

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: Black homelessness, HC 1505

Tuesday 25 November 2025

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 25 November 2025.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Sarah Owen (Chair); Alex Brewer; David Burton-Sampson; Dame Nia Griffith; Kevin McKenna; Rachel Taylor.

Questions 1 - 27

Witnesses

I: Professor Glen Bramley, Professor of Urban Studies, Heriot-Watt University; Jasmine Basran, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Crisis; Martha Schofield, Senior Research Officer, Shelter; Uche Eneke, Peer Researcher, Shelter.

Written evidence from witnesses:

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Glen Bramley, Jasmine Basran, Martha Schofield and Uche Eneke.

Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to the Women and Equalities Select Committee. Today we are holding our first evidence session on black homelessness, and I am really glad that we have a fantastic panel of experts and witnesses. We will be hearing from Jasmine Basran, head of policy and campaigns at Crisis; Professor Glen Bramley, professor of urban studies at Heriot-Watt University; Martha Schofield, senior research officer at Shelter; and Uche Eneke, peer researcher at Shelter. Welcome to you all; thank you very much. I am going to hand over to David.

Q1 David Burton-Sampson: Thank you, Chair. First, I would like to thank Jasmine and the team at Crisis for initially coming to meet with me earlier this year to highlight some of the challenges with black homelessness, which has led to us bringing this inquiry forward, so thank you for raising it. I am going to start with you, Professor Bramley, or Glen—how do you prefer to be addressed?

Professor Bramley: Whichever you prefer. Glen is fine.

David Burton-Sampson: I am aware that you have done a lot of research in this area—well, in homelessness generally, but drilling down into this area, what data have you found to suggest that black people are at a disproportionate risk of homelessness?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Professor Bramley: Thank you for the question. I do not know whether people have had a chance to see the executive summary of the research we have done over the last three and a half years with the Oak Foundation funding on black and minoritised communities and homelessness. I have been the quantitative lead in that research and, particularly in the first big report we did—State of the Nation—I reviewed a lot of existing surveys and other datasets, for example the official statutory homelessness data.

There were pretty striking and shocking findings that some of the main minoritised groups—particularly the black group, but also the mixed and multiple ethnicities group, and the “other” group, which tends to capture more recent migrants including people from North Africa and the Middle East and so on who perhaps come through the asylum route—have consistently shown much higher levels of homelessness, sometimes as much as three or four times the risk, depending on exactly which dataset you look at. I also reviewed a number of major official government surveys, such as the English Housing Survey, which is very helpful; the equivalent Scottish survey; an older but quite rich survey called the Poverty and Social Exclusion survey, which I was on the research team for; and certain other sources, and there was a pretty consistent picture in that early work.

More recently, I have been doing more detailed work. I am the first researcher to have worked in the ONS Secure Research Service on three cohorts of homeless people who applied to local authorities—750,000 cases, which were followed through for two to three years to see what actually happened to them. That material is very much reported in the latest and final report rather than in the earlier report we did.

That is a review of the kind of evidence we have been looking at, but it is a pretty consistent story. Obviously, the Asian group is quite diverse. When we broke it down, we found that the Bangladeshi and Pakistani group had somewhat greater experiences of homelessness, but were more notable for what you might call hidden homelessness—in other words, living in very overcrowded accommodation rather than some of the more overt forms, such as rough sleeping. That is a quick overview of the kind of data we are looking at, but it is a pretty consistent story.

Q2 David Burton-Sampson: Just to drill down on that hidden homelessness a little bit more, can you give us a bit more of an overview of what you mean by hidden homelessness?

Professor Bramley: Conceptually, we talk about four levels. There is the statutory homelessness, because we have a well-established system here. People apply, and if they meet certain criteria—either literally being homeless, or at risk of homelessness within 56 days—they can come into that system. However, as you probably know, there are certain groups that are excluded from that kind of support. You then have what we and Crisis call core homelessness, which is a definition we developed with them after 2017. I do detailed work on that measure, which we present in the Homelessness Monitors every year or two. That is a measure of the more extreme and immediate forms of homelessness; it has an overlap with



statutory homelessness, but it is nothing like a complete overlap. I can report that it has now been included in the Government's official indices of deprivation from a month ago, published alongside the statutory data. So, there are two overlapping measures there.

Hidden homelessness is a term that has no agreed definition, but our colleagues in Shelter and similar organisations tend to talk about the more extreme forms of overcrowding as perhaps being an example of that. A fourth category might be people at risk of homelessness—who, say, are living in an insecure tenure which has not actually ended but could end quite soon, and that sort of situation. We try to present measures of all those things, and as I have already indicated, some phenomena are more associated with some ethnic groups than others.

Q3 David Burton-Sampson: Jasmine, the research has obviously shown that black people are more at risk of hidden homelessness. Why is that the case?

Jasmine Basran: Essentially, if you look at the drivers of homelessness—things like welfare adequacy, whether there is enough social housing for people to access support, funding for support, and the support services available—all these factors make homelessness much more likely. In our own research and experience with supporting people, we find that experiences of racial abuse exacerbate those more systemic drivers of homelessness. People we have been supporting and what we found in our research around race and homelessness have really highlighted the prevalence of people facing forms of racial discrimination from services that were meant to support them.

There are also specific policies underneath those broader systemic drivers that target ethnic minority groups, such as the right to rent checks for private landlords. Many private landlords—actually, in general, the representative organisations for private landlords—have been very clear that they have never supported the right to rent checks and would no longer support them. You see those kinds of policies that require private landlords to carry out immigration checks resulting in things like people's names being taken, being seen as from an ethnic minority, and them being turned down regardless of whether they are British citizens or immigration is relevant to them trying to rent—just based on their name. That is a really key element behind some of this.

I also want to draw out an experience from one of our Experts by Experience panel members who works with us on our policy and campaigning. He is a mixed-race individual, and he talked about how because of his appearance, when he became homeless and was rough sleeping with his partner—his partner was black; he is mixed-race, black and other ethnicities—they were explicitly told by a homelessness local authority team that they should consider shaving their hair because it would make them more likely to be able to privately rent. These kinds of experiences obviously manifest distrust and make it really difficult for people to engage, access, or even ask for the help they might need in the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

first place. You see that really difficult interplay between those bigger structural policy drivers of broader homelessness, and then specific discrimination and experiences that lead to people who are black and of ethnic minorities being much more likely to be homeless.

Q4 David Burton-Sampson: Would either of you two like to add anything?

