

# CORE analysis

## Housing Homeless People: The Housing Association Role

This paper examines the overall role of housing associations in housing homeless households during the period 1996–2001. Using mainly CORE data from 1996 through 2001, it looks at the changing role of general needs and supported accommodation in meeting the needs of homeless households and provides an analysis of the regional pattern in these trends. The final section considers the role of the local authority nominations system in utilising the potential of housing associations to house homeless households.

### 1. THE USE OF CORE IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

Housing Associations fulfil three main roles in relation to accommodating homeless people. First, they assist local authorities in housing statutory homeless households (those in priority need); second, they provide accommodation to non-statutory homeless households and third, they provide accommodation to those who require support in order to be re-housed or to sustain a tenancy.

The Homelessness Act (2002), imposes a new duty on local authorities to undertake a homelessness

review and publish a homelessness strategy. The “homelessness strategy” involves the development of policies by local authorities designed to prevent homelessness and to ensure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless. Housing associations will be key partners in helping to deliver the strategy, especially in areas where the local authority has transferred its stock.

CORE provides information on lettings to both statutory homeless households as defined under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act (Part VII), and to non-statutory homeless households. The database has collected information for lettings in both general needs accommodation and in supported housing, on a continuous recording basis, since 1996 and hence provides a rich data source on which to base a review of homelessness and potential homelessness. Although there is no equivalent of CORE for local authorities, CORE can provide a framework at national and regional level and in combination with local authority data can form the basis of a review of homelessness at the local level. This paper is based on the CORE data for new lettings (i.e. excluding internal transfers) in general needs and supported housing.

## CORE analysis

### 2. KEY FINDINGS

- Between 1996-2001, the number of lettings to all homeless households (both statutory and non-statutory) recorded by CORE increased from 68,125 to 70,444 (3.4%),
- For each year between 1996-2001, housing associations provided housing for the equivalent of approximately 30% of all households accepted by local authorities as statutorily homeless.
- Between 1996 and 2001 the number of statutory homeless housed by housing associations decreased (by 2661) and the number of non-statutory homeless increased (by 4980).
- The relative importance of general needs and supported housing changed dramatically throughout the 1996-2001 period with an 18% decline in the number of homeless households accommodated in general needs housing and a 25% increase in the number accommodated in supported housing.
- The overall pattern of an increase in supported housing lettings to statutory homeless and a decrease in general needs lettings, was replicated across most regions. The exceptions were the South West, where general needs statutory lettings increased, and the East Midlands and West Midlands, where supported housing statutory lettings decreased.
- The concentration of homelessness in London has placed major demands on housing associations which have been difficult to meet in the context of a decline in the number of properties available for letting; overall general needs lettings declined by 14% between 1996/97 and 2000/01. During the same period, the number of homeless households accepted by local authorities in the capital as statutory homeless increased by 10%, while statutory homeless households housed by London housing associations in either general needs or supported housing declined by 11%.
- In 2000/2001, 20% of housing association general needs lettings and 70% of supported accommodation lettings were to homeless households (statutory plus non-statutory). Almost two-thirds of general needs lettings were as a result of local authority nominations compared with only 14% in supported housing.
- The role of the nominations process is most significant for tenants designated as statutory homeless; 85% of general needs lettings and 35% of supported lettings were to statutory homeless households nominated by local authorities.

### 3. OVERALL TRENDS IN HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS RE-HOUSED

Housing associations provide a key source of accommodation to enable local authorities to meet their obligations in relation to homelessness legislation. Taking general needs and supported accommodation together, almost 40% (70,444) of all accommodation let by housing associations during 2000/2001 was to formerly homeless households. This represented an increase during the five years since 1996 of 3.4% at a time when local authority acceptances of statutory homeless households increased by a similar amount and when local authority lettings (including secure and non-secure tenancies) to homeless households declined (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that the decline in local authority secure lettings (33,439) has been offset by an increase in non-secure lettings (17,767) which are mainly introductory tenancies.

