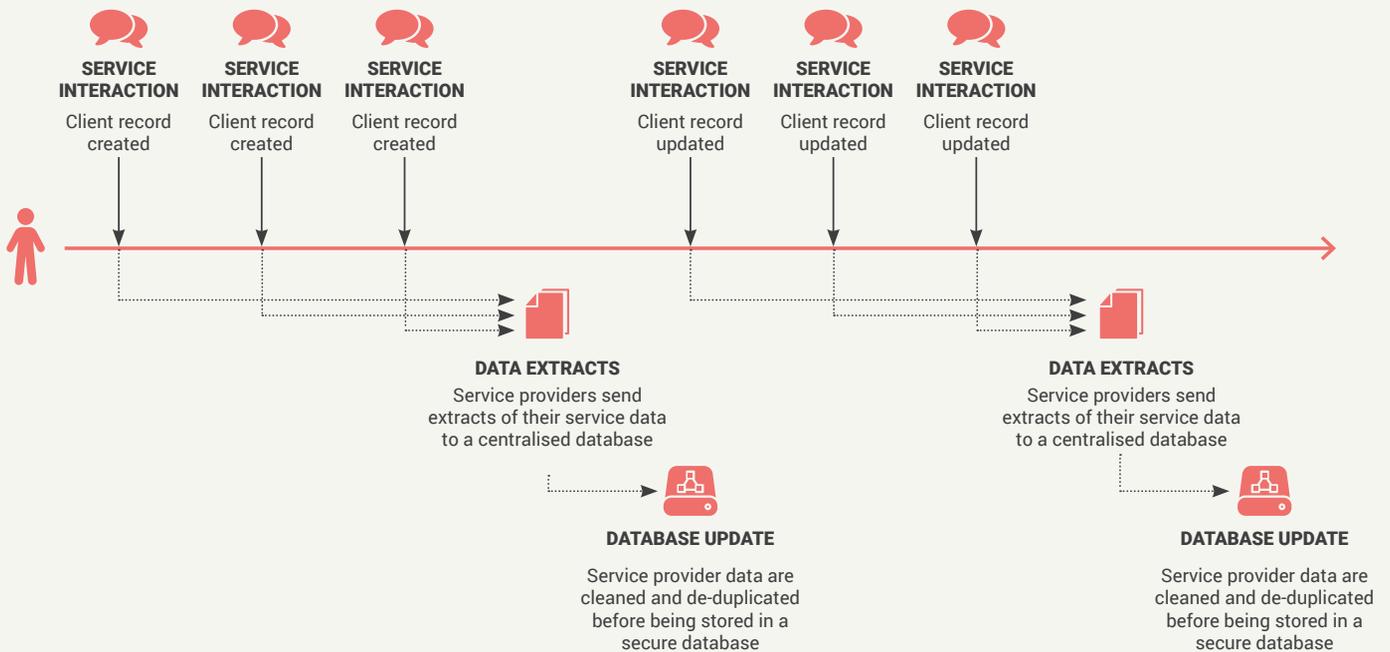


OPTION 1

Centralised reporting for street homelessness

Focus	Closest comparison	What is it?
<p>Primary focus on measuring progress. Secondary focus on evaluating system-level improvements. Minimal focus on enabling joined up working.</p>	<p>The Department of Housing and Urban Development data collections (USA)</p>	<p>A standard for data returns from organisations working with people experiencing street homelessness, used to build a picture of street homelessness and service usage. Client data are collected by a number of organisations and periodically reported back to a central data store.</p>

Diagram: how data is collected and used



How does it work?

This system configuration is designed to fill the gaps in current data collections from local authorities with relevant data from homelessness services. All agencies working with people who are street homeless or at risk of street homelessness would submit periodic returns about their clients' accommodation status and service use (either as extracts from their existing data collection activities or new data collections where they do not already exist). These returns would then be matched, de-duplicated and anonymised in a centralised data warehouse, allowing for periodic analysis at a national and local level. Unlike the systems built around case management, the value for data inputters is less immediate in this configuration, so providing access to meaningful local analysis will be an important factor in ensuring service providers' data capture is consistent.

What data are collected and by whom?

At a minimum, all participating agencies will need

to be able to supply information about their clients who are street homeless. This would mean dated and identifiable records of experiences of street homelessness (name, gender, date of birth, whether the individual slept out the previous night).

Local authority data – HL1, HL3 and PREVENT1 will provide a foundation for rough sleeping numbers and wider homelessness. Local authorities are already required to ask whether clients slept out the previous night and in the last three months, and submit this data as part of the HL1 return. This gives a continuous figure (from the question about the previous night) and a secondary figure for estimates (the last three months). Matched with temporary accommodation allocation data from HL3 and PREVENT1, we can start to build records of people who may also be at risk of street homelessness.

Street outreach – Where street outreach teams exist, they will already try to ascertain the accommodation status of people they meet on

the street. Where they can provide identifying information (i.e. name and date of birth), additional records of whether people slept out the previous night would be a valuable complementary data point to HL1 questions. This differs from the CHAIN model, where individuals are only recorded as street homeless if they are visibly seen 'bedded down', although this data could be captured by outreach teams in Scotland too.

Emergency accommodation providers – While people in emergency accommodation like night shelters may not technically be street homeless at that moment, many will be at significant risk of street homelessness, or may have recently slept out. Collecting information about recent periods of street homelessness at these services has the potential to address some of the gaps where people either have not presented to their local authority or have not been in contact with street outreach teams (this could be because they are hidden from or known to outreach teams when they have slept out). Evidence suggests that women in particular might be disproportionately represented in this hidden group as they are less likely to be visibly bedded down. People using hostels will often be identified by staff, and their stay will be recorded in administrative systems. However, lower threshold services like night shelters and winter shelters often do not collect this information, for a multitude of reasons (e.g. volunteer staff, chaotic environments, and clients who typically use these services because they are not required to engage much with staff). Bearing this in mind, it would be necessary to test new ways of collecting identifying information and previous experience of street homelessness in these contexts, and to accept that data submitted by these providers might always be somewhat incomplete.

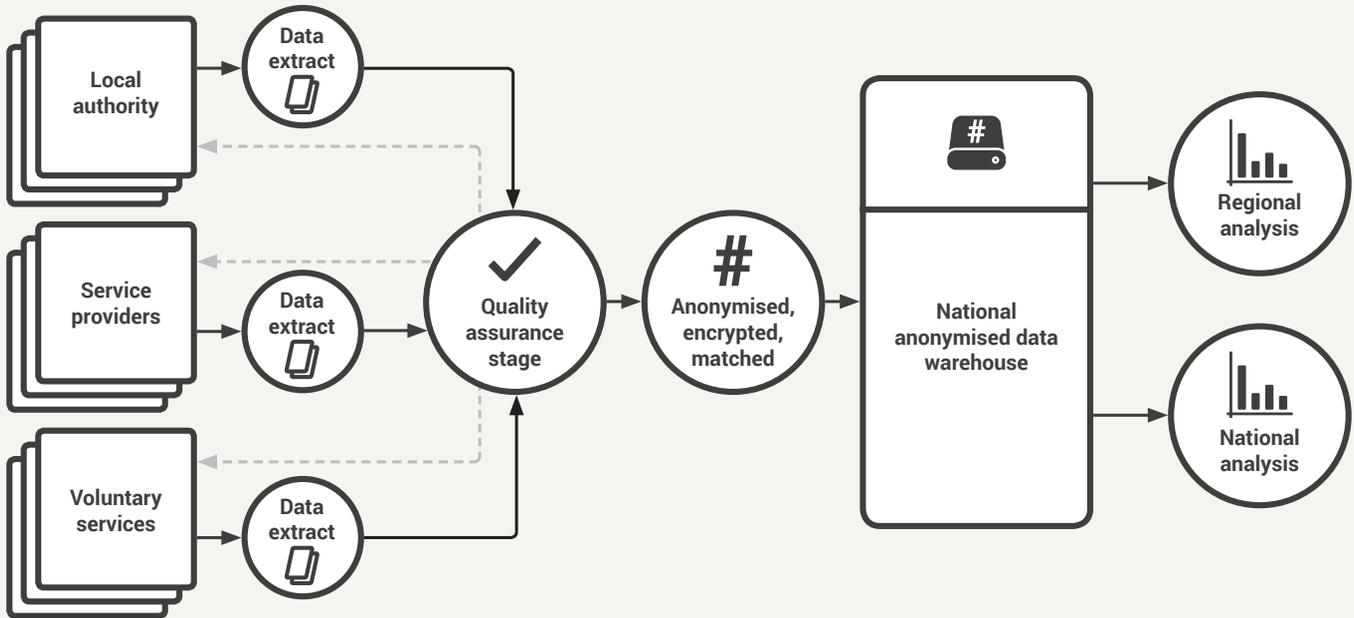
Areas with no street outreach – Numbers of street homeless people are thought to be small in most rural areas with no street outreach services although this remains an assumption, with no formal

mechanism for making contact with people in these areas. This means that other service providers could be involved with collecting data on people's accommodation status, including day centres, advice services and food services. As above, the variability of these contexts means that different methods of collecting data will need to be tested.

People not known to services – A significant challenge for any data collection on street homelessness is capturing information about people who are not known to or using specialist homelessness services and street outreach. CHAIN goes some way to addressing this gap by integrating with Streetlink – an alert service that allows members of the public to notify outreach teams of the whereabouts of people who are sleeping out. In London, outreach teams are on the street most nights and able to respond relatively quickly, within smaller geographic areas. However, SHIN in Wales is also trialling a version of Streetlink in which trained volunteers respond to alerts in rural areas. This is a model that could be replicated in Scotland, particularly if certain groups that are likely to encounter unsheltered people are specifically encouraged to raise alerts on the system. This might include park rangers, rubbish collectors, taxi drivers, security guards, etc.

Data quality assurance – Quality assurance processes would need to be implemented to ensure data returns from all submitting organisations are reliable and comparable with each other, and that sufficient feedback processes are in place to correct any data quality issues that arise. Local authority data returns already have a number of in-built quality assurance mechanisms, including a data transfer system with embedded quality assurance checks. Mirroring this approach across other service providers may require significant development so simplifying data requirements wherever possible, as well as designing and structuring data fields carefully to encourage quality will be important.

Diagram: how data are processed



How is it configured?

Participating agencies would submit periodic extracts to a national data warehouse in much the same way local authorities are already submitting HL1/3/PREVENT1 returns. This would need to be mediated via a secure staging area to pseudonymise client records and render them matchable. All agencies contributing data would be assigned a project ID number and a local authority/local area number to allow for granular local analysis. The frequency with which returns are submitted is not as important as other system configurations, although it will need to take into account the resource required for organisations to prepare their data to be sent. Similar systems that compile records from multiple agencies vary in their update frequency from annual (Continuum

of Care communities submitting data to the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the US) to quarterly (HL1 in Scotland) to monthly (Built for Zero communities in the US and Specialist Homelessness Service Collection for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

In future it may be possible to automate these returns through the use of application programming interfaces (APIs) or automated data exchanges. This technology is widely available and inexpensive but would require significant resource to set up as data exchange protocols would need to be negotiated with each participating agency and would vary depending on how their data are stored locally.

How does it contribute to ending street homelessness?