Uche Eneke: Yes—thank you very much for the opportunity. Hidden homelessness can also be sofa surfing or disrepair in your home; from my experience, it was overcrowding. I lived in a one-bedroom flat with my two sons. The property was dilapidated; there was a big crack in our bedroom that used to bring in the cold from outside. We tried to get help to get it fixed, and they said it was structural damage and it would take that part of the building to collapse before they could actually do anything. I was quite gobsmacked. I said, “Are you telling me it would take someone getting hurt or possibly killed for you to actually fix this problem?” He said, “Well, there’s nothing we can really do about it unless this whole wall collapses.” I did not get a report for that or any further feedback; I did not even get an opportunity to seek more help or support, so we just had to live with that. I used to cover it with an old mirror that I had, just to keep the cold out.

When you say “homeless”, people think you do not have a roof over your head, but it could be the disrepair or the fact that you are in a bedroom and there is no more space or room for you to do anything—you have a growing family. Sometimes I would fold everything and put it on my bed, then when it came to bedtime, I had to move everything and put it back in the corners. I used to do that every day. There was one little storeroom that was packed with toys, prams and things for a growing family. People do not really think about that as an aspect of homelessness, but it does have an effect on your mental health and on your family.

There was mould as well. There was a mouldy corner; the mould used to grow in there. I would clean it, scrub it, use bleach and everything, but nothing worked. I was just going around in circles and not really getting any support for that. My son developed bronchitis, furthering to asthma; he had chronic rhinitis because of it. I was not really aware of the dangers of mould until later on when I started to do research. I was asking myself, “Why is he always coughing? Why am I always at the GP? We do not have this history of respiratory issues in my family.” When it comes to homelessness, it is not a tent outside a supermarket somewhere; it is all these other aspects that people do not really seem to think about unless you talk about it.

Q5 David Burton-Sampson: Uche, obviously you have just given your experiences. Given the statistics we have heard Glen talk about, do you feel that you were at a greater risk of homelessness as a black person? Was the situation aggravated by the fact that you were from an ethnic minority?



Uche Eneke: It actually was, because I used to question myself. I used to ask, "Is it because I'm black?" And then I would question, "Is it because I'm a single mum?" Or, "Is it because I'm African? Is it because of my name? Why am I not getting the help? This is basic necessity; it is basic support that I need. You can see a fault there; you can see the disrepair; why do you not want to help me? What is it about me that is making you not want to do your job?"

Q6 **David Burton-Sampson:** Interesting. Martha, looking at people who are sleeping rough, what additional safety concerns do you think black people face when they are sleeping rough, and why?

Martha Schofield: Obviously, anyone who sleeps rough is at risk on the streets, but people of colour can feel extra unsafe because of the added fear of racist abuse and violence. In our research where we looked specifically at black people's access to social homes, anti-black racism was a theme that we heard time and time again. We know that it is manifesting in a range of different derogatory stereotypes about black people, the impacts on how they are perceived, and how they are treated by different services and—if you are thinking about people on the streets—also how they are treated by members of the public.

Some of the derogatory stereotypes that we heard from people were that they were linked to crime—I almost feel uncomfortable saying them, but it is important for people to understand these are the stories that we heard—black men being perceived as more aggressive, or the angry black woman stereotype. Some of these might be familiar to people in the room. Clearly, if you are sleeping rough where you are in danger anyway and people hold these kinds of racist tropes around you, that will impact on your safety in an already very unsafe environment.

There is another form of hidden homelessness, which is the households in temporary accommodation who are hidden away and often ignored. Many black-led households are disproportionately stuck in temporary accommodation. Black-led households are over 12 times more likely to be in temporary accommodation compared to white households. They are also staying there longer: black-led households are more than twice as likely to have been stuck in TA for over five years compared to white-led households.

We cannot say for certain the reason why black households are likely to spend longer in TA, but we believe there are a number of systemic factors leading to that. A really key aspect is the lack of suitable social housing. Inadequacies in the housing benefit system is another really key factor. Structural racism, as our research showed, is really important for us to be considering in this context, and we believe it is leading to people being stuck in temporary accommodation for longer. That ties in with the racism and the derogatory stereotypes that people have, the excessive questioning and a sense of being blamed for being in that situation, or that your case is being de-prioritised by the people who you are going to for support.



Q7 Rachel Taylor: Glen, how do you think the risk of homelessness for black ethnic groups varies across England, or does it?

Professor Bramley: Depending on how you measure it, the risk of homelessness varies across England. Our housing system demonstrates really excessive pressure in the London area. In a way, the statutory homelessness statistics do not fully reveal that, although the temporary accommodation figures do.

In response to what you were just saying, in London there is vastly more temporary accommodation and people stay for vastly more time, and there are a lot of black people living in London who experience that. There is some interaction with regional disparities and so on, but we found that the ethnic disparities were more or less replicated across the different broad regions. We did a deep dive in the West Midlands, which is another area that obviously has quite significant numbers. London is rather distinctive, and that contributes to this bigger disparity in the risks in London than elsewhere, but it is generally true across the country with similarly poor outcomes in terms of access to social housing.

Q8 Rachel Taylor: Do you think there are differences within the black community? For example, do black African or black Caribbean people face different risks of homelessness?

Professor Bramley: I was advised that I might be asked this, so I looked at more detailed figures than are in any of our reports, comparing a black Caribbean and mixed group with the black African heritage groups. There are some differences and some similarities. For example, black Caribbean heritage are more likely to come into homelessness from a family and friends situation, whereas black African are more likely to come via the private rented sector. That is one type of difference. The black Caribbean and mixed are more likely to perhaps have more complex support needs. That is less the case with the black African group.

There are other differences. Somewhat less of the black Caribbean groups are working at the time of application. Outcomes are mainly similar for the two black groups, but the black African group are more likely to go into temporary accommodation. As far as getting housed, the Caribbean group are somewhat less likely than the black African group. So, there are some differences, but they are probably less great than the differences between black and white, or black and Asian.

Rachel Taylor: If you have extrapolated any more detailed information, please feel free to submit it to us in writing to supplement what you have said today.

Professor Bramley: I can follow up on that one, because that was not in our published reports.

Martha Schofield: May I add a quick point? We would also be able to offer more information if there was more specificity in the Government statistics. When we talk about, say, black African, that is such a diverse range of



ethnicities, religions, and cultures: Sudanese, Somalian, Nigerian, Congolese. Even within Nigerian, you have different ethnicities such as Yoruba and Igbo. That impacts people's housing needs and the amenities they need to be close to. To give more detail on that, a bit more specificity there would be really brilliant.