#### *Statutory and non-statutory homeless*

While the overall number of homeless households accommodated by housing associations increased, there was a shift in the balance of provision for statutory and non-statutory homeless over the period (Figure 1). The number of statutory homeless households housed by housing associations decreased (by 2661) while the number of non-

statutory homeless households increased (by 4980). This decrease in the number of lettings made by housing associations to statutory homeless households, reflects the variation in the number of households accepted by local authorities as statutory homeless. Throughout the period, on a year by year basis, housing associations provided accommodation for the equivalent of just under 30% of all households accepted as statutory homeless by local authorities.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Statutory homelessness and general needs housing*

The decline in lettings to statutory homeless households was particularly marked in the general needs sector between 1996 and 1997. Since that date there has been a slight increase in lettings to statutory homeless (Figure 2). This mirrors the trend in homeless acceptances by local authorities, which declined by over 7% between 1996 and 1997 (continuing a long-run decline from 1992), since when it has risen by 11% (Figure 1).

Research suggests that there is likely to have been considerable diversity in how local

<sup>1</sup> Calculated from Figure 1: column 3a as a proportion of column 1

## CORE analysis

authorities interpreted the Housing Act 1996 and, thus, in local authority procedures for the categorisation of households as statutory homeless and for nominations to housing associations (Pawson and Third, 1997; Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 1999; Cloke et al, 2000). While overall local authority acceptances have increased since the 1996 Act, there is apparent regional variation in acceptances and in associated nominations to housing associations. This is briefly considered in a later section but further research would be needed to assess the full impact of the relationship between homelessness, housing market conditions, housing association provision and local authority practices related to statutory acceptances and nominated lettings by housing associations.

A second explanation for the decline in statutory homeless households housed in general needs accommodation could reflect a growing recognition that statutory homeless households require support if they are to make a successful transition to permanent housing. The increase in the number of statutory homeless housed in supported accommodation between 1996/97 and 1997/98 (Figure 2) offers some support for this interpretation. The intention to widen the priority needs categories by statutory order under the provisions of the Homelessness Act (2002) suggests that the shift in the relative importance of supported housing will continue.

**FIGURE 1 Statutory homeless household acceptances compared to lettings in social housing, 1996/97 to 2000/2001**

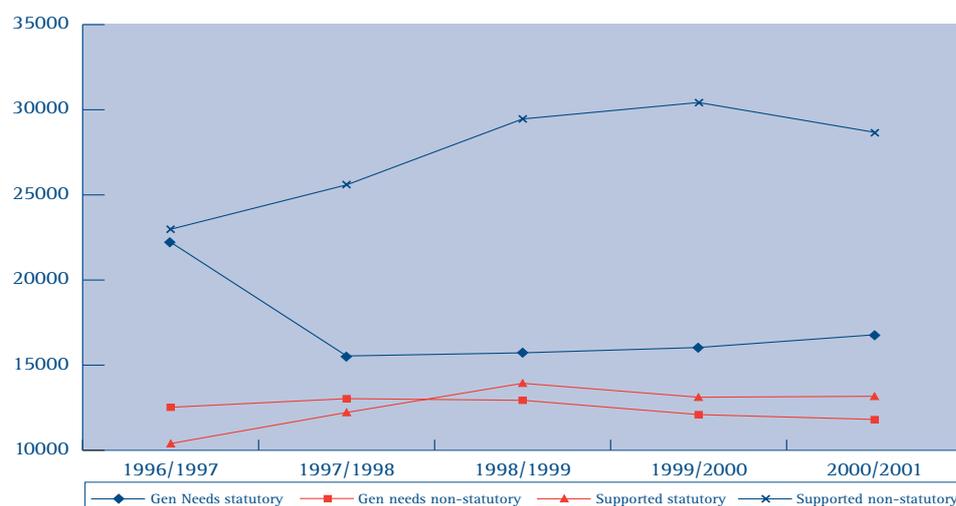
| Year               | Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities (England) (1) | Local Authority Secure Lettings to homeless households (2a) | Non-secure Lettings (**) in Local Authority housing to Homeless households (2b) | Housing Association Tenancies(*) let to statutory homeless households (3a) | Housing Association Tenancies(*) let to non-statutory homeless households (3b) |
|--------------------|--|---|---|--|--|
| 1996/1997          | 110,810  | 59,673  | 16,353  | 32,618   | 35,507   |
| 1997/1998          | 102,650  | 41,109  | 23,382  | 27,762   | 38,624   |
| 1998/1999          | 104,150  | 35,646  | 25,355  | 29,658   | 42,397   |
| 1999/2000          | 106,130  | 29,656  | 29,474  | 29,154   | 42,523   |
| 2000/2001          | 114,350  | 26,234  | 34,120  | 29,957   | 40,487   |
| % Change 1996-2001 | 3%   | -56%  | 109%  | -8%  | 14%  |