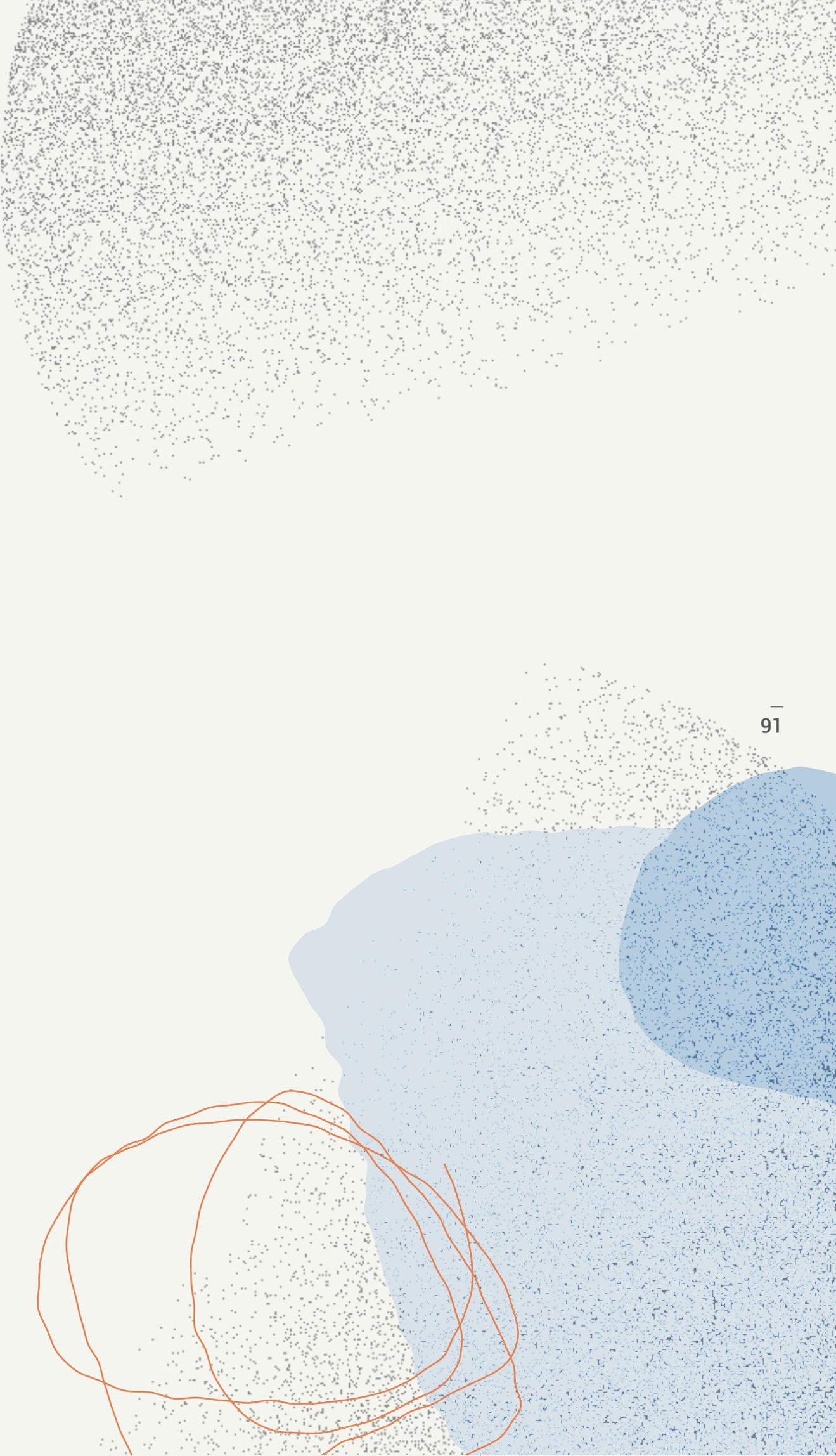
Expanding the reach of current data collection around street homelessness would give the Scottish Government and the homelessness sector a much clearer and more reliable picture of the challenge than currently exists. This will allow for progress towards ending street homelessness to be measured quantifiably, and in more detail than is possible with existing data. It has the potential to establish a precedent of accountability for government and local areas to demonstrate the measurable impact of their work in reducing street homelessness, while maintaining a high degree of autonomy for local areas to decide how they achieve and sustain those reductions.

Benefits and limitations

The biggest potential benefit of this approach is its focus. It builds on current data collection practices wherever possible and requires less input from organisations who do not currently formally collect data on clients who are street homeless than a more fully realised case-management style system.

The biggest potential limitation is the disconnect between data collected on the ground and the insights that can be drawn from the aggregate data at a local and national level. Without a clear feedback loop from the data they submit, it may be challenging to get consistent buy-in from service providers.

+ Lightest burden on service providers and local authorities.	– Technically quite difficult. Requires lots of data sharing protocols.
+ Lower update frequency is probably more palatable for providers and reduces technical barriers.	– Less clear feedback loop, meaning less clear benefit to users.
+ Fewer requirements for data security – contributing agencies will be responsible for their own data security until they submit their returns.	– Will likely require significant data cleaning in order to make the records matchable.
	– Requires new data to be collected with some providers – this could take time to build momentum and reliability.



City of Dundee by name list

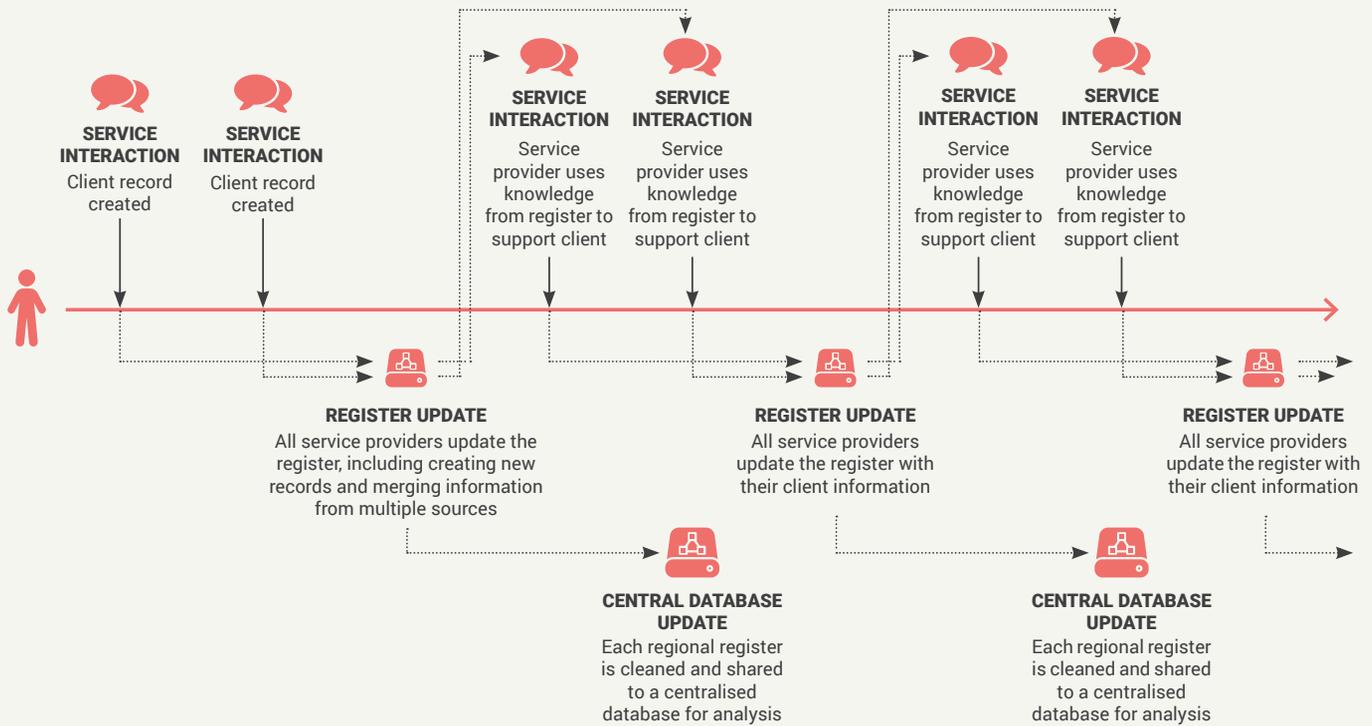
RISK LEVEL	NAME	D.O.B.	NOTES	SUPPORT NEEDS	CONTACTS
SH HIGH	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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OPTION 2

The Street Homeless Register

Focus	Closest comparison	What is it?
<p>Primary focus on enabling joined up working and measuring progress.</p> <p>Secondary focus on evaluating system-level improvements.</p>	<p>Some Continuum of Care (US), Built for Zero campaign (US), Multi-agency Safeguarding Hubs (UK)</p>	<p>A simple and focused register of people experiencing or at risk of street homelessness in each local area, used for monitoring numbers of rough sleepers. The register is hosted, maintained and managed by a lead organisation but its content is provided in collaboration with other partner agencies via informal knowledge-sharing.</p>

Diagram: how data are collected and used



How does it work?

This system configuration supports a coordinated and collaborative approach to moving people from the streets and into sustainable accommodation. Local areas work together to build a continuously updated by-name list of people experiencing or at risk of street homelessness in their area. These partnership groups then share relevant case-level information (either formally or informally) about the clients most at risk, and coordinate support accordingly. This serves as a constant feedback mechanism for the local area to measure their progress in reducing street homelessness and provides a simple foundation for continuous quality improvement approaches. This activity could comfortably sit outside of any other day-to-day data collection without much duplication of data entry, although maintaining the register would require frequent multi-agency meetings and a high level of communication between organisations.

Snapshots of each list can be regularly archived and aggregated at a national level to provide insight into the number of people who are street homeless, how long they are street homeless for, local changes in numbers over time and potentially other useful data about people’s circumstances.

What data are collected and by whom?

Establishing the register – Building the initial register would itself need to be a highly collaborative effort across local areas. The European Campaign to End Street Homelessness piloted a similar approach across a number of cities in 2016 (including the London boroughs of Croydon and Westminster). This exercise, named the ‘registry week’, used a similar methodology to point-in-time street counts combined with a needs assessment tool over the course of a week to identify as many people as possible who were

street homeless for inclusion. Beyond the creation of the initial list, organisations could continue to record their client information on their own systems without any changes, provided regular case conferencing meetings are in place to update the records.

Updating the register – Once the list has been registered, records about clients on the list and their cases would be updated at regular multi-agency meetings. Built for Zero communities, for example, maintain and support client records on their by-name lists in weekly meetings, while Glasgow and Edinburgh already conduct Interagency Street Network meetings to convene a group of workers from across the sector and beyond to respond to emerging needs from the street homeless population in their cities. The discussions at these meetings are recorded informally in spreadsheets, serving as a simple version of the register. The multi-agency nature of these meetings is absolutely essential to their success, ensuring that the people at greatest risk are represented in the list irrespective of which services they use, if any. In particular, they allow for light-touch involvement from non-homelessness services with ‘write only’ privileges (i.e. they can contribute information but cannot access client records at will). This is particularly important for statutory services like police and health, where workers may be able to provide valuable information about clients but need to be kept ‘at arm’s length’ to preserve trusting relationships with clients. Other attendees might include prison officers, faith groups providing services to homeless populations, foodbanks and housing and financial advice services.

Glasgow and Edinburgh’s Interagency Street Network meetings have also shown how valuable it is to have representation from local authorities, who are able to access additional information that would not otherwise be available to the group, such as temporary accommodation allocation

data. These meetings have the potential to be particularly useful in rural areas where knowledge sharing may be slower and street homelessness is far less visible.

Identifying information/demographic data – Identifying information is needed for several reasons: firstly, participating agencies need to be sure they are all talking about the same person. This would mean ideally a name, estimated age and physical description where more concrete information cannot be obtained. However, name and date of birth would be needed at a minimum for data to be aggregated nationally, even if it is not explicitly needed to provide support for that individual. Nationality/ethnicity would also be a useful data point to ascertain eligibility for public funds.

Current accommodation status – The focus of the register would initially be on people who are street homeless, particularly in cities. However, a register exclusively for street homelessness would be of limited value to rural areas with far fewer people sleeping rough. The list might therefore focus on those at greatest risk of street homelessness, which could include people in emergency or temporary accommodation with high support needs, or other unstable living situations. These living situations would need to be recorded on the register as part of the support offered to individuals. This would have additional benefits for analysis of accommodation service usage at a national aggregate level amongst people who also experience street homelessness.

Risk level – Similar by-name list activities (such as Built for Zero and the Interagency Street Network meetings in Edinburgh and Glasgow) seek to collectively decide how best to support the individuals most at risk. This focus on risk level acknowledges that people often do not move through homelessness in a linear or predictable way, and that taking a preventative approach

means reducing risk from multiple factors rather than only responding to moments of crisis. In Glasgow and Edinburgh, decisions about who is most at risk are currently made informally and collectively at ISN meetings by attendees. Careful consideration would need to go into how these decisions are made if a register approach was scaled more widely. Any activity that seeks to prioritise people's support based on risk also has the potential to exclude or miss people who fall outside of the definition of risk. This approach does go some way to address the longer term usefulness of a register and once street homelessness has been eradicated, local areas will still need to work together to sustain a state of zero street homelessness and prevent other forms of homelessness. Understanding who is at greatest risk of entering in to street homelessness in a multi-agency setting will allow local areas to respond quickly to those situations and prevent people from becoming street homeless.