Q9 Rachel Taylor: Thank you, Martha. The next question is looking at those black people who also have other characteristics—gender, sexuality, disability—and particularly young people. Do they experience a difference in homelessness?

Martha Schofield: I will answer that point on intersectionality, and then I will pass to you, Glen, to speak specifically about young homelessness.

In our research, when we think about anti-racism, it is really important to think about intersectionality. While there are heightened risks, there are also different intersecting layers of discrimination that different groups will encounter. For example, black migrants may be at risk of anti-migrant sentiment and xenophobia on top of the racism they encounter. That was certainly the story we heard from the people we interviewed as part of our research. Black women are subjected to misogynoir—that is part of their experiences—which is that unique form of discrimination from the intersections of racism and sexism, for those who are not aware.

Another example is ableism, such as when you are trying to access an online form that keeps timing out and you need that bit longer to fill out the form. There are particular vulnerabilities among specific groups due to those intersecting forms of discrimination, and we have heard those stories in our research, for sure.

Q10 Rachel Taylor: Is that also the case with sexuality or transgender identity?

Martha Schofield: Yes, exactly. What we heard on that front is getting to the point in your journey to a social home where you are being offered accommodation, but you have fears around racism as well as homophobia. One individual we spoke to was offered accommodation in a social home on an estate in London. He said, in his words, "I'm asking for trouble as a gay black man going on to that estate." Clearly, he did not feel comfortable to accept that offer, so yes, those were some of the stories we heard on that note. I will pass to you, Glen, to talk about young black people.

Professor Bramley: I am not sure I can say so much about some of these more detailed intersectionality issues, partly because quite a lot of the research I have done is through the Secure Research Service where there is a minimum size—

Rachel Taylor: More on the young issues would be fine.

Professor Bramley: That approach is not really feasible for relatively small-number groups. I am not sure if I can say anything very strongly distinctive about young people from this project. It is quite widely



HOUSE OF COMMONS

recognised that there are serious risks of homelessness for people, say, coming out of the care system or those who have had disadvantages in childhood. In a way, there is more recognition of that in the system than of some other types of problems that we might be talking about here.

Rachel Taylor: I know Jasmine wants to come in as well. Thank you.

Jasmine Basran: I just want to build on the evidence that Martha was sharing because, similarly in our research, we found the importance of those intersectionalities. I want to share some experiences of our peer researchers and people who participated.

Speaking to Uche's point earlier, black women in particular spoke of being stereotyped, which held them back from speaking up. They were labelled as aggressive and support was withdrawn from them, so they very much felt like they were being treated as a stereotype rather than as a person. Black men spoke of assumptions made around criminality. People with disabilities spoke about how they had worse treatment based on the assumptions around their intelligence. The people we worked with who identified as LGBT+ from that community felt that they were an amplified target for violence when they were forced to sleep rough. It is that exacerbating experience which makes it so much harder for people to trust that they will be supported and their needs met, both to prevent and end homelessness, which is why we are seeing the statistics, numbers and experiences that we are.

Professor Bramley: Our own qualitative research that we did near the end came up with exactly the same kinds of comments about perceptions of black men and women that we have just heard about, so that is across different research projects.

Q11 **Kevin McKenna:** It is really good to hear about how this issue is manifesting. I would like to delve a bit more into some of the factors that may be driving it. Glen, your research found that ethnicity exerts an independent effect on homelessness risks, even when controlling for factors like housing and poverty. Can you explain what that means in practice?

Professor Bramley: I will come at it via the statistical thing. When we started this research, the Sewell Report had fairly recently been published—I am not sure whether you have discussed that. It did not look particularly at homelessness, but it reviewed a number of other areas of public policy and tended to argue that on the whole, in so far as black and other minority groups were doing poorly in those areas, it was usually because of other characteristics rather than their ethnicity.

We looked more closely at that in the statistical analysis, which is my primary responsibility. It is certainly the case that ethnicity and some of the things that are linked to it—such as having been a migrant, and/or having some kind of experience or perception of expectation of discrimination—would still have an effect independently, even when you



had included everything else in the statistical model as well. We then did a more sophisticated level of modelling using a technique called mediation, looking for indirect effects. Across three different datasets, we found consistent evidence of indirect effects from ethnicity and the things I just mentioned—migration and discrimination, if there was evidence on that—via two key areas: poverty and housing circumstances, particularly being stuck in the rented sector, probably the private rented sector, and having those hidden homelessness-type situations.

Often, ethnicity increases the risk of those things, which contributes more to the final risk. For different types of cases, we were able to show that it might actually double their chances of homelessness, or even more for some cases. That was quite an important contribution of our first report responding to the general picture that the Sewell Report had tried to paint, which I think we challenged. Do you want to go further on it?

Kevin McKenna: No, that is really helpful. You have made me dredge through some old statistical sociological analyses that I have in my head somewhere.

Professor Bramley: Mediation and moderation.

Q12 **Kevin McKenna:** Mediation and moderation. Uche, particularly to flesh some of that out from your lived experience, can you explain how any historical policy decisions have contributed to the present-day disproportionate risk of homelessness faced by black people?

Uche Eneke: I can give one example of the Windrush generation. What they went through is probably still being experienced to this day. The newer generation are coming with that trauma, so they are kind of reliving and going through the same sort of experiences that their predecessors went through. Historically and present day, it is almost like going through the same thing. You are reliving the trauma, but it is not getting any better; it is getting worse. We cannot compare how it was back then to how it is now, but we are experiencing similar situations within that.

Martha Schofield: Can I add to that? Thank you, Uche.

It was very clear from our research—and we reviewed a ton of literature sources—that historic policies have profoundly shaped the present-day experiences of access to social homes. I just want to mention a few of those policies, if I have time. First, there have been increasingly restrictive allocation rules and migration policies from about the '70s onwards; to give an example, asylum seekers or persons subject to immigration control being excluded from housing registers in the '90s. Clearly, there is a restriction there.

The second one I wanted to mention, which is really key when we are thinking about access to social homes, as we were in our research, is racial steering practices after the second world war where letting agents and social housing providers were essentially acting as gatekeepers, putting



white communities in the better homes in the less deprived areas. If you think about those patterns being set in stone and continuing on today, you really are setting those patterns of segregation in place, and that racial steering is still seen today. Also, communities where they feel safe are shaped by those racial steering practices as well—so, feeling more safe in the more deprived areas because you are surrounded by other people of colour.