Note: Source (1,2a & 2b) ODPM, HIP data; (3a & 3b) CORE, Housing Corporation

(\*) includes all forms of tenancy - assured, starter and licence

(\*\*) includes introductory tenancies and licence tenancies in local authority owned property

**Figure 2 : CORE lettings by year in General Needs and Supported Accommodation 1996/97 to 2000/01**



Source : CORE, Housing Corporation

## CORE analysis

### 4. THE ROLE OF SUPPORTED HOUSING

While the number of all homeless households accommodated by housing associations increased overall in the period under review, there was a shift in the roles of general needs housing and supported housing. Over the five year period, there was an 18% decline in the letting of general needs housing and a 25% increase in the letting of supported housing to homeless people. In absolute numbers a *decline* of approximately 6,000 in general needs lettings to homeless people (from 34,750 to 28,600) was offset by an *increase* of more than 8,000 in supported accommodation lettings (from 33,377 to 41,847).

This change in the relative importance of supported housing in meeting the needs of homeless households marks a significant change in approach, probably representing an increased recognition of the need for support in the prevention of homelessness and the resettlement of homeless people. The importance of this is recognised in the Homelessness Act which requires that local authority homelessness strategies ensure the satisfactory provision of support for people who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and are in need of support.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Supported housing and statutory homeless households*

During the period, statutory homeless households have been increasingly housed in supported accommodation rather than in the general needs sector. In 1996/97 only one-third of all statutory homeless households housed by housing associations were accommodated in supported housing, in 2000/01 this proportion had increased to 44%.

#### *Supported housing and non-statutory homeless households*

The role of supported housing has also been significant in meeting the needs of people who, until now, have not been considered to have a priority need for housing under homelessness legislation. In 2000/01 more than half (54%) of lettings in supported housing were to single homeless people while 11% were to women fleeing domestic violence. Overall, almost half of the people provided with supported accommodation were aged 16-24 (13% were aged 16-17).

### 5. REGIONAL VARIATIONS

#### *Statutory homeless households (Figure 3).*

The overall pattern of an increase in supported housing lettings to statutory homeless and a decrease in general needs lettings, was replicated across most regions. The exceptions were the South West, where general needs statutory lettings increased, and the East Midlands and West Midlands, where supported housing statutory lettings decreased.

#### *Non-statutory households (Figure 3).*

A similar pattern in relation to the relative contribution of supported and general needs housing is apparent in relation to non-statutory households. Over the five years 1996-2001, the housing of non-statutory households in general needs accommodation declined by 6% overall (to 11,812), while supported housing increased by a quarter (to 28,675). This pattern is replicated across all regions except for the South West and the West Midlands where general needs non-statutory lettings increased along with supported lettings, and London where, against the overall trend, supported lettings also declined by 9%. This pattern of decline in London has to be seen in the context of an overall reduction (by 15% over the period) in the number of housing association lettings. This reduction in turnover created a 'silting up in social housing' (NHF, 2001) as, presumably, fewer housing association tenants were able to afford to move out into the private sector or home ownership.

#### *Types of homeless households*

Within this national picture there are, however, clear regional variations in the type of homeless households housed in supported accommodation. The complexity of this pattern of household types, support provision and costs of support can not be explained here. Broad indicative examples are highlighted. *Single people* figured prominently in London, the East and the North East regions where they accounted for about two-thirds of all lettings to homeless people. Lettings to *women fleeing domestic violence* constituted proportionally twice the national

<sup>2</sup> The increasing importance of supported housing in meeting the needs of homeless people has occurred at a time of dramatic growth of the sector. The number of lettings of supported housing by housing associations has increased by about one-third since CORE first began recording such lets in 1996. There were 64,000 supported lettings made to new tenants (i.e. excluding internal transfers) in 2000/2001, of these 70% (41,847) were to homeless people of whom one-third were identified as statutory homeless.