Support needs – Capturing high-level support needs would help local areas to provide the right type of support for individuals on the register and respond to any changes in people's circumstances. Additionally, if support needs are recorded in a comparable way to HL1 data, they can be used to aggregate level analysis. A further extension of this information might use the register to provide visibility over the progress of referrals, information about who is supporting which clients and how, and help connect people from different organisations who might be providing support to the same people, although these are not essential to the core function of the register.

Discussion notes and warning flags – The register would act as a record of case-level discussions and work done to support individuals. This is primarily to support conversation during multi-agency meetings and record support activities, so may have limited value at an aggregate level. However, the register could also include functionality to

raise 'warning flags' for certain situations (e.g. lost contact, imminent prison release). This has value for shared case-management activities but may also provide additional useful context for outcome monitoring at a national level.

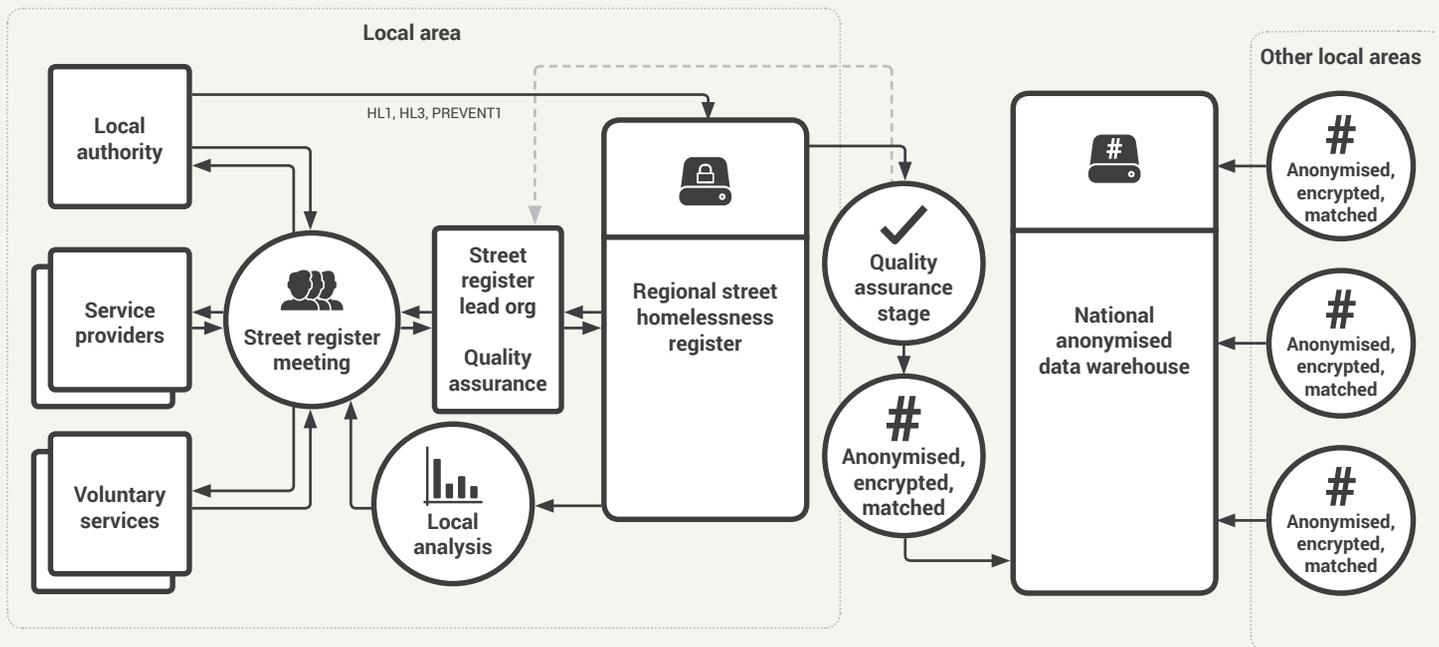
Local authority data linkage – If registers collect sufficient identifiable information about individuals (i.e. name and date of birth), they could be linked or cross referenced with local authority data from HL1, HL3 and PREVENT1. This would provide valuable insight into who is experiencing homelessness but not receiving local authority support and may be able to flag any other discrepancies between local authority records and records from the sector more widely.

Data quality assurance – Quality assurance processes would need to be implemented to ensure data are reliable and comparable across local areas. Much of this can be addressed at the point of data entry, with clear guidelines and templates for how the register should be maintained and how data should be captured. Additional data cleaning may be required before records can be de-duplicated and matched at a national level.

How is it configured?

Registers would be built collaboratively in local areas, with a lead organisation taking responsibility for maintaining the database and ensuring its security. Provided the data fields are consistent, the registers could be built and maintained in a number of ways (even down to a secure spreadsheet) and easily submitted to a secure national database. However, it would also be possible to automate returns to a national database provided the necessary quality assurance procedures were in place. This would reduce the administrative burden on each local area's lead organisation. Mechanisms would need to be put in places to ensure data quality is maintained. This might include measures to ensure there is sufficient geographic coverage and service representation from local areas, as well

Diagram: how data are processed



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how frequently the list is updated and archived. Built for Zero has published data quality scorecards for local areas to assess their own data quality, and are required to reach a certain threshold as the first activity for local areas joining the initiative.

An additional layer on top of the by-name list might provide some light analysis of the data including trends over time. Visualisations like run charts that plot data over time might help local areas measure their progress, understand the impact that any changes they make to services has on their data and support strategic activities like continuous quality improvement.

How does it contribute to ending street homelessness?

The use of a single local register, updated via multi-agency case conferencing represents a focused and structured methodology built around collective action towards reducing, and ultimately ending street homelessness. By making the challenge

visible to all participating organisations, local areas are able to see progress as it happens, effectively share their workload and move collectively towards a measurable end to street homelessness.

Benefits and limitations

The biggest potential benefit is the speed with which an approach like this could have a tangible positive impact on people experiencing homelessness. This option does not require much technology to build and maintain the register and creates minimal additional work for the organisations involved. However, benefits from formal multi-agency case-conferencing could be felt relatively quickly. In areas where such practices do not currently exist, this approach would help to build a quick, shared picture of street homelessness locally. Only having one organisation responsible for managing the data in each local area also simplifies processes around quality assurance, data sharing protocols and minimises costs.

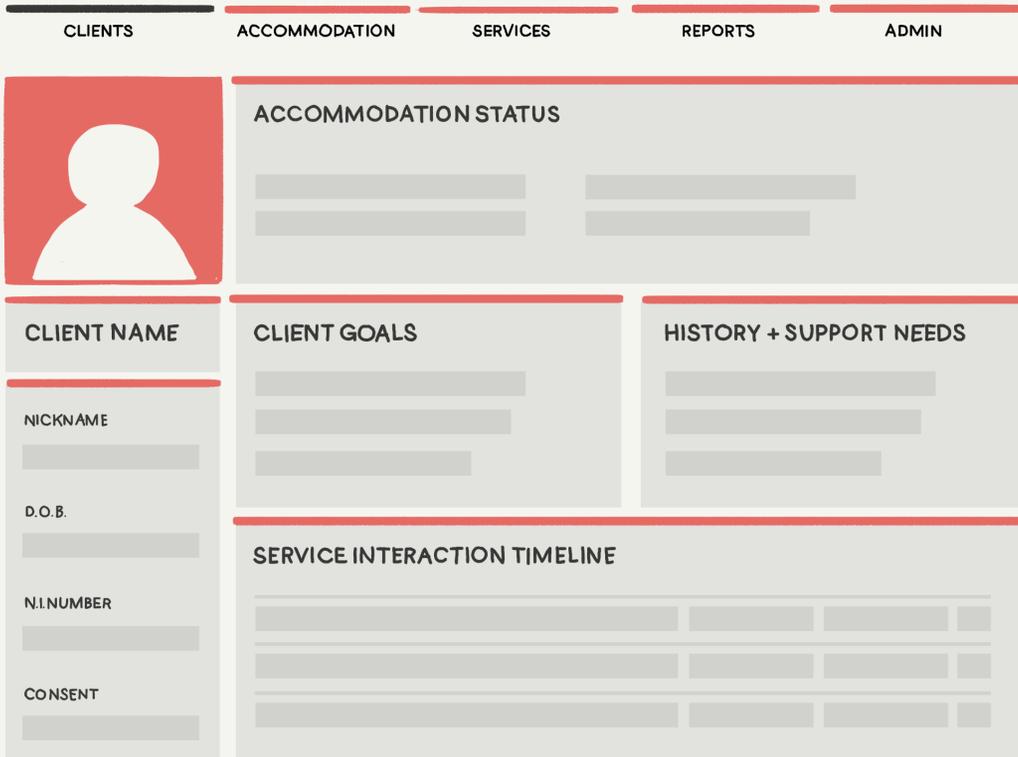
The register could also function as a foundation for a more comprehensive shared case management system further down the line by helping to establish the collaborative practices that a shared case management approach requires without the heavier upfront infrastructure investment.

The biggest potential limitation is the trade-off in reliability of the data for national reporting that comes from such a light-touch method of data collection. While the register goes some way to address current gaps in data by involving a wider group of stakeholders, there is still room for people to fall through the gaps of data collection (e.g. someone's record might not get updated on the list if the only service that interacts with them is not involved in the multi-agency case conferencing meetings). This is not an insurmountable challenge, and the register data collection could be supplemented by other data sources, but minimal requirements from participating organisations is both a strength and a weakness.

Another significant challenge with a more fully realised version of this approach is the need to build and maintain momentum around continuous quality improvement methodology. Supporting local areas to learn from and respond to the data they collect is where Built for Zero has seen its biggest impact, but the resources needed to galvanise local areas around this idea is not insignificant (Built For Zero have a team of full-time advisors to assist local areas with quality improvement programmes). While this is not an essential component of the street homeless register approach, multi-agency case-level meetings without the additional layer of analysis will not allow local areas to truly understand whether their efforts are making a sustainable impact.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Strongly supports joined up working.+ Continuous quality improvement approach builds in a mechanism that holds everyone accountable for progress collectively.+ Potential for rapid impact and does not require national scale buy-in to be useful.+ Technically easiest.+ Can be done at very low cost without much resource investment from participating organisations.+ Simple for local areas to use. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Non-participation from services may create blind spots in the data.- May not be able to provide the same richness of data as some of the other options.- Reliability of the data for reporting purposes is heavily dependent on which services are represented at multi-agency meetings.- Unable to capture information about service use or resource management.- Careful consideration needed for the privacy requirements around multi-agency meetings.- The basic premise of reductions in street homelessness does not necessarily take into account the longer term sustainability of accommodation placements. |
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Perth + Kinross client relationship manager