The third policy is right to buy. I am sure everybody in this room knows about right to buy, introduced in the 1980s. While it was framed as giving people more choice, we know that it stripped away a huge amount of the social homes that people need today. That market-led approach, even with those discounts, led to many people of colour not being able to purchase their homes, and that has an impact on wealth-building opportunities. We know that today, black households are less likely to own their own homes and are more likely to be stuck waiting for social homes that are not there.

Q13 Kevin McKenna: I should probably put on record that, although I was a council tenant for a very long time, I never exercised the right to buy. I do not think that actually goes on my declaration, so that is handy.

That is a really good articulation of how these historical factors are still having impacts today. Given that, what can we do to address them so they do not have those impacts today?

Professor Bramley: There has not been this almost formal policy of steering, which you described from probably the '50s and '60s through to the '70s. Latterly, it has been more about combinations of black and other minority groups feeling that their support network—their community network—is in a particular area where they have settled and the fact that, in a lot of provincial cities, the peripheral council estates have tended to be white and working class. Some have become stickier in terms of poverty, deindustrialisation and that sort of thing, so they feel they will be away from their support networks and potentially in a more hostile atmosphere, even though it is not a formal policy. That sort of situation has probably been very important in more recent decades.

Jasmine Basran: Some of this comes down to how we treat and use national policy in this space to prevent drivers of homelessness, but also look within that to specific groups at higher risk of homelessness, which black people and those from ethnic minority backgrounds are.

For example, if we look at the Government's commitment around the Social and Affordable Homes Programme, that is a significant amount of money. It sets out a 10-year funding framework, which is really positive. However, we need to think about the delivery of social rent homes within that, which is really important; it is different from the definition of affordable homes, which is often set at 80% of market rate. When we are thinking about people in deep poverty and homelessness, 80% is completely out of reach, and people who are black and of ethnic minorities will disproportionately show up in those households needing these social rent homes. We really



need to think about where these homes are delivered for them to be social rent housing, and to be addressing some of the geographical points and points around estates that my colleagues have raised.

One really key thing, which is a little technical but so important, is about the infrastructure behind this. When you have local housing needs assessments at a local level, we need those to be conducted taking into account all forms of homelessness, including hidden homelessness, looking at things like race and the households that need support, and then flowing into actual strategic planning on the ground so that you are delivering the homes for the people who need it in the places that need it.

There is an opportunity with the homelessness strategy as well, which we are waiting for from Government—the Homelessness Minister has said that that strategy is imminent, which we are really pleased to hear—to really set out how to address these issues around race, and black households and ethnic minorities being disproportionately at risk. We would argue that a key factor in that is the welfare system and the freeze on Local Housing Allowance rates, which is driving levels of homelessness. It needs to be discussed in the round of the overall measures in the autumn Budget tomorrow, but there is a clear link there that we really need to see addressed.

I would also make the point that we are talking about lots of different households within this, and some households caught up in this are people who have come through our immigration system and are refugees. Unfortunately, what we see at the moment in our immigration system is that an outcome for refugees is homelessness, and particularly rough sleeping.

We are concerned about some recent asylum announcements. I will caveat that we are waiting for a lot of detail to see and understand, but we know that some of the things that have already been announced around people being in insecure immigration status for much longer prevent people from being able to rent privately, for example, because we already have people in routes such as those. Therefore, their ability to support themselves and move into secure, stable housing, avoid homelessness, and integrate in their communities is impacted by their immigration status. We would really like to work with lots of stakeholders and the Government to ensure that our immigration policy is not driving homelessness. It touches on what Martha was raising about some of our historical policies coming through to the present day.

Kevin McKenna: Jasmine, all those insights are really helpful. I will have more questions later, but I am going to hand back.

Q14 **Chair:** Thank you, Kevin. Jasmine. I just want to come back to some of the points that you made. Much has been made about taking refugees and asylum seekers out of hotels. If they are still waiting for an outcome in their case, where are they finding themselves? Does it differ depending on local authorities?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Jasmine Basran: That is a really good question. Where people have been granted status and then moved on very quickly, we are seeing them present as homeless. Not everyone actually knows to present to their local authority to ask for that help; some people do. Sometimes we pick people up through our services because they come to us for help. Other organisations pick people up on outreach. We do see people sleep rough, and we have a specific service in Brent called the Single Homelessness Prevention Service.

Until recently, the Government were piloting for refugees to have 56 days to move on after they had been granted status. Actually, across our specialist services where we support refugees, we saw that make a huge difference. For example, we were able to turn around homelessness prevention outcomes and secure housing outcomes for people in 44 days because we built such strong relationships with the local Home Office—I know they have recently changed their names, but the people managing that on the Home Office side.

The recent reversion to 28 days has undermined a lot of that process and ability to do that preventative work. We see that it disempowers people, because within 56 days, we were able to work with people so they could access services themselves, learn how to navigate and manage the system, set themselves up for things like entering work and essentially build their life, whereas when we are managing things in 28 days, we go into crisis mode ourselves. Basically, a lot of that choice and support for people to do things for themselves as they want to gets taken away because the concern is, “You’re going to end up rough sleeping, so we need to avoid that outcome as much as possible.” So, I want to talk about that.

Then, there is that point where people do not have settled status and do not realise, for example, that they should be accommodated while they appeal to resolve that. Again, we see people sleep rough and some people go into forms of modern slavery exploitation, where they do not get picked up until they access some sort of service to help.

Professor Bramley: I just want to support the points that you are arguing there. There is a lot of evidence in the Homelessness Monitor that we published only a couple of weeks ago for England, from a survey of most of the local authorities in England, saying that almost the biggest factor driving increases and problems that they really find difficult to deal with is the factors to do with the transition from asylum. There are various suggestions in it about better ways of doing it, and 56 days is one. Another is that local authorities, where they would be willing, could try to take on the role of providing accommodation for the Home Office rather than these companies that have been running hotels. That might work out better in some areas; it might be difficult in London, possibly. A more flexible approach to that transition would help a lot, including with the most extreme forms of homelessness, such as rough sleeping.

Q15 **Dame Nia Griffith:** I accept that you may find you are touching on



something you have mentioned before, but I would like to explore the whole issue of discrimination. Perhaps I could ask the practical people on the ground from Crisis and Shelter: to what extent is stereotyping by landlords and even by housing officers an actual cause of excess homelessness among black people?