## CORE analysis

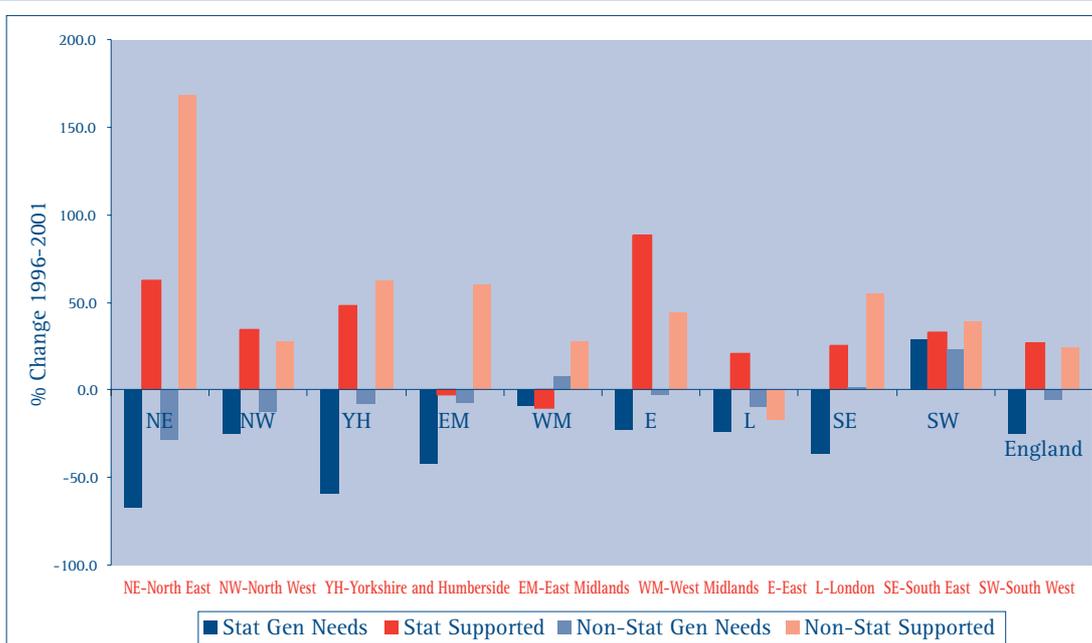
average in the East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West regions, while the proportion of *young homeless people* housed in the South East and West Midlands was almost double the national average.

### Types of support

Different types of homeless households require different forms of support. Almost half of homeless people housed in supported accommodation received counselling support, a

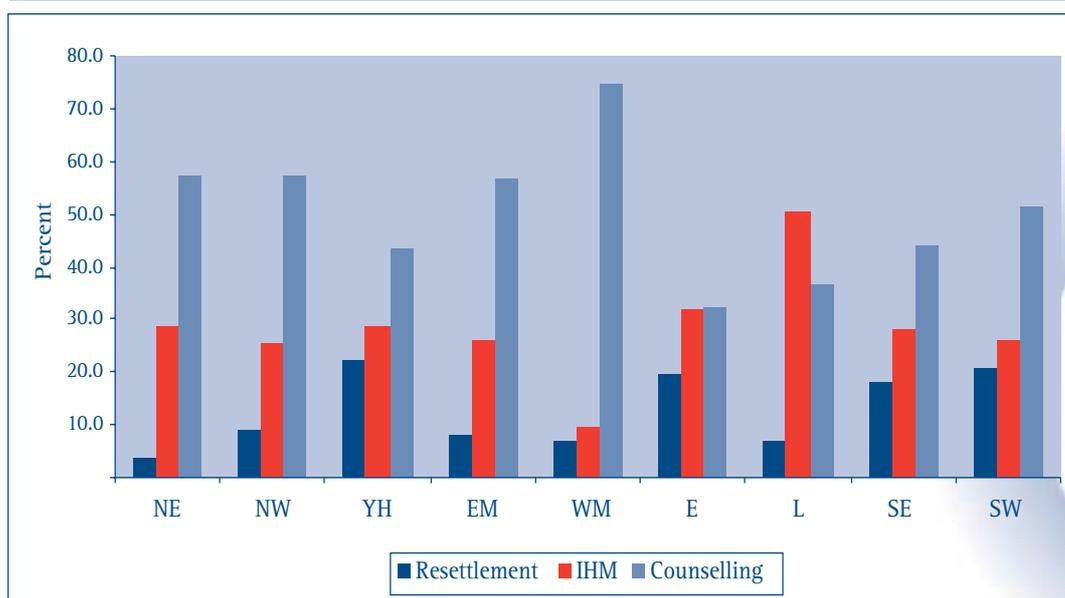
third received intensive housing management (IHM) support and 12% received resettlement support. The regional pattern in the types of homeless household accommodated is reflected in the nature of support provided. This shows a proportionately higher level of counselling support in the East and West Midlands and the North East and North West regions, and a higher level of intensive housing management support in London (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Changes in lettings to homeless households by region