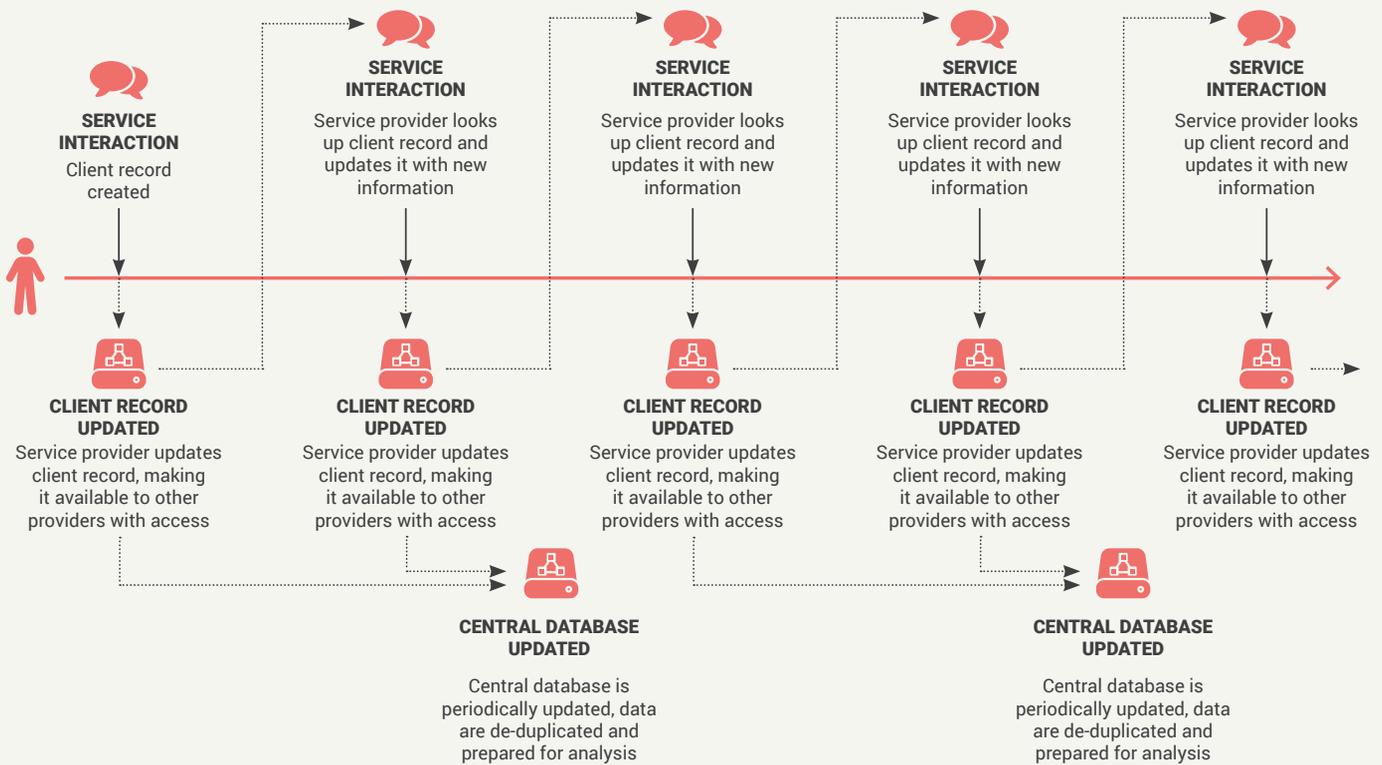


OPTION 3

Shared case management

Focus	Closest comparison	What is it?
<p>Primary focus on enabling joined up working. Secondary focus on measuring progress. Smaller focus on evaluating system-level improvements.</p>	<p>GMThink (Manchester), HIFIS (Canada), SHIN (Wales), CHAIN (London)</p>	<p>A real-time person-centred, shared client relationship management software system, used to better coordinate client support across services. The system is structured around client records (rather than organisations), which can be accessed and updated by organisations working with the client.</p>

Diagram: how data are collected and used



How does it work?

This system configuration is built around multiple local or regional case management dashboards. Local areas would have access to a real-time ‘client relationship management’ tool that maintains records for people currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness in their area. Service providers would be able to view client records (including previous service interactions, current support needs and client goals) to inform the support they provide. They would also be able to update client records as people’s circumstances change. Data from these local client relationship management records would then be periodically de-duplicated and aggregated at a national level.

What data are collected and by whom?

Current accommodation status – This would be the minimum required information for any service interaction. Emergency accommodation providers such as hostels would collect this as

part of their own administrative data, while other accommodation providers would be connected to local authority HL3 and PREVENT1 data. Non-residential services (e.g. day centres, street outreach) would need to ask people to provide this information. The more frequently the case management system is used, the more reliable this data would become.

Where people are not already known to services, an additional and potentially valuable layer to this information could come from Streetlink referrals (or a similar system). This would allow members of the public to raise alerts to the system when they encounter people who they think may be street homeless, or for individuals to self-refer. Pushing these alerts to a shared case-management system would enable a more rapid response than is currently possible with Streetlink, where referrals are pushed to outreach teams via the local authority.

Assessments and support needs – Assessment and support needs information might initially be populated via local authority homeless applications (HL1 and PREVENT1 data). Where individuals have not approached the local authority, another service provider would need to add support need details according to the assessment criteria within the client relationship management system. Ideally, this data would be based on a shared assessment tool like the one used in Ireland and hosted on the PASS system. An additional function within a case management system would be to share risk assessment information across agencies, to mitigate risk to workers and service users.

The ‘story’ – A significant potential benefit of a shared client relationship management system would be the potential to prevent people from having to repeat their story with different service providers. While this has less immediate value to the data collection at a national level, it would provide a huge benefit to service users and would support better relationships between staff and clients, especially if people are able to shape the way their story is represented on the system.

Service usage – Also known as ‘timeline events’ on similar systems, service use is recorded at any interaction point between a client and service provider. This would include referrals, accommodation or service check-ins, appointments, street contacts or other updates to client records. Over time, these would begin to build up a picture of individuals’ service use. The detail of these interactions (e.g. case notes) would be hidden unless specific sharing permissions are granted by caseworkers, and ideally agreed with clients.

Resource data – Resource data could be recorded as an extension of service usage data over time. This might include costs associated with certain types of support, occupation rates in accommodation projects or staff hours spent on cases.

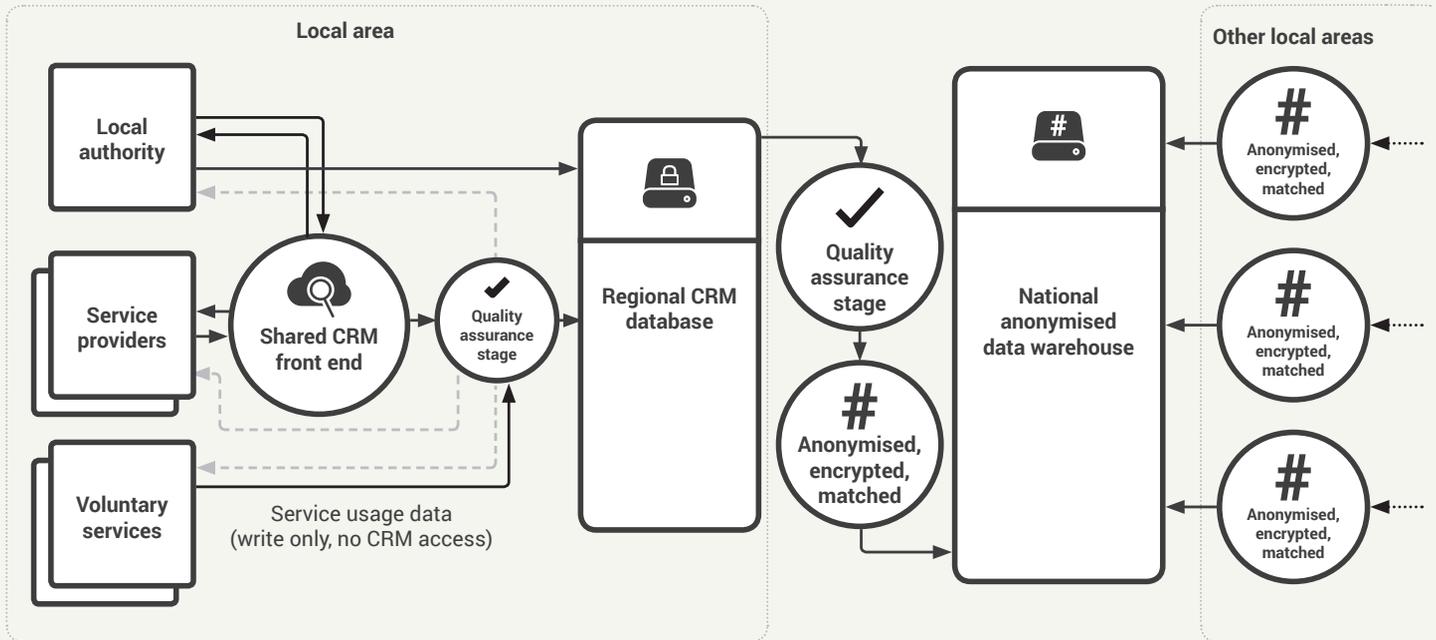
Data quality assurance – Quality assurance processes would need to be implemented to ensure data are reliable and comparable across local areas. Much of this can be addressed at the point of data entry through the design of the system interface, ensuring that open text fields are kept to a minimum and guidance for usage is clear and intuitive. However, additional data cleaning may be required before records can be de-duplicated and matched at a national level. All agencies contributing data will need to be assigned a project ID number and a local authority/local area number to allow for granular local analysis.

How is it configured?

Participating agencies would have access to a ‘front-end’ version of the CRM system. Each staff member would have their own login credentials (associated with their organisation), allowing for a high degree of control over client data privacy – based on their agency, role and working relationship with clients. For case management to function effectively, data would need to be uploaded and made available to other system users in close to real time. This means that users would ideally be accessing and inputting data directly from the system’s front-end. However, indirect data input is possible provided it is done with sufficient frequency (e.g. some smaller accommodation providers using PASS submit paper summaries of service use nightly to be added to the system). A cloud-based database with a responsive front end portal would be accessible on any internet-connected device. Provisions can be made for offline data collection (e.g. where mobile service is poor) – CDPSoft, for example, have developed ‘offline forms’ that allow frontline staff to complete custom forms without an internet connection, which can be uploaded automatically at a later point.

Each region would have a secure data warehouse environment, hosted on separate or partitioned databases. This would allow for a degree of regional flexibility in the variables that are

Diagram: how data are processed



collected on the system. However, certain fixed variables (i.e. identifying details for client records, accommodation status) would need consistency so that they can be aggregated nationally.

There are numerous vendors who provide multi-agency client relationship management products, including a number with specific experience in multi-agency client relationship management systems for housing and homelessness. Additionally, a number of open-source products exist outside of the UK, including Open Path in the US which is available under a General Public Usage licence. There may be some potential to use or build on these systems' designs.

How does it contribute to ending street homelessness?

This system option recognises the pivotal role that coordinated support plays in addressing homelessness when it happens, and the need for organisations to more closely align their objectives around prevention and supporting people to sustain exits from homelessness. However, it also provides a high degree of flexibility for local areas to address their own unique challenges.

Building a great shared case management system ensures that all contributing service providers tangibly benefit from the data collection and creates opportunity for a diverse set of service providers to collectively build the picture of homelessness in their local area. The data collected within the case management system becomes a live record of local areas' homeless population, allowing them and national government to monitor progress to reducing and sustaining reductions in homelessness.

Benefits and limitations

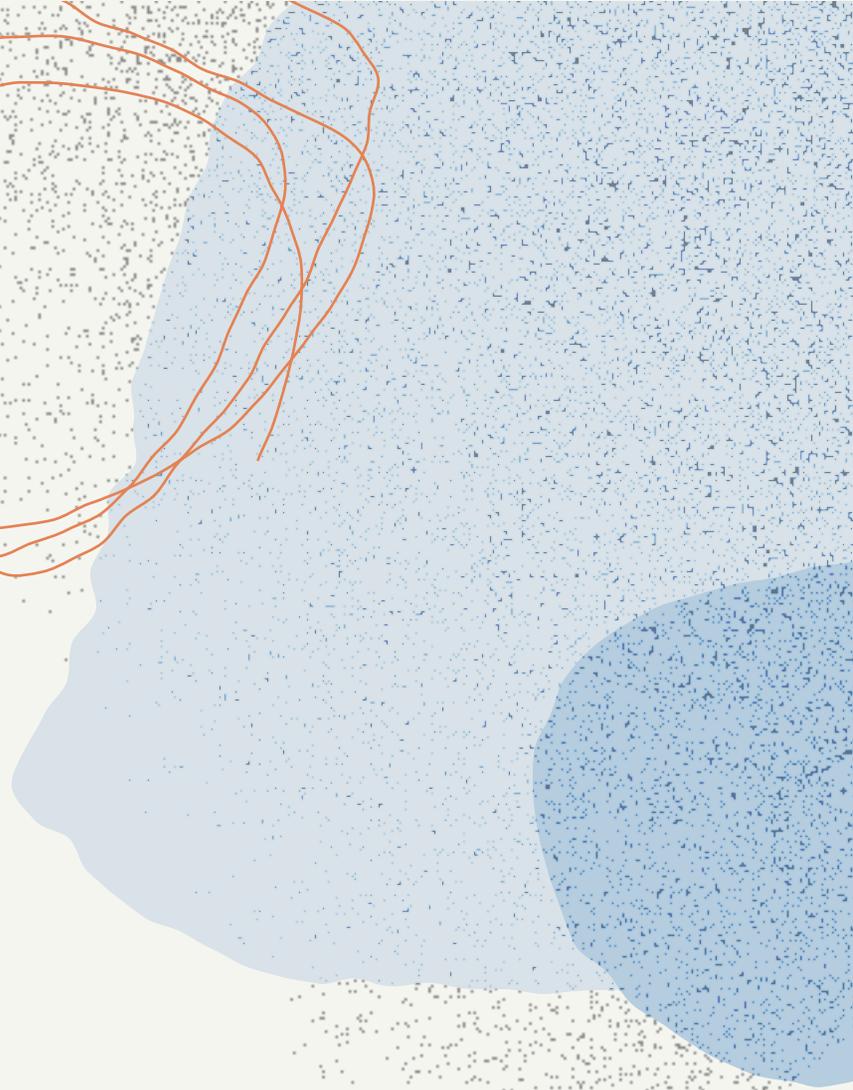
The biggest potential benefit is the service improvements that will come through multi-agency case conferencing. This is something that was raised by people experiencing homelessness and most service providers as a critical practice that needs to grow and be better supported.