Jasmine Basran: Unfortunately, I cannot quantify it in terms of “If this had not happened, perhaps somebody’s homelessness would have been prevented.” Certainly, in our research we found that people who were trying to access the private rented sector or social housing experienced racism and discrimination. People told us about experiencing racist language from landlords about who could and could not live in their properties, and were sometimes told that certain properties were just for certain ethnic groups—they were explicitly told that. Sometimes people felt the landlords were making discriminatory housing decisions after judging the name on the application or from the colour of that person’s skin. Even if they did not express that explicitly, it was the way they were treated and the way they felt.

One participant in our research shared a more overt case of discrimination. She told us that she became homeless following eviction by a landlady who had been racist towards her. The landlady would regularly let herself into the home without providing notice and blame the tenant for issues in the property. When people of colour come to us for support, we regularly hear that they feel like their race has been a factor in what they have experienced. More recently, one of our frontline services told us that it is seeing some people in the local area who are aware of local connection and are seeking homelessness assistance, who have said that they feel the local authority is hostile to them because of the colour of their skin and are therefore seeking help from other areas, not realising there is a legal system that prevents them from getting help from elsewhere.

When you have experienced racism and discrimination, it is very difficult to say to somebody, “Well, you have to go back to the place where you have experienced that. It’s the only way you can access homelessness assistance.” It is really difficult, because it exacerbates people’s homelessness and—we would argue—pushes them deeper into homelessness, rather than allowing them to move on with their lives and away from homelessness.

Martha Schofield: We conducted a survey of private landlords, and we found that over a quarter of the private landlords that we spoke to said, “It’s natural that stereotypes and prejudice come into it when I decide who to let to.” Clearly, that is going to make it harder for black people and people of colour to access homes.

Stereotyping and discrimination came up repeatedly in the research that myself and Uche did alongside our other brilliant peer researchers looking at access to a social home. I have already named some of the stereotypes; I will not go through any of those again, but it was clear that assumptions were being made about people’s ability to navigate the system for



themselves and about people's preferences about where they would like to live. We spoke to a local councillor who spoke really passionately about a culture that he had observed as a black man working in a housing department—a culture of prejudice and stereotypes, and conversations that he regularly heard about “Well, if you put that community over there, then this is going to happen.” You can quite clearly see the depth of the stereotypes from those conversations and how they are informing where people are being allocated homes.

The participants in our interviews and the peer researchers spoke about that leading to a pressure to code switch—to conform to ideas of whiteness in the language you use and the clothes you wear, just to be, as one participant said, treated like a human. Uche, I know you have some examples of where you have had to do that, so I would like to bring you in.

Uche Eneke: Yes, if I may be allowed. My telephone name used to be Jillian, so I find that when I say, “This is Jillian,” I get put through a lot quicker than when I use my very African name. You can sense the difference when you have to code switch. Sometimes I will speak in Cockney—you know, you just change it. Sometimes I will speak like a rich lady, and you get more attention that way. They are nicer to you; the tone of voice is softer. When you are just being yourself, it is quite harder to get through to services or access whatever support you need, and you find yourself not being real. You feel like, “This is not my identity.” I have to take on a pseudo-identity just to get to the basic offers that are readily available to others unlike myself.

Martha Schofield: Thank you for sharing, Uche. This speaks to the earlier question—how do we stop this from happening?

These are stories we hear time and time again. Clearly, something is up if you are not able to access a service and get the result that you need by being yourself. That is why we believe that anti-racism needs to be included in the competence and conduct standard, which is the new standard being introduced next October and enforced by the Regulator of Social Housing. It will require the senior housing management staff of social landlords to have professional qualifications, and we believe a specific module on anti-racism should be included. It is good that it will cover EDI—equity, diversity and inclusion—but anti-racism specifically needs to be in there.

The reason we are arguing for that is because, as you can see with the historic policies we have mentioned, racism and discrimination have an intergenerational impact over the years. Uche and others may have seen their parents or even their grandparents experience racism, potentially in a different form—a more overt form. We have heard about cases of overt racism that are happening today, but what we heard is more prevalent—and we may be coming on to this—are cases of what academic Sue Lukes calls “slippery discrimination,” which is when you know you are being treated poorly and differently to white applicants, but it is more covert and



harder to pinpoint. As a result, of course, it is harder to prove it is happening to you at all.

We are arguing that MHCLG needs to amend the guidance for local authorities on allocations policy. Staff involved in creating and implementing allocations policy and processing applications should have training on cultural competency that is both trauma-informed and racial trauma-informed, so that they understand the intergenerational nature of racism. We need to have that training and focus on anti-racism so that staff have cultural competency and treat everyone with the dignity and respect that they deserve, and are not making assumptions about communities but listening to what people want. That is what we are calling for.

Q16 Dame Nia Griffith: Effectively, you are saying that applications are definitely affected by the fact that somebody is black in terms of the way that they are treated. If I can just pick up on what you were saying latterly—I will come back to Glen after—over the years, we have tried to have these various legal protections for people. Are you saying they are not effective; in other words, you can have fine legislation, but it is not working? What do you see that could be different? What would you like to see the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government doing to make something that actually works? If you would like to carry on, Martha, then we will pick up on any comments from the others.

Martha Schofield: I will keep it brief. The legal protections are definitely positive, thanks to many grassroots groups and organisations led by people of colour, such as the Brixton black women's groups in the '60s. They challenged racist violence and the discriminatory housing policy they were seeing back then, prompting many legislative changes and the outlawing of racial discrimination in housing, like with the 1968 Race Relations Act.

So yes, we want to see legislation. But my point on slippery discrimination is really relevant here, because it is a more covert form of discrimination—harder to pinpoint, but no less harmful. When that burden falls on the person experiencing that discrimination, it is a real challenge to provide hard evidence of it. Particularly without access to legal aid, it becomes hard to benefit from those legal protections.

Professor Bramley: Can I make two points? One goes back to the quantitative stuff. I looked for surveys that had some evidence about the perceived experience of discrimination. There were three datasets; first, the English Housing Survey asked questions about whether people would anticipate discrimination, which would perhaps have been influenced by their previous experiences, distinguishing between social landlords and private landlords. Quite a high proportion—though not a majority—of the black group did. The perception was stronger in relation to private renting than the social rented sector, but it was still a factor there. There were also similar findings from other surveys and evidence that statistically contributed to predictions about actual homeless experiences.