Source: CORE Housing Corporation

Figure 4: Type of support by region, 2000/2001



Source: CORE Housing Corporation

## CORE analysis

### 6. NOMINATIONS AND HOMELESSNESS

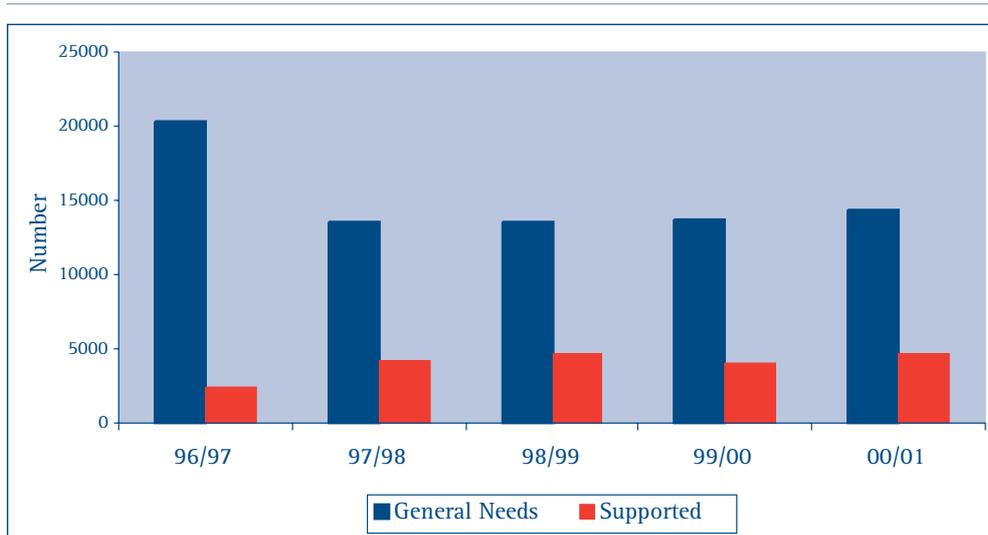
#### *Overall trends*

In a period in which, after an initial decline, there was a modest increase in the number of households accepted by local authorities as statutory homeless (Figure 1), the total number of local authority statutory homeless nominations housed by housing associations fell by 16%, from about 22,600 (1996/97) to 19,000 (2000/01). Much of this decline was accounted for by a reduction in the number of homeless lettings to general needs housing: between 1996 and 2001, the number of statutory homeless households nominated by local authorities and accommodated in general needs housing fell by almost a third. In this same period, the number of local authority nominations of statutory homeless people housed in supported housing doubled (see Figure 5).

There is some concern that total nomination figures from CORE should be treated with some

caution as a result of the growth of voluntary transfer housing associations (LSVTs) and the use of common housing registers (CHRs). The use of agreed re-housing criteria on CHRs and of agreed nomination targets between local authorities and LSVTs can, in some cases, influence nomination levels. However, a comparison of overall nomination rates between those authorities using CHRs and those not using CHRs indicates that data for nominations in respect of statutory homeless households is robust. Further, there is no significant difference in the level of lettings to statutory homeless households between LSVTs compared with other types of HAs. Given this caveat, in a period in which the total number of households re-housed as a result of a local authority nomination remained fairly constant, the number of statutory homeless nominations re-housed fell by almost 5,000 between 1996 and 1997 and have remained relatively constant since then (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Housing Association lettings to statutory homeless households – General Needs and Supported Housing, nominated by Local Authorities, 1996-2001**