The biggest potential limitation could be the difficulty of encouraging users to work on a shared system. Many service providers will have their own internal client relationship management systems and they may be reluctant to move to a new system or duplicate data entry across multiple systems. An alternative solution for data entry may be possible (e.g. APIs, periodic data exchanges, offline forms) but users with their own CRMs will still need to use a separate system to look up shared client records.

Another limitation of this approach is that due to the nature of third-sector funding, the Scottish Government has no leverage for requiring organisations to participate in this system.

Therefore, if organisations do decide not to use the system, this may impact on any outcome measures and national statistics produced from it. For example, if an outcome measure was based on returns to street homelessness after receiving support from a local authority, if there were no outreach teams in a particular area, or an outreach organisation decided not to participate, then that local authority may be particularly 'successful' at ending street homelessness by virtue of the fact that there are no suitable organisations within the area that can be used to capture 'failure', i.e. returns to the street. Careful consideration will therefore need to be made on what statistics/ outcomes the system will be measuring, that these are suitable given the limited control of the Scottish Government to mandate participation, and also the patchwork of third-sector organisations that may end up using the system.

- + Case-level collaboration is being called for by service providers, service users and the advisory panel.
- + Potential for quick impact where systems are well adopted.
- + Does not require national scale buy-in to be useful (i.e. is useful at a local level).
- Navigating different organisational priorities will be a challenge.
- If a shared system is not used, data sharing protocols will be most difficult in this scenario.





ACTIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS

PAST RESEARCH + ANALYSIS



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LAYER

Homelessness data lab layer

Focus	Closest comparison	What is it?
<p>Primary focus on evaluating system-level improvements. Smaller focus on measuring progress. Minimal focus on enabling joined up working.</p>	<p>SAIL Wales, SHIP Scotland, Integrated Data Systems (e.g. NYC CIDI)</p>	<p>A permanent and accessible research resource that collates various administrative data relevant to homelessness.</p>

The three options above represent quite focused approaches to homelessness data collection. However, an additional layer that could be applied to any of these options is the creation of a permanent and accessible research resource that collates various administrative data relevant to homelessness. This would enable government, local authorities and third-sector organisations to undertake analysis on a broad pool of linked administrative data.

This approach is similar to the Integrated Data Systems found in the US. Though IDS can be used to interrogate single data sources, for example longitudinal analyses of repeat presentations at outreach services and hostels, their main benefit is in bringing together data relating to different policy areas. Culhane (2016) and Culhane et al. (2010) identify several ways in which IDS can be used to examine multi-systems usage. Interventions in one domain, such as street outreach, could be designed and evaluated in order to reduce service use in another area, such as health or social care. Through predictive analytics, programmes can be better designed in order to target particular populations who are identifiable through their patterns of interactions with other services. For example, can young people be identified prior to becoming homeless through their patterns of care and school absenteeism? Analysts can identify which programmes/interventions in policy area one, for example Housing First, have the greatest long term gains in terms of reduced service use in other areas and over the life course.

An additional example of this approach using Wales' SAIL databank can be seen in the Supporting People data linkage project.⁸ The Supporting People (SP) programme in Wales provides housing-related support to vulnerable people with the aim of helping them live as independently as possible and prevent homelessness. Roughly 60,000 people are

supported each year through SP funded projects. In 2016, Welsh Government completed a feasibility study using individual level data relating to recipients of SP from two local authorities in Wales, linked to administrative health data. The feasibility project looked at whether variations in health service usage, including A&E and GP visits, and reasons for seeking medical assistance, changed before and after receipt of SP funding. The results of the feasibility study were compelling enough for the Welsh Government to fund a further four-year study to gather SP client level data from all 22 local authorities in Wales, in order to examine the wide scale impacts of the fund. The full-scale project will also examine whether a suitable comparison group can be identified in order to measure the impacts of SP funded support, compared with a group with similar characteristics who have not received SP funded support.

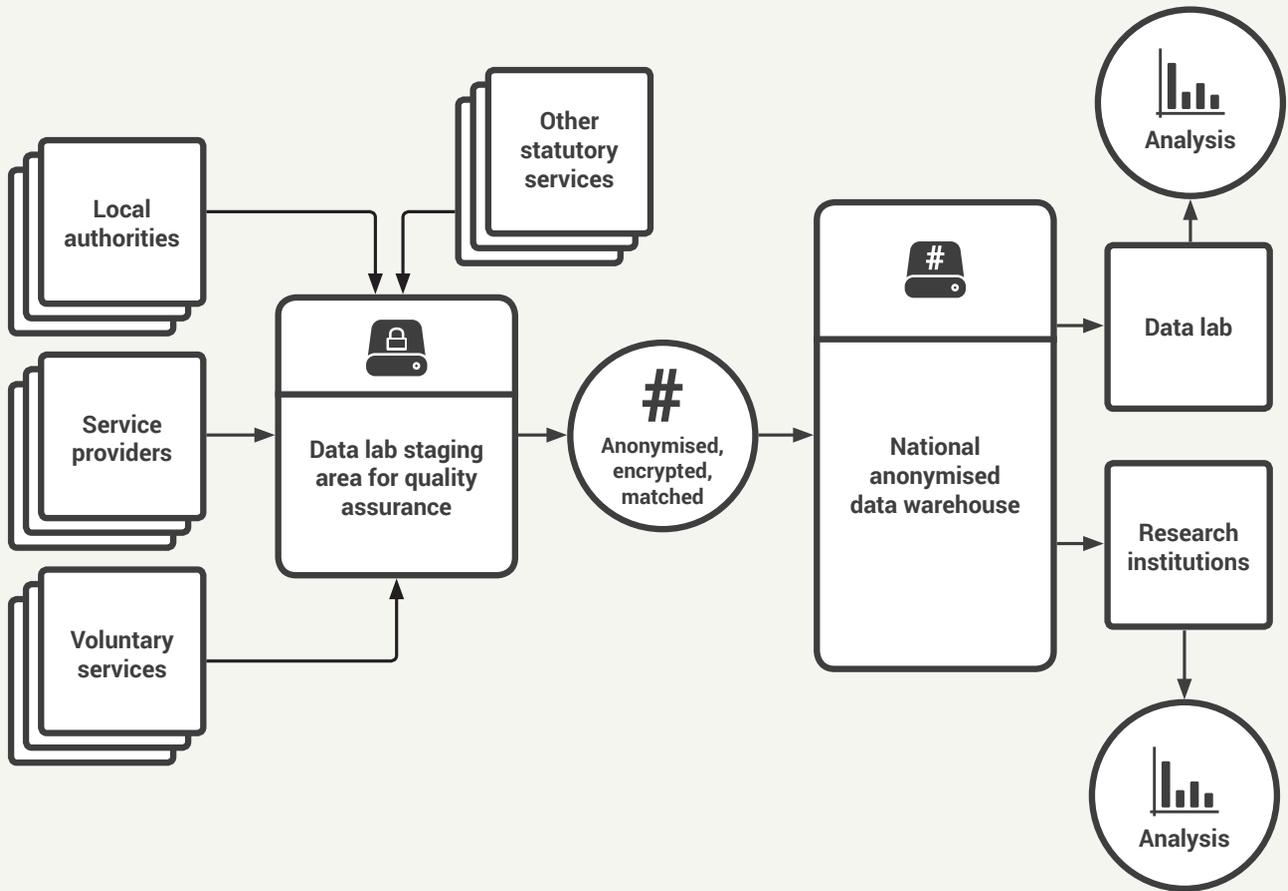
In their report on ending homelessness, Crisis (2018) outline a series of recommendations related specifically to data collection. Across all regions of Great Britain, the report suggests that infrastructures should be put in place to enable data linkage to be undertaken. Though Scotland has made some headway toward this, including Waugh et al.'s (2018) data linkage between HL1 and health data, a more permanent research resource would help the sector evaluate the impact of its services, and at a lower cost than is currently possible.

This resource could take two forms:

- The Economic and Social Research Council has continued to fund the Administrative Data Research Centre (ADRC) Scotland. Though the remit of the ADRC may have changed, it may be able to act as guardian of data, provide a review and governance function over projects wishing to use administrative data, and ensure safe access to linked administrative data.
- A Data Lab for Scotland could be commissioned with the capacity to undertake analysis on behalf of the Scottish Government, local authorities, and others. For example, this might work in a similar way to the Ministry of Justice's 'Justice Data Lab'. Organisations would submit secure client data to the lab, which would then be linked to statutory homelessness data in order to explore the incidence of statutory homelessness post-intervention, and compare this to a matched comparison group based on basic demographic characteristics. A standard report is then provided back to the submitting organisation, which summarises, for a non-technical audience, whether the intervention had any significant effects.

A first step towards building this kind of data linkage infrastructure in Scotland would be to examine the quality of the linkage to the population spine for those who were identified as experiencing rough sleeping in HL1 returns. People experiencing street homelessness have, by definition, chaotic housing patterns and therefore may not be captured completely when matching to the population spine, which uses registrations of addresses. An integrated data system that follows the same data linkage approach as adopted by Waugh et al. (2018) will have to satisfy itself that there are good quality linkage rates for people sleeping rough and that there are no systematic biases arising from the nature of the population.

Diagram: how data are processed



- + Could be started relatively quickly because it does not require agencies to change their data collection practices.
- Still needs additional work to complete the picture of rough sleeping.
- Much slower response time / no real-time benefits.
- Would require lots of data sharing protocols to be negotiated and drawn up.