On the qualitative front, our own recent qualitative work that is in this report, which is again very similar to what we have been hearing about, has some rather striking and shocking examples. Sometimes it was actually ethnic minority officers who themselves were being discriminatory towards their own group. They were quoted as saying, "This is better than you would get treated in your own country", and that kind of thing.

We had a roundtable discussion last week with a number of organisations, and the conclusion was that homelessness services are under a tremendous amount of pressure. It is a very stressful job working at the frontline of homelessness, particularly in certain areas where the pressures are very extreme. But there is a sense that they have gone backwards in terms of standards; they are not doing training of the kind that you are looking for, which they would have done a few years ago. They have gone backwards, partly because of the pressures that they are under, but one conclusion was that they need to revisit it.

Jasmine Basran: I just want to add a really small point. There is data at a local level that shows who is at risk of homelessness, who is asking for help at the job centre, and who is asking for preventative homelessness assistance. There is a conversation to be had about how we can target resources for households that we know will be at risk because of their financial situation and who, because of their ethnicity, are much more likely to experience racism and therefore may not access the support they need, or it may not even exist. How can we proactively target financial assistance, support, and access to things to prevent homelessness in the first place?

When the Government introduced the benefit cap many years ago, they actually told local authorities who would be affected by it. Regardless of what you think of that policy—Crisis believes it should be reviewed and the cap removed, as it is increasing homelessness—it shows that we have better data and can target interventions in a way that we do not perhaps think about at the moment.

Q17 **David Burton-Sampson:** Coming to you, Glen, just looking at your research, do the wider public sector services—things like GPs and mental health services—play a role in reducing or perhaps even increasing the risk of homelessness for black people?

Professor Bramley: The risk of homelessness for all groups, really. Our Homelessness Monitors and my analysis show that where local authorities are more proactive in their use of prevention opportunities, as far as we can infer from the statistics, there are better outcomes in terms of the level of core homelessness. That is a general thing; it is not ethnic-specific.

In the Homelessness Monitors we argue—and I know my colleagues would argue—that we really need to move forward. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was very important in getting prevention on the agenda, but the next step is to get public sector bodies other than local authorities, or even possibly other parts of the local authority, to come on board. We would particularly mention prisons, the Probation Service and mental health



services as being prime examples of where better articulated transition arrangements can avoid the frequent situation of people going straight into homelessness from those institutions. Very often, there is a high proportion of black and minority groups within that. So yes, prevention needs attention; it involves giving more firm duties to other public bodies and clear protocols for how they should operate.

Q18 David Burton-Sampson: Uche, if we can come to you—and maybe Jasmine and Martha can support with this—to what extent do you think there is a link between the adequacy of mental health services, particularly in supporting black people, and the disproportionate risk of homelessness?

Uche Eneke: There is a huge connection, because the journey of trying to access a social house is actually very draining. It affects your mental health. By the time you get to being rehoused, you are mentally dilapidated. It got to a point where I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety; I did not want to get up and out of bed in the mornings. The only thing that would get me up was the school run, and that was the hardest thing I had to do that day. I would do the school run and get back into bed. I could not do the normal things that I wanted to do with my kids because I was so depressed, just trying to access a social home and waking up every Wednesday for 15 years to bid. Sometimes the system will log you out, and by the time you get logged back in, you find yourself back in the thousands—number 1,800—and you are thinking, “When is this going to end?”

I got diagnosed with depression and anxiety and was put on medication for it, but at the end of the day, it took a crisis happening within the home for me to access the services I needed. Before that, it was me just going round in circles. I did not know what help or support was out there until something happened within the home. Next thing you know, you have children’s services, social prescribing, and you are finding out all these things that should be known before. They should be easy to access. I should know that if I need help here, I could go to my GP and ask them what to do. I did not even know what a social prescriber was at the time; it was only afterwards that I found out. They signpost you to the support you need, but why do you have to go through so much mentally?

It starts to affect your physical health as well. Your kids start to notice. My children started to notice, and they are sensitive: “Mum, are you okay? Mum, is everything all right? Mum, do you need help?” I am the parent. I am the one who is supposed to be looking after them, but I am so affected by it that my kids are starting to look after me now. I was suicidal at one point. The only thing that got me through was my faith, and asking myself, “Who is going to look after my kids if I am not here?” This is just me trying to access a home for my children and I, so why do I have to go through that?

Q19 David Burton-Sampson: I was going to come on to that exact point. Martha and Jasmine, you may have some detail or statistics around this, but obviously poor mental health can lead to a greater suicide risk. I have



HOUSE OF COMMONS

been doing a lot of work on this recently. Are we seeing any increase in people at risk of suicide because of homelessness issues in the black community, and is that disproportionate to the suicide risk for other communities?

Martha Schofield: I do not have any specific data on suicide; I do not know if Jasmine might, but we can certainly provide some in the written evidence afterwards. I do have specific data on the impact on mental and physical health, though.

Of course, accessing a mental health service is beneficial when you are going through something like this, but ultimately it is getting a home that is going to help you the most. So that really needs to be the focus; only a home is actually going to benefit you. Many of the households that are stuck in temporary accommodation may not have had a mental health issue going up to that point, but the chances are that time spent in temporary accommodation that is usually cramped and poor-quality, which we know is disproportionately happening to black households, can have an impact on your mental and physical health.

At Shelter, we conducted the largest ever survey of households in temporary accommodation. Two in three of the people we spoke to reported that TA had a negative impact on their physical or mental health; we did not just speak to the adults, but to the children as well. Six in 10 of the respondents told us that TA was also damaging their children's mental and physical health as they lacked the basics of having space to play, develop, read, write, and access education. It takes a toll on all aspects of life for both adults and children.

David Burton-Sampson: Thank you. Did you want to add anything, Jasmine?

Jasmine Basran: Yes. Unfortunately, I do not have statistics, but again, we can also follow up in writing.

I wanted to highlight that in our research, many of the participants from black and ethnic minority communities had mental health diagnoses. One of the things we saw and spoke to them about, which came out really clearly, was that if they lived in areas that had joined-up mental health services with housing and homelessness services, they were able to access mental health support and really benefited from that stability. It allowed people in very precarious living situations to avoid homelessness. Where people cannot access the support they need, we would say that is an exacerbating factor that can lead to homelessness.

As Martha has already outlined really well, we know that the longer people are homeless, the more likely they are to develop support needs and mental health complexities. It is not just about what everyone can see and visibly knows around rough sleeping; it is about those hidden forms of homelessness as well, and the trauma that inflicts on people.