Source: CORE Housing Corporation

The reduction in local authority nominations of statutory homeless households may, in part, be explained by the shift in roles of general needs and supported housing discussed above. In 1996/1997, 10% of local authority nominations of statutory homeless households went to supported housing, by 2000/2001 a quarter of all such nominations were to that sector. Despite this change, it remains the case that while almost all (85%) statutory homeless lettings in general needs housing are the result of nominations, only a third (35%) of lettings to homeless households in

supported accommodation arise from local authority nominations. This reflects that more homeless households in supported accommodation are coming through referral from social services and other routes rather than the homelessness provisions.

#### *Regional pattern of nominations*

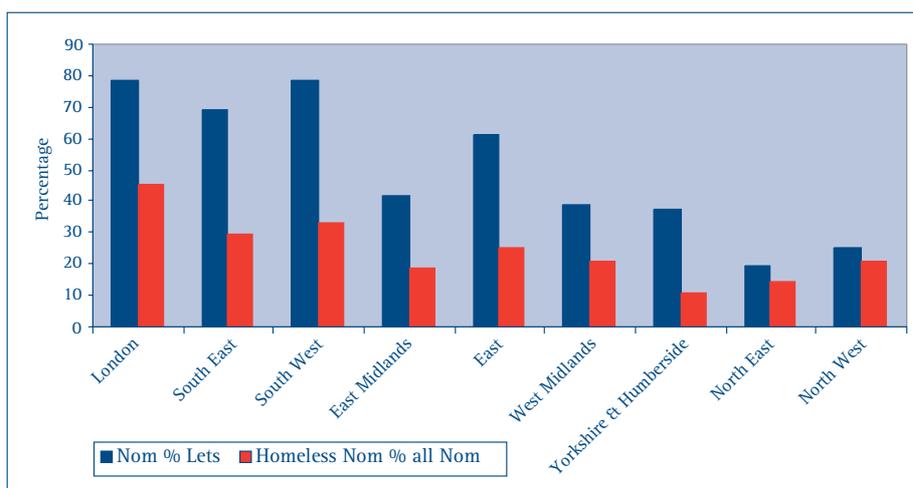
The geography of homelessness, together with regional variations in market demand for social housing, is reflected in the regional pattern of

## CORE analysis

nominations. In London, the South East and the South West, where nominations (and demand) are highest, homeless households represent between approximately a third (South East and South West) and almost a half (London) of all nominations. In the northern regions, where nominations (and demand) are lowest, homeless nominations

represent between a tenth (Yorkshire and Humberside) and fifth (North West) of all nominations (Figure 6). In circumstances where demand for social housing is low, as in the Northern Regions, the relative importance of the nominations procedures as a pathway to secure accommodation diminishes.

**Figure 6: Housing Association lettings to households nominated by Local Authorities by region: statutory homeless nominees compared to all nominees**



Source: CORE, The Housing Corporation / ODPM Quarterly Statistical Returns

### Housing local authority transfers

In rehousing statutory homeless households nominated by the local authority, housing associations are making a direct contribution to re-housing homeless households. However, in previous research the National Housing Federation (Withers & Randolph, 1994) has argued that housing associations also contribute indirectly by housing local authority transfer tenants. A council tenant transferring to a housing association, they argue, offers the local authority the possibility of rehousing a homeless household in the vacancy freed up by the move. In England, in 2000/2001, 16,000 council tenants who were nominated by local authorities were rehoused by housing associations (15,000 in general needs and 1,000 in supported accommodation).

## 7. Conclusions

Housing association lettings to homeless people are a significant proportion of all available lettings. Although the number of homeless households accommodated by housing associations has increased only marginally over the last five years, this has been at a time when local authority acceptances have increased only marginally overall after a period of decline. The role played by housing associations in meeting the needs of homeless households has been

influenced by the growth in the provision of supported accommodation over the last five years.<sup>3</sup> Thus the relative decline in the general needs provision in housing statutory homeless people has been offset by the increased role of supported accommodation.