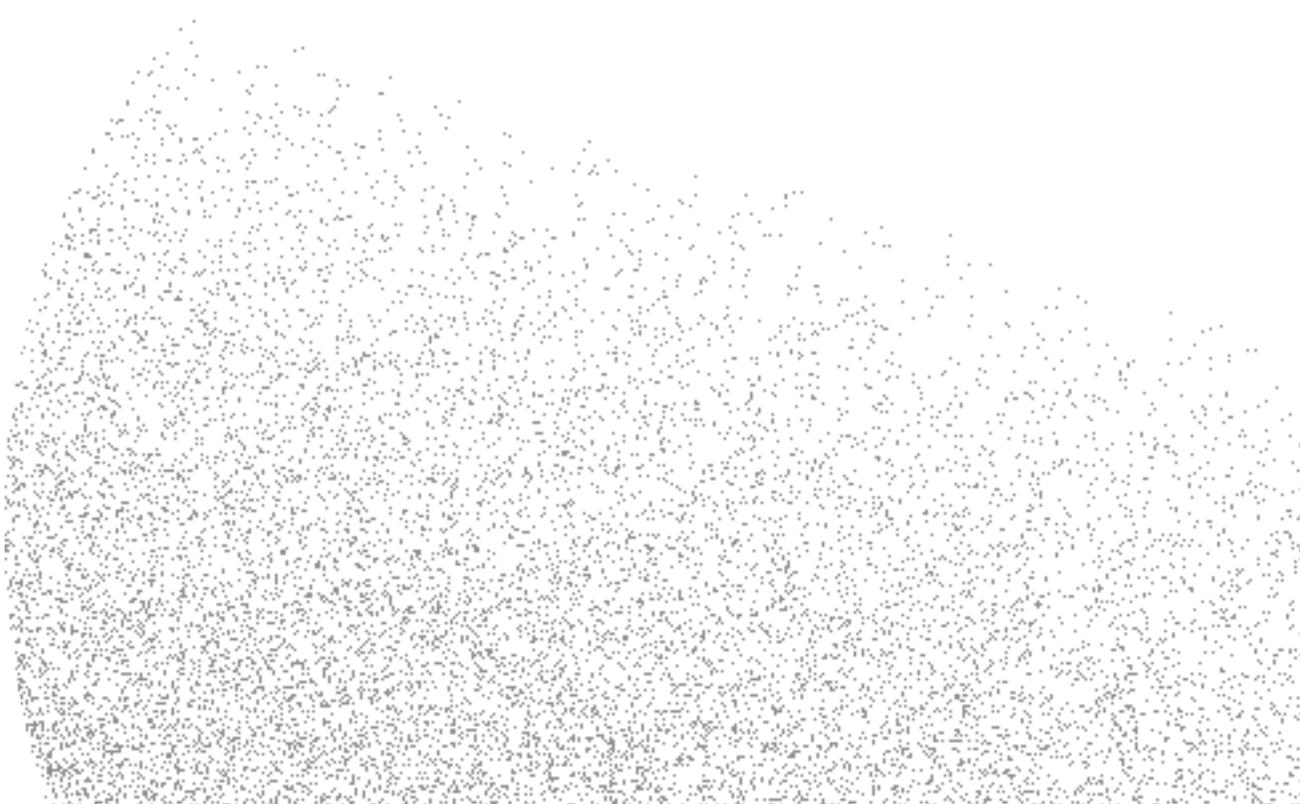
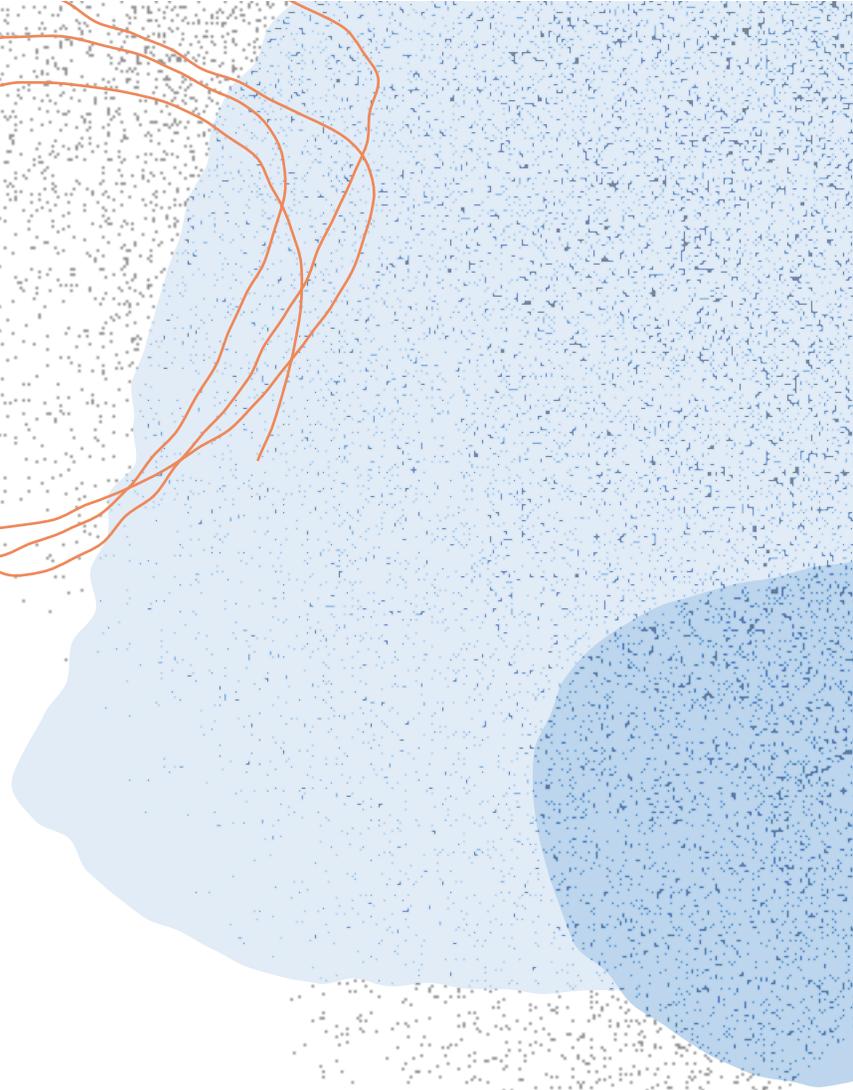
5.6 Roadmaps, prototypes and pilots

The process for developing any of the data collection systems above will not be a linear one. The number and diversity of stakeholders means that if the data collection is to be successful, it will require ongoing consultation, engagement and learning through prototyping and piloting to ensure the system works for its stakeholders.

A report published by the Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) in 2016 discusses the potential pitfalls of introducing technology driven systems into complex organisations: 'During stable times organisations are tempted to build big systems – multi-year projects of brain melting complexity, like the Death Star... The technological environment is now moving too quickly for us to take years building big solutions. If we try we'll get blown up... The 'big planning' approach to building a Death Star just isn't relevant to speculative exploratory work. In fact, it's wasteful.' The report goes on to suggest instead: 'Organisations need a number of flexible, small solutions that can be easily combined in different ways. To survive we need to incubate ideas quickly, failing fast and learning from the experience. A project failing isn't a bad thing if it fails early, in fact that's something to celebrate!'⁹

The following roadmaps outline indicative approaches to the development of each system configuration – from prototypes and pilots, to establishing a minimum viable version of the system, to mid- and long-term development. However, these roadmaps are by no means set in stone – in fact, the development of any of these system configurations will require an approach that is responsive to the emerging needs of stakeholders, with the potential to build components that can be configured into a bigger whole. They should therefore be viewed as a starting point rather than a fixed plan.

Activities on each roadmap are broken down into four broad categories. **Learning prototypes** are activities that set out to address specific, unanswered questions about how the system might work. The primary objective should be to answer those key questions, as opposed to a **pilot**, which aims to 'stress test' the system in a real-world context. As a result, the methods used to create these prototypes can afford to be 'hacked' together to approximate how the system (or even a part of the system) might function. A pilot, on the other hand, requires a higher fidelity execution that is closer to a fully functioning model of the system. **Feature development** activities represent additional functionality that, while not essential to the core functioning of the system, could be built to draw out new forms of value from the data collection. Finally, a number of actions relate specifically to **scaling** the system nationally and ensuring it functions effectively at scale.



Option 1: Centralised reporting for street homelessness

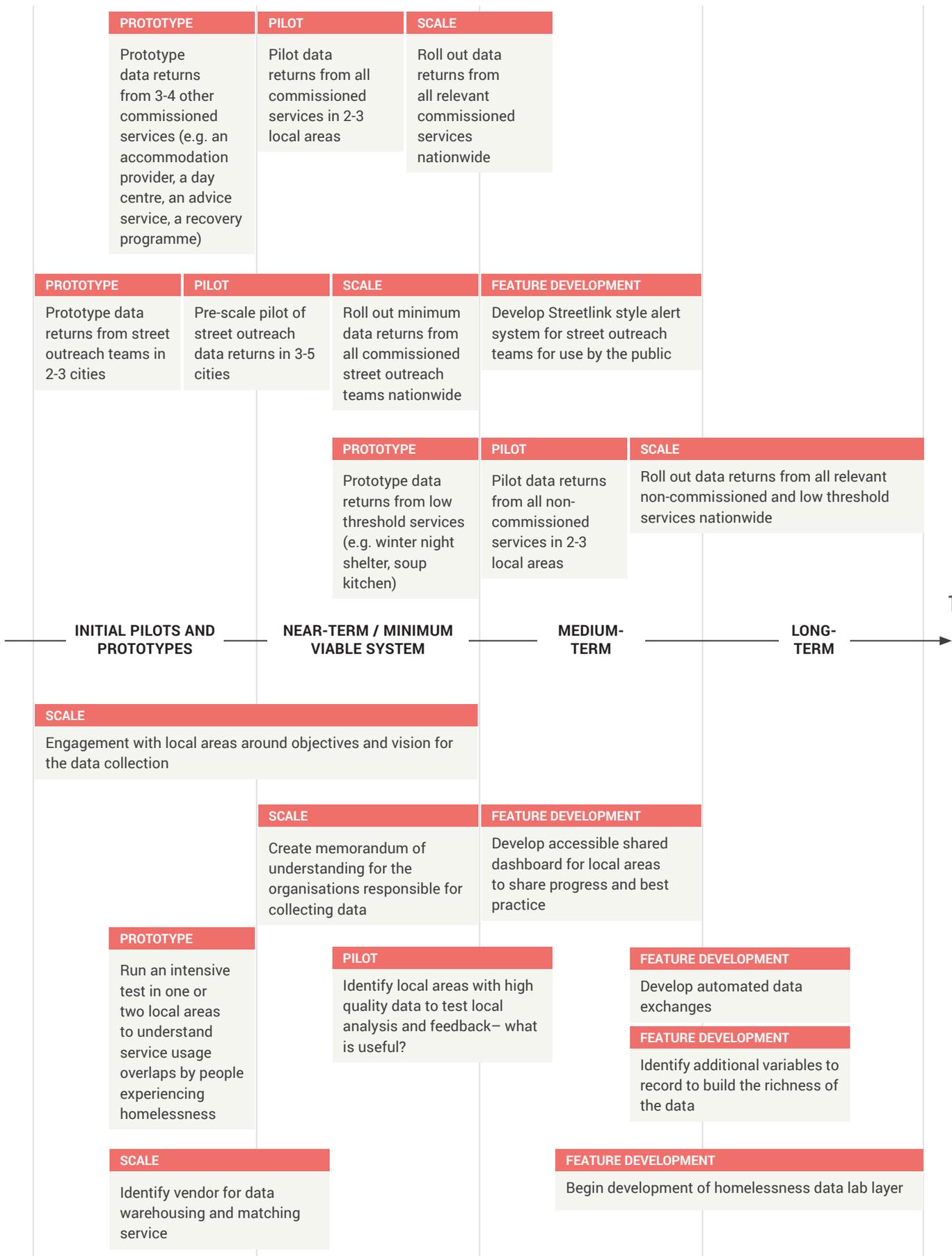
Initial prototypes should seek to develop consistent practices around data collection for street outreach teams to understand the feasibility and reliability of reported data on street interactions with rough sleepers – what are the challenges in collecting identifying personal information? Another prototype might explore data collection from all commissioned homelessness services in a local area. How different is the data picture of street homelessness when drawing on all commissioned services compared with the current data collections from local authorities? This would be of particular value for learnings in more rural regions, especially those without street outreach teams. Additional smaller scale exploratory prototypes could be tested in low threshold services (e.g. night shelters, soup kitchens) to test ways of collecting consistent data on service usage, and prototypes/pilots of a Streelink-style alert service for the public to share information about the location of rough sleepers with outreach teams.

From the operational side, it would be important to understand how much data cleaning is required to match and de-duplicate client records, and how feasible it is to overlay this data with HL1, HL3 and PREVENT1 records. This could be tested at a local level using data from the initial prototypes and pilots. Other features could be developed further down the line to improve usability and usefulness for local areas – this could include exploring ways of automating data returns from local areas and developing a shared dashboard for local areas to monitor their progress in the national context.

Questions to be answered through prototyping and piloting

- How should findings from the data collection be shared and published?
- What is the mechanism for feeding analysis back to local areas?
- What are the consistent variables required from each provider?
- Is it possible to identify those who are not currently engaging with local authorities?
- What are the requirements for data matching and de-duplication?
- How can identifying data be captured in low threshold environments?
- Is it possible to create automated data exchanges?
- What is the overlap of service use? What is the smallest number of organisations that can be required to submit returns to build an accurate picture based on a fuller understanding of service usage in local areas? – This could be an analysis exercise from a pilot.

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITY



OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

Option 2: The Street Homeless Register

The street homeless register approach to the data collection has the benefit of building on practices that are already established in many local areas – if not in case-conferencing meetings like the Interagency Street Networks in Edinburgh and Glasgow, then at least in informal networks of knowledge sharing between service providers. A first step would therefore be to formalise the information sharing that already occurs as a small-scale pilot, with a view to testing the collection of a set of core variables consistently in multiple cities.