Chair: Uche, before we move on, I just want to thank you very much for your openness, honesty and bravery. It is truly courageous, and we really appreciate it.

David Burton-Sampson: Hear, hear.

Q20 **Alex Brewer:** I know from my previous charity work experience that distrust of services is a huge barrier to engagement and finding an appropriate solution. Uche, I wonder if you could talk, first potentially about your experience, but also about your work. To what extent do black homeless people distrust mainstream public services, and how does that compare to other homeless groups?

Uche Eneke: From my experience, it is definitely true—I would have to agree with that statement. For me, it was mainly about privacy and not letting people know what was happening in my home. I said to my kids, “Don’t tell our business out there,” because at the end of the day, my children got taken off me. My son made a disclosure about something, and social services was involved all of a sudden. I did not think it was that serious, but the next thing you know I am getting cautioned, and it just happened so fast. It went from one extreme to another, and I thought to myself, “How did it get to this point?” because there was no information going out of my home to the school, but the next thing you know, there was a social worker and police involved.

At that point, I did not trust anyone, but that was then. Now I use my lived experience to help others in situations like this, but at that point, I never let anybody know what was happening within my home, and I made sure my kids did not tell anybody what was happening. That built a lot of trust issues, not just for myself but for my children. They are scared; they ask me, “Mum, can I say this, can I say that? Am I allowed to say this? Am I allowed to say that?” So I would definitely have to agree.

Martha Schofield: If I could add to Uche’s response, we are obviously talking about distrust, particularly in the housing sector, as that is the focus today. But what we need to bear in mind is that racism and discrimination are systemic. We are focused on housing, but of course it goes beyond that into interconnected systems.

In the last few years, as part of our anti-racist commitments, Shelter ran a review of access to our services for communities of colour. We heard from the service users of colour—some had come to our services; others had gone to a whole range of different services—that there was a real mistrust and a sense that they were not being believed. The stereotypes that I mentioned earlier were being cast upon them. If you are going to a service and someone holds those kinds of stereotypes about you, are you going to trust that service or feel believed when you go there? We heard of services like doctors, job centres, and the police where people felt unwelcome and uncomfortable. Then, of course, they question whether that service is for them, and that creates a pattern of mistrust which ultimately compounds the trauma attached to homelessness experiences.



- Q21 **Alex Brewer:** Thank you—that is interesting. Jasmine, do you have anything to add from your research or professional experience in terms of what drives distrust in public services among black communities?

Jasmine Basran: Our research very much echoes the points that Martha and Uche have made. Black participants described their engagement with a range of different public services; to be frank, they felt that they were cast aside or else ignored. One gentleman said that local services expected him to be dead by now. He felt like he was a pain, just adding to their paperwork. Another person told us he felt let down—he was a refugee in the 1990s. He was legally here, granted status and welcomed to this country. When he was evicted from the Home Office accommodation, he said at the time, “I do not have anyone else. I do not have anywhere else to go.” He felt he was forcibly given that experience of homelessness, forced into homelessness without any real care or joining up of what should happen. We see that time and time again in our service: a lot of charities are on the frontline trying to fill that gap where services are not working together or speaking to each other, and people are experiencing multiple experiences of racism or being left aside.

- Q22 **Alex Brewer:** You mentioned services communicating and working together. Is there anything else that we should be looking at structurally from a policy perspective? How can we begin to address this?

Jasmine Basran: As Glen touched on earlier, we are very keen to see the laws we have for public bodies to look at specific prevention duties around homelessness developed, with an expert group that would bring in not only those organisations but local authorities and people with lived experience so that it can be done in an effective and meaningful way. Even though there is such demand, we see all the time that services are not talking to each other.

In the long term, we would argue for a policy and legal framework that sets out those expectations, along with the funding and training around it to enable that to happen. That is where the recommendations we have heard today about the need for very specific training on black and ethnic minority households, including exacerbating factors and intersectionality, would be vital. At the moment, there is not really the legal framework to hang things off.

Where we see this happening well, it is because of a lot of goodwill. Sometimes that is the goodwill of a single person or a small team in an organisation, and when that changes, everything shifts. Services have reflected to us how they built something with a local service, and then there was a turnaround of staff and suddenly they had to start from scratch again. But that is not really a good enough reason to say to the people we are supporting, “I am sorry, this is why things are so much more difficult today.” We would really like to look at that long-term view and the policy and legal landscape in which we operate.

- Q23 **Chair:** We have already identified there are a lot of barriers, including



HOUSE OF COMMONS

discrimination, and distinctive challenges that ethnic minorities face when seeking support from the public sector. In terms of the charity and voluntary sector, what have your respective services done to take people's ethnicity and background into account? I will come to you first, Martha.

Martha Schofield: Back in 2020, like many organisations at the time, Shelter recognised that it needed a more explicit commitment to anti-racism. Since then, we have been on our journey to becoming an anti-racist organisation. That has paved the way for lots of work specifically looking at the housing emergency and its disproportionate impact upon people of colour, which paved the way for the research that myself and Uche produced.

First and foremost, we provide housing support and advice. We support black households who might be facing homelessness by informing them of their legal rights and helping them to enforce those rights. As I briefly mentioned, following our anti-racist commitments, we conducted an independent review of access to our services which revealed a number of things that have been altering our service delivery and how we engage with anti-racism.

Other organisations can take a lesson from this about embedding anti-racist practices within their service delivery models. It is really key to encourage staff to engage with anti-racism. That can be through training—I have touched on our anti-racism course within the competence and conduct standard—but at Shelter, it is about building the cultural competency of our staff and their confidence in being able to challenge discrimination when they see it, whether that is internally at Shelter or discriminatory practice at local authorities. Staff need to feel that senior support and time is given to them to do that when they are also working on the frontline. Staff should be aware of many of the challenges that communities of colour face, not just in accessing Shelter but other services. Language barriers are a key issue that comes up time and time again, but there are also the stereotypes that we have touched on today, such as being aware of some assumptions around specific communities that may come into play or wider systemic experiences of race and racism that cause trauma when people are trying to access a service.

At Shelter, we have also been building links with local community groups. Our research found that big national charities such as Shelter can feel somewhat distant; people might not be aware enough of the support we offer. Through the training and advice we give to professionals, we are able to meet people in environments where some communities might feel more comfortable. Some people may wish to go to a grassroots group setting with another person from the same community. Not everyone wants that, but for some people that is their preference, and we can then almost indirectly provide advice in a comfortable environment for that individual.