In all regions of the country, a decrease in lettings to statutory homeless households has been offset by an increase in the housing of non-statutory homeless households. Since statutory homeless lettings tend to be lone parents and homeless families (60%) this shift indicates a growth in lettings to single person homeless households. Whether this is a reflection of the changing pattern of need or provision, the increasing role of supported accommodation or of changed allocation policies and nominations procedures requires further investigation.

The level of lettings of supported housing to younger single homeless people, ex-offenders and women who are vulnerable as a result of domestic violence is significant in the context of recent legislation. Supported housing will be

<sup>3</sup> While the increase recorded by CORE in supported accommodation lettings between 1996 and 2001 reflects in part an increase in the rate of housing association participation in supported CORE, Regulatory Statistical Returns (RSR) by housing associations also record a substantial increase (5,500) in supported accommodation over the five year period.

## CORE analysis

increasingly in demand in the light of the intention to extend (by statutory order under the Homelessness Act) the definition of priority need to include - homeless 16-17 year olds, care leavers aged 18-21, people vulnerable as a result of an institutionalised care background and people fleeing violence (or threat of violence).

The nominations process is clearly important in the general needs sector where 85% of statutory homeless households were nominated by local authorities. However, nomination arrangements are particularly important in regions of high housing demand. Hence, regions in the north of England are not utilising nomination rights to the same extent as authorities in London, the South East and the South West. The role and effectiveness of nomination procedures in supported housing is less clear. To the extent that a greater proportion of supported housing allocations arise from social service referrals, then it is to be expected that nominations arising from homelessness procedures will be less significant overall.

For further information on this report and related CORE research contact Alison Sandeman on 01334 463910 or [as7@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:as7@st-andrews.ac.uk) or write c/o Joint Centre for Scottish Housing Research, School of Geography, University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Fife, KY16 9AL.

### CORE Annual Digest 2000/2001

The CORE Annual Digest for 2000/2001 is available now. The Digest enables associations to review their own statistics against regional and national averages. Following the success of previous editions, the Digest for 2000/2001 will comprise a CD-ROM of standard statistical tables and a concise six-page summary of key facts. The price of the Digest and CD-ROM is £15. Please order a copy by calling Deirdre Stewart on 01334 463918.

Copies of the 1998/99 and the 1999/2000 CORE Annual Digests and CD-ROMS can still be purchased at the reduced price of £10.

### CORE Data

For a small data provision fee, you can request a subset of CORE data so that you can analyse and compare your housing management performance at a local authority level. Contact Jim Brown on 01334 467291.

Please visit the CORE Web Site at  
[www.core.ac.uk](http://www.core.ac.uk)

## References

- Cloke, P., Milbourne, P. & Widdowfield, R. (2000) 'Change but no change: Dealing with Homelessness under the 1996 Housing Act' *Housing Studies* 15(5): 739-756.
- Fitzgerald, S. & Stephens, M. (1999) 'Homelessness, Need and Desert in the Allocation of Council housing' *Housing Studies* 14(4): 413-432.
- Withers, P., Randolph B. (1994) 'Access, homelessness and housing associations' National Federation of Housing Associations, London.
- National Housing Federation (2001) 'New Research confirms London's housing associations are key to housing homeless' News Release, 20 November 2001.
- Pawson, H. and Third, H. (1997) 'Review of General Needs CORE Log 1997' Report to the Housing Corporation, School of Planning and Housing, Heriot-Watt University.

### CORE Data Analysis Service

CORE also operates a Data Analysis Service which provides special analyses of CORE data. CORE data can be invaluable for housing strategies, comparative studies, commercial assessments and many other applications. Analyses may be undertaken to meet needs at local authority, regional or national levels or for any selected subgroup of associations. Comparisons to show trends over time can be made. If you would like further information or to commission an analysis, please contact George Marshall on 020 7843 2266 at the National Housing Federation, 175 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8UP (email: [georgem@housing.org.uk](mailto:georgem@housing.org.uk))



- Joint Centre for Scottish Housing Research, August 2002.
- (University of St Andrews, University of Dundee)
- Correspondence:
- JCSHR, School of Geography,
- Irvine Building, North Street, University of St Andrews,
- St Andrews, KY16 9AL.