Alongside these small pilots, it should be established whether similar collaborative case-conferencing meetings happen in more rural areas. If so, data collection could be formalised around their activities as a small scale pilot. If not, these should be prototyped in a few rural local areas to understand whether they function differently to city-based networks and to learn what kind of data output they produce. All of these prototypes and pilots can be done very cheaply and with minimal technology (e.g. a secure spreadsheet) – the emphasis should be more on establishing consistent practices. Pilots can then be scaled nationally, starting with the cities with highest estimated populations of rough sleepers. A separate prototype could explore the value of a Streetlink-style alert system that feeds into outreach teams and/or the multi-agency meeting. In particular, this could focus on engaging certain groups who might have greater visibility into street populations than the general public (e.g. bin collectors, taxi drivers, park rangers, security staff).

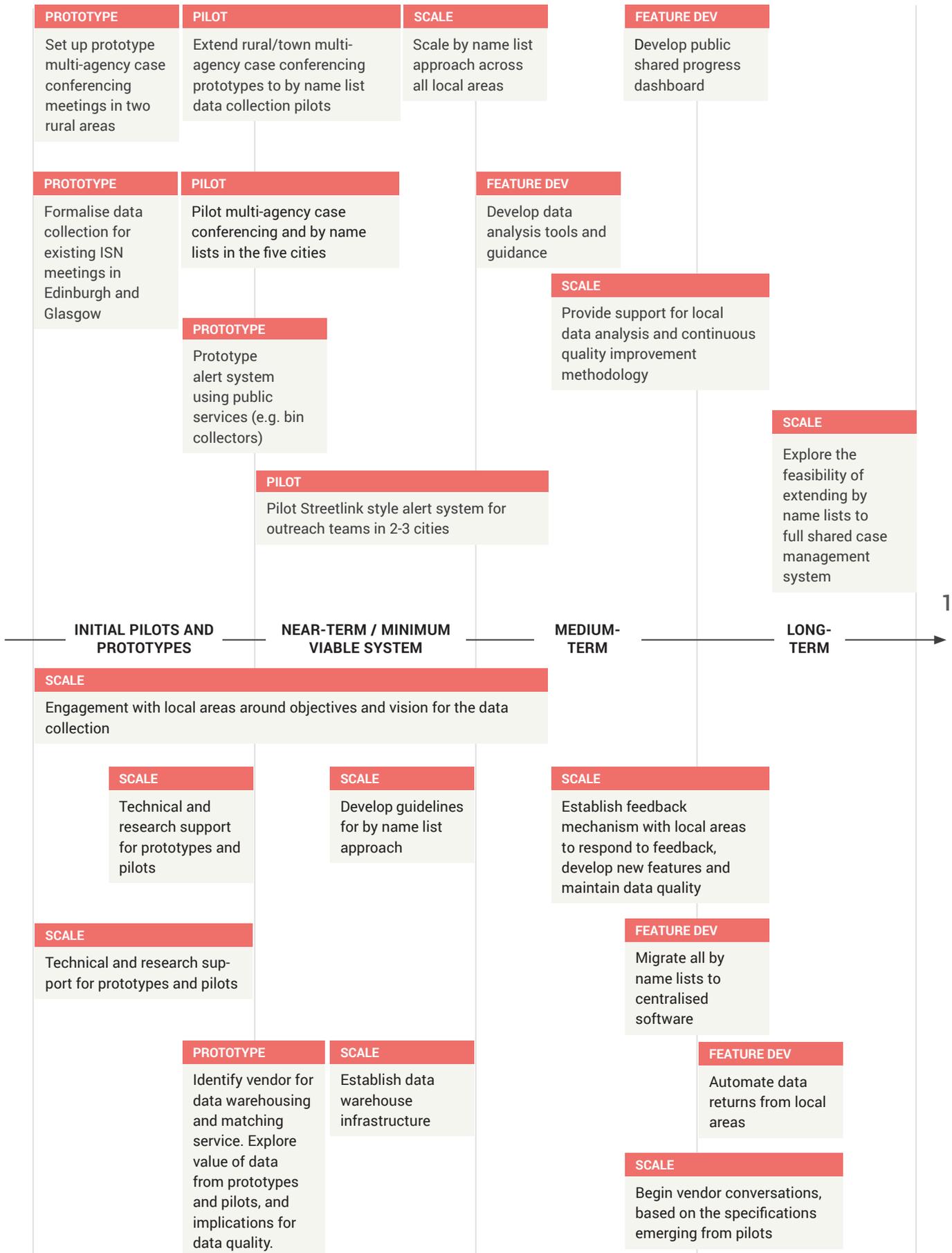
The main operational considerations would be supporting the prototype and pilot activities and identifying a suitable service for data warehousing, and matching and de-duplicating client records. Once the data collection practices are established nationally, a system could be developed for data input that automates returns to the central database. This would remove the need for local

areas to submit their data periodically and allow government to consistently deploy updates, new features and extensions to the data collection where relevant. One example might be the development of a shared dashboard for local areas to monitor their progress.

Questions to be answered through prototyping and piloting

- Is there a need for a data collection system for outreach work (e.g. CHAIN)?
- What is the right indicator of progress for local areas?
- How should prioritisation of cases work, if at all? How can this be done fairly (i.e. without returning to a priority need model)?
- What is the right frequency for local areas to meet? Is there a minimum required representation from organisations for it to be useful? To produce reliable data?
- What is the right frequency for national returns?
- How are lead organisations to be identified? If this is not the responsibility of local authorities, what needs to happen to ensure lead organisations' neutrality?
- What structures need to be in place to ensure consistency across the country? How is data quality maintained?

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITY



Option 3: Shared case management

The shared case management approach has significant potential value for local areas, but it is also likely to be the most difficult approach to establish due to the 'network effect', where the value of the system is proportional to the number of contributing organisations. This means that early versions, prototypes and pilots may not feel as valuable to local areas in the short term as they have the potential to be in the long term. One way to mitigate this effect during early testing would be to run a number of simultaneous learning prototypes that aim to recreate elements of the system, functioning as they would at scale. One prototype might seek to simulate a full version of the shared case management system in a very focused local area (reducing complexity by limiting the geographical area, number of participating organisations and number of clients on the system). Another might be tested in a larger geographical area like a city, but focus on a smaller subset of the larger data collection (e.g. only collecting data on rough sleepers with addictions). A final prototype could explore how a system might work where service users are responsible for their own data, granting access to service providers at each interaction point (reducing complexity on the software system side and providing an opportunity to understand more about how data ownership might work for service users). Based on learnings from these tests, the next step would be to establish a fully functioning shared case management system pilot in a few local areas to stress test the system, understand how it is used and how useful the data output ultimately is before wider scaling.

From an operational perspective, the first priority is to explore the software and IT infrastructure needed to support a shared case management system. Many vendors provide tools that would meet these needs. It might also be the case that the tools used to carry out learning prototypes are not the same as the tools used at scale, depending

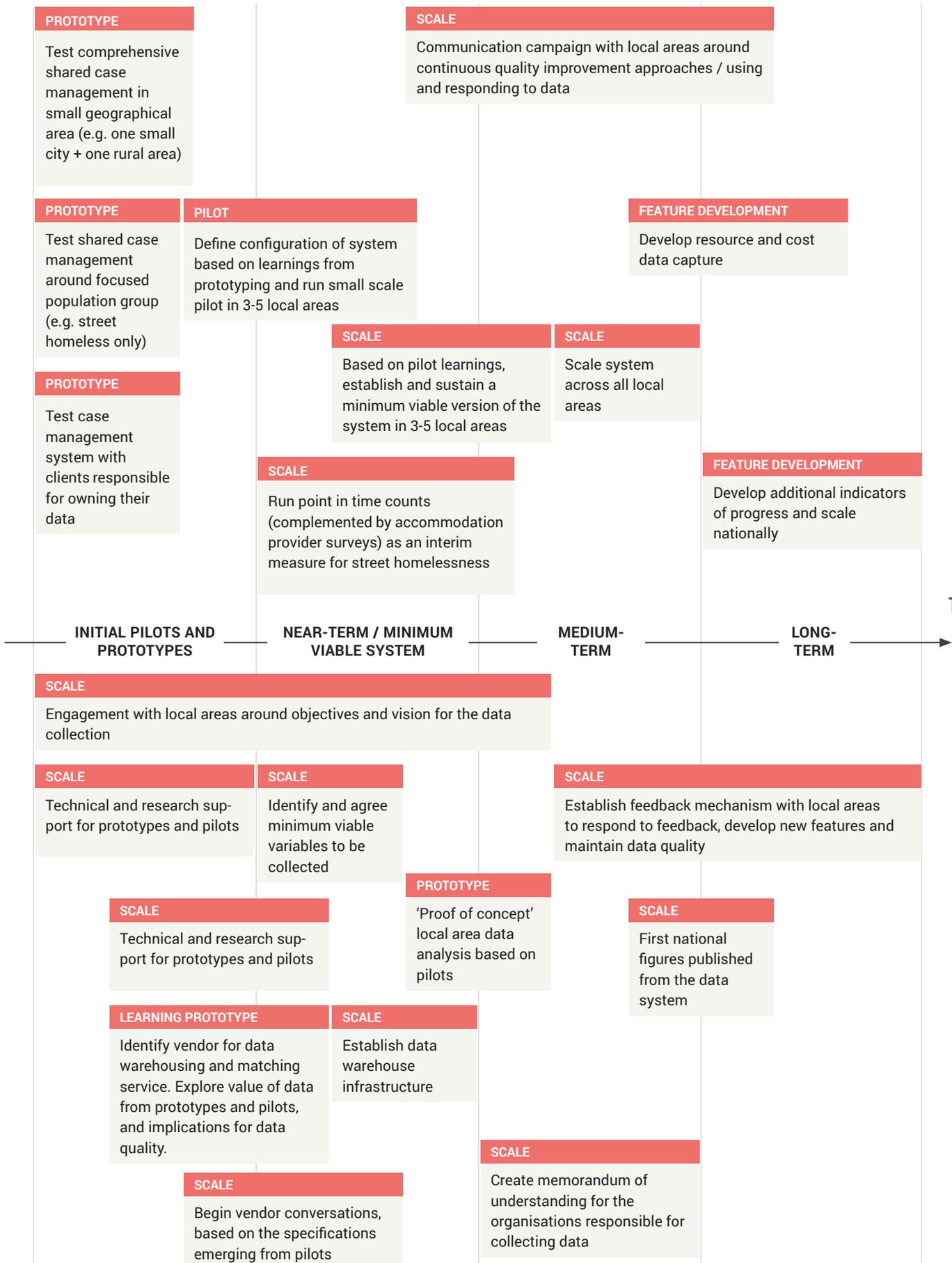
on how successful the prototypes are. During the prototyping and piloting phase, guidelines and shared agreements should be developed to ensure that all participating organisations are aligned in the use of the system. Deciding on the minimum core set of variables that would need to be collected consistently across the country would be an important element of these guidelines. Additional considerations before a wider roll out of the system would be quality assurance processes, client record matching and anonymising services, and data warehousing infrastructure.

Of the three options, the shared case management is likely to have the longest lead times for comprehensive national figures, so point-in-time street counts could be considered in the interim to complement other data collection activities.

Questions to be answered through prototyping and piloting

- What is the right progress indicator for local areas?
- Where is the critical mass point for a shared case management system in terms of contributing organisations?
- What is the minimum amount of consistent information needed on the system for it to be useful to organisations inputting data? (e.g. client record + service usage + story)?
- What is the minimum consistent level of information needed for the data to be reliable once aggregated at a national level?
- How should local areas be divided up (e.g. along local authority borders may not always make sense in more rural areas)?

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITY



Additional prototypes: hypothesis and lines of questioning



How might we engage the public and non-professionals in homeless data collection?

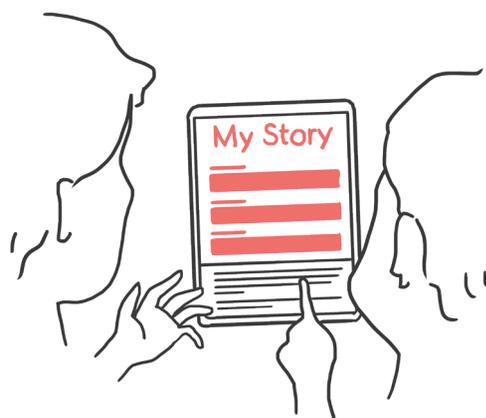
Street outreach teams work well in small urban areas but what about more rural areas where no street outreach teams exist? Or unsheltered people who are not visible or known to outreach teams (because they are hidden or not on outreach teams' routes)? There have been examples of the public and non-professionals participating in the identification of street homeless individuals – most notably via Streetlink, but also making use of the geographical coverage that groups like waste collectors or taxi drivers have to identify people who could be sleeping rough. A simple prototype to understand whether an approach like this might highlight people who are otherwise hidden from conventional street outreach routes would be to engage with workers like waste collectors over a focused time period to make a record of any people they see who could be sleeping rough. This would start to build up a 'heat map' of potential rough sleeping spots, which could then be cross referenced with workers familiar with the locality.

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How could an alert system provide better/quicker support for people who are otherwise hidden from mainstream services?

Similarly to the prototype above, a Streetlink style system could be prototyped with the public or even with a focused group of volunteers. This would be especially valuable in more rural areas or smaller towns as it might reveal locations otherwise not known to local services. A prototype that uses volunteers might also help us understand what information is useful or not useful for those raising the alert to pass on to the workers responding to it.

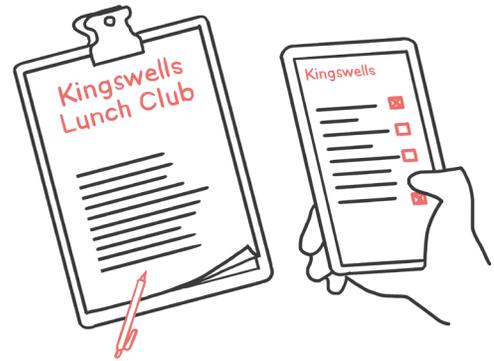


How might we prevent individuals from having to repeat their story?

Not having to repeat one's story is seen as a significant benefit of existing multi-agency case management systems and people experiencing homelessness. A small scale prototype could reveal insights about how the 'story' is recorded in the first place, and what benefits it brings to people experiencing homelessness and service providers when it is made shareable.

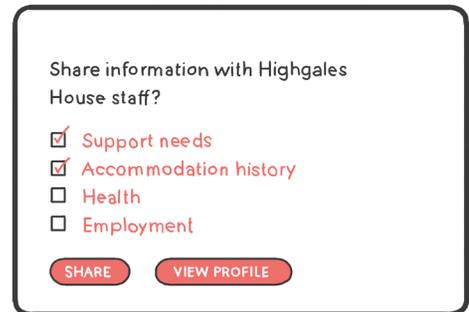
How might we collect meaningful and useful data in low threshold service contexts, where service users might be less willing to engage with staff?

Low threshold services like night shelters can be challenging environments to collect meaningful data about service users who may not want to engage with staff. A series of simple prototypes could be run in these services using a number of different formats to understand how people respond to each method. These methods could explore the effect of changing who collects information, how the information is collected, when the information is collected, and what information is collected.



How might we give individuals more ownership of their data?

Throughout the consultations with people affected by homelessness during this options appraisal, there was a consistent feeling that people should have more control over their information – what they share with services, which services that information is shared with and when. A simple prototype could be run with a small number of people currently in the homelessness system to understand more about data ownership and how it could work. This could involve setting up client records for individuals and providing them with a ‘pass’ to give to service providers to access their information (this could be a password, a scannable code or even a card with login details). This would help us understand how people feel about having greater ownership over their data, who they share it with and why, and whether the mechanisms for granting access to service providers work for them.



How can geographically dispersed services (e.g. those in rural areas) record reliable real-time data?

We have heard good examples of multi-agency working in cities, where service providers are located geographically close to each other, but what does this look like in smaller towns and more rural areas? A prototype modelled on some of the practices seen at Edinburgh and Glasgow’s Interagency Street Meetings would provide some insight into the overlap of people’s service usage in more dispersed areas and how multi-agency practices in rural areas can be recorded in a data collection. This could be as simple as a secure message chat or weekly video conferencing call.



5.7 What more could we do with the data we already have?

HL1 and PREVENT1 data could be linked in order to get an expanded picture of rough sleeping/rooflessness in Scotland. As indicated in Section 2.1, Scotland already have data relating to people sleeping rough from HL1 and roofless people from PREVENT1. However, as these data are not routinely combined and reported on, this is potentially one new use of current data in order to gain a more detailed picture of numbers of people sleeping rough in Scotland. Some harmonisation of terminology between the HL1 and PREVENT1 might be beneficial, as PREVENT1 asks for the last settled property in which the applicant has been for the past six months, while HL1 also asks about street homelessness in the previous night and the period three months before application (in addition to last settled property).

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The analysis of street homeless data using HL1 could be expanded. Currently, statistics produced by the Scottish Government on those who have experienced street homeless are limited to overall percentages and rates of people sleeping rough. Expanding this analysis to give more detailed demographic characteristics and support needs of those who indicate they have experienced street homelessness would provide some insight into street homeless populations who attend local authorities. This is a first, basic step in utilising current data in a more proactive way to understand the street homeless population across Scotland.

The Scottish Government could start to produce experimental statistics and research using repeat homelessness as an indicator of success. This could include exploring whether those who indicate they have slept rough also experience greater incidence of repeat homelessness. It would also provide some indication of whether the legislation as it is currently framed is 'successful' at ending homelessness for people sleeping rough in the long term. This fits within the National Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan and the SHARE framework's aim for homelessness to be non-recurrent.

Next steps

As this report shows, building a data collection for street homelessness in Scotland will not be a straightforward task. There are many factors to consider and a wide range of stakeholders that need to be involved further in the decisions around this system as it is developed. Next steps for developing the system might include:

- Establishing an expert steering group for the development and maintenance of the system
- Recruiting local areas for prototypes and pilots
- Further engagement with local areas around the potential benefits of the system for people experiencing homelessness and organisations working with them
- Further engagement with local areas to understand current local practices around multi-agency collaboration (e.g. what partnerships already exist across the country?)
- Further consultations with local authorities and housing options hubs to better understand national practices around data collection at housing options
- Exploring the requirements around matching and de-duplicating records (including the feasibility of a 'safe haven' research resource for homelessness data)
- Producing a detailed assessment of the developmental and operational costs (both IT costs and staffing) for all options under consideration by the Scottish Government

ANNEX 1

Frameworks for ending homelessness

HARSAG

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was set up to recommend to the Scottish Government the actions and solutions needed to eradicate rough sleeping and transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland. HARSAG was unusual in that its membership was formed from a cross-sector group, bringing together senior representatives from academia, councils, charities and housing associations from across Scotland. It was also unique in that all of the work was informed by discussions with more than 400 people with recent or current experience of homelessness, from across Scotland.

The group published recommendations on:

- How to eradicate rough sleeping
- Ways to transform temporary accommodation
- How to bring about an end to homelessness in Scotland

HARSAG's recommendations within those three areas looked at changes to practice, policy, systems and funding mechanisms. Working effectively between both statutory and non-statutory, within and outwith the homelessness and housing sector, was a recurring theme. The importance of prevention – in cases where it was predictable, or when people were presenting as being at risk – was also highlighted. Speed and agility when dealing with rough sleeping and temporary accommodation was also a key component of their recommended approach – a 'rapid rehousing' approach.

HARSAG was also clear that current data collection and recording on rough sleeping does not support joint working at the case level, and is not complete enough to be as effective as it could be in service or policy planning and design, or on tracking trends and measuring the impacts of policy and practice change. It recommended that the Centre for Homelessness Impact be asked to undertake an options appraisal to determine the detailed requirement of a national 'CHAIN-like' system for Scotland, including the extent to which such a system can build on existing data collection in Scotland.

The Scottish Ending Homelessness Together. High Level Action Plan

The Scottish Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan sets the direction for real and lasting change towards ending homelessness in Scotland. It recognises that having somewhere to call home is a basic human right and that housing is one of the most important factors in any person's quality of life. It identifies the need to have a wide range of measures in place that help prevent homelessness in the first place and ensure that when it does happen, the needs of people experiencing homelessness are addressed as quickly as possible.

Key to the plan is the voice of lived experience. This is seen in its person-centered approach, which is embedded across strategy and services.

The plan also shares Scotland's National Performance Framework, which was developed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). The framework calls for an increase in focus on preventing homelessness from happening in the first place; prioritising settled homes for all; increasing investment to respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens; and joining up planning and resources to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The plan highlighted the primary need to be preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place. It also highlighted the role of safe, affordable housing as part of that prevention work. Prevention work was also deemed key for people in transition, for instance from children's social care, to ensure that no one leaving an institution has nowhere to go. Where homelessness was not prevented, there was a commitment to finding them housing swiftly, and moving them out of temporary accommodation promptly also. Collaboration between different services and person-centered care was emphasised.

As recommended by HARSAG, the action plan also explains that the Scottish Government is exploring options for a data and monitoring system. A system that enables real-time data sharing between agencies as well as regular reporting is key to monitoring the reduction in rough sleeping across Scotland. Part of this work will include ensuring that national data collections reflect the evidence requirements to underpin their plans to prevent, tackle and end homelessness.

SHARE framework

The SHARE framework outlines the Centre for Homelessness Impact's vision for ending homelessness and shapes a path towards a future where homelessness, when unavoidable, is only ever brief and non-recurrent. Based on current evidence, it outlines five strategies which offer the best chance of success, taking a holistic, integrated perspective of what it takes to achieve

better population-level outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, across areas like housing sustainability, employability, and wellbeing. SHARE was developed in response to the need for a simple, memorable framework to help policy-makers, independent funders and practitioners think about, and work systemically towards, ending homelessness. It was designed to be used immediately as a simple conceptual tool to help positively frame discussions and efforts in this space. However it is also being adapted to specific contexts and subpopulations. This is because some aspects of the framework can be supported by existing or new data, specific metrics which are currently in development.

ANNEX 2

Stakeholder engagement

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Throughout this options appraisal, we spent significant time with future stakeholders of the system – to understand and compare their various perspectives, challenges, good practices, motivations, and attitudes towards homelessness data. This has taken the form of qualitative research – including in-depth interviews (with local authorities, service providers, data collection systems and providers), small focus groups (with people experiencing homelessness) and shadowing (with outreach workers).

Speaking to this broad cross-section of stakeholders has provided us with a rich and deep understanding of the complexities and huge potential that a new data-monitoring system design represents for the Scottish homelessness sector. Consulting each of these stakeholder groups equally has allowed us to explore the issue from multiple angles and perspectives, including where they may conflict with or contradict each other.

The following table shows a list of the stakeholders who were involved in this piece of work. We would like to thank them for their valuable input.

Stakeholder group	Research objectives
Local authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fife Council• Edinburgh City Council• Glasgow City Council• North Lanarkshire Council	Building a clear picture of current homelessness service provision in urban and rural Scottish authorities, current data monitoring, the role that data plays in making strategic decisions and expectations from a new system, and the extent to which it is shared with other organisations.
People with lived experience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Edinburgh (13 people)• Glasgow (15 people)• Inverness (15 people)	Understanding people’s experiences and feelings around data collection, what successful interactions with services should look like and the importance of relationship building.

Stakeholder group	Research objectives
<p>Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAN (City Ambition Network), Glasgow • ISN (Interagency Street Network), Edinburgh • ISN (Interagency Street Network), Glasgow • PSP (Public Social Partnership), Fife • SHAPE (Edinburgh) 	<p>Understanding how multi-agency collaboration has been working in Scotland, the benefits and learnings that can be used elsewhere.</p>
<p>Homelessness data collection systems and software providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHIN (The Street Homeless Information Network), Wales • CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network), London • PASS (The Pathway Accommodation and Support System), Ireland • Built For Zero, Community Solutions, US • CDPSoft Software Solutions • Better Futures 	<p>Identifying principles of effective systems, the infrastructure and culture required for successful system implementation and day-to-day maintenance/efficiency.</p>
<p>Service providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bethany House, Edinburgh • Cyrenians, Edinburgh • Streetwork, Edinburgh • Simon Community, Glasgow • Tomorrow's Women, Glasgow • Glasgow City Mission, Glasgow • Churches Action for Homelessness, Perth • Foodstuff, Inverness 	<p>Understanding current data collection methods, data usability for service improvement, barriers experienced around system design and data entry and measures of success.</p>
<p>Street outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyrenians Outreach Service, Edinburgh • Streetwork Street Team, Edinburgh • Simon Community, RSVP Street Team, Glasgow 	<p>Understanding the role relationships play around data gathering, the logistics surrounding data capture when working with individuals on the street and roles that outreach workers play around brokerage.</p>



**Centre for
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