Finally, of course, Shelter is actively campaigning to tackle discrimination, primarily through the recommendations that have come from our report on the competence and conduct standard.



Q24 **Chair:** Jasmine, before I come to you, I wanted to touch on the intersectionality that people are experiencing. Uche described it really well, unfortunately: the feeling that you do not know the reasons why you are being discriminated against. Is it because you are a single mum, because you are black, or because you have a different name? What is it that they are really discriminating against?

Obviously, we know that hatred does not stay in one lane. Discrimination does not stay in one lane either, so we have to tackle this from multiple angles. It is great that we have heard from Shelter on that point, but I am sure Crisis has done similar work in those areas. What are you doing to tackle intersectionality and the reasons why people face discrimination?

Jasmine Basran: We have had a similar journey to Shelter; we have done an audit of our own approaches and set up specific task and finish groups. Our research was also born out of the attempt to scrutinise ourselves much more. One of the things that came out of the research was about people's experiences with services—public services, but also homelessness services and charities. I will not repeat what has already been said, but the intersectionality point is really vital.

One thing that we have taken away from that broader work, specifically around race and ethnicity but also other forms of discrimination, is setting out to improve our own data. We have worked to develop and gather much more specific data so that we are able to actually support people and know how to design our services to meet their needs. Of course, we do not do that without permission from people and building a trusting relationship; that often needs to happen before we get to that stage, but that is starting to give us a much clearer picture and understanding of where the intersectionalities are.

One of the key things our frontline staff have said is that we need to practice a trauma-informed approach in our services, recognising that while homelessness is traumatising, racism and other forms of discrimination are themselves also traumatising, so our centres are designed to be psychologically informed. The support model we use in our services is based on giving an individual their own lead worker who will then co-ordinate with others in the service in providing wraparound support. People tell us all the time that when they go to different services, they have to repeat their story each time and relive their trauma in different ways, so we have tried to bake that into the way we do our support and to offer services that speak to that. We have translation services on hand where they are needed and, as Martha said, we work with local support providers and other communities that can really support us to ensure we are meeting people's needs.

We are definitely on a journey; there is so much more we could be doing. We have internal task and finish groups looking specifically at this, and particularly how we are working in local ecosystems to make sure we are bringing things together. As well as using national advocacy, we are using local advocacy to shift this, including supporting smaller providers and



building their capacity. I would also like to say that we reached out to some black-led organisations—smaller specialist organisations—in this space. Unfortunately, they felt prohibited from sharing some of their considerations at this time, so we would really support the Committee hearing directly from these smaller organisations.

There has been some work in this space, particularly the recent Heriot-Watt research in Birmingham for the West Midlands Combined Authority. One of the things that research found was that specialist organisations often do not have enough capacity to meet the very diverse needs of the communities. There needs to be much better work between larger and more specialist organisations on how that comes together. That is a really interesting thing we are looking to explore, but it has implications to consider, including how we fund these services and how we can ensure that there is genuine wraparound support for people.

Q25 Chair: Thank you very much. Before I hand over to Kevin for some final questions, I would like to bring Glen in. We have heard about the fantastic work of Crisis and Shelter and the good example they have set, but we know this will not be the picture for every organisation. Not every organisation has the resources of Shelter and Crisis, and quite often they are focused on firefighting what comes through their doors every single day. What do you think could be done to ensure that homelessness services and charities are sufficiently inclusive?

Professor Bramley: The key recommendation in here, which was informed by the West Midlands work, was the same as what Crisis and Shelter have said they are trying to do: work with local organisations that may be particularly associated with, and hopefully trusted by, particular minoritised groups in particular contexts, to bring in their professional approach and understanding of all the key issues like the benefits and migration system, the legal situation in homelessness law and so on. In the West Midlands, we found that there were local grassroots organisations rooted in communities, but often the advice they were giving their clients was wrong, because they did not know enough about the benefits system. That is why that vertical link with national organisations is something to be very much cultivated.

Q26 Kevin McKenna: I would like to take it up to the national response, and what the Government have done and may do. First, to Jasmine: what steps have the Government already taken, as far as you understand it, to address these challenges around black homelessness? Probably more importantly, how effective do you think these have been?

Jasmine Basran: There are some broader measures that we touched on earlier, such as the funding settlement for social housing, broader reforms around planning, and the Renters' Rights Act. We have heard a lot about the research into negative experiences of racism and discrimination in the private rental sector. The measures in that Act will create a more positive policy environment that reduces the likelihood of those things occurring, but to be really honest, there needs to be more focus in this space. That is



HOUSE OF COMMONS

something we would like to see in the upcoming homelessness strategy but also to be considered as part of the long-term housing strategy, and we would like those two things to be aligned.

There are quite significant and specific policies that are perhaps not being viewed in the light of the impact of discrimination and people's experiences of racism, and we would like those to be reconsidered. That is particularly the policies around asylum that we have discussed, but also things like right to rent checks and those more direct policies that tend to disproportionately impact black and ethnic minority households, including welfare measures such as the freeze on local housing allowance rates and the benefit cap.

Homelessness is the sharp end of poverty, and people who are black and of ethnic minority communities are disproportionately represented in poverty overall and in homelessness. These broader measures are therefore having a disproportionate impact on those communities, so we would really advocate for the Government to look at those broader policies in that light, with the opportunity of the homelessness and housing strategy.

One thing we are very keen to see is that the Government have an inter-ministerial group on homelessness, where Ministers are at the table for their respective Departments. We would love to see the Women and Equalities Minister in that group as part of her role, because one of the difficult things in any large organisation or governance structure is all the things that need to work together. If you address something as a silo, if you just look at it from one perspective—just with housing, as Martha was saying earlier, there is lots in that space—we will not address the wider issues.

To be really honest, everything we have talked about today is about systemic racism. It is much more complicated than just taking one thing and looking at it in one way. We would appreciate a broader approach around this and thinking about some of those really big drivers.

Kevin McKenna: I put the same question to you, Martha.

Martha Schofield: One important statistic from Heriot-Watt's research that I do not think we have touched on today and which adds to the qualitative insights around access to social homes is that black-led households are less than half as likely to secure a social home as their white counterparts. That speaks to the question you were asking earlier, so I wanted to make sure I mentioned it.

Social housing is the only genuinely affordable source of housing; it provides people with the foundation to get on in life. We were really pleased to see in the spending review that the Government have pledged £39 billion for a new 10-year Social and Affordable Homes Programme, as Jasmine has mentioned already. We need that to ramp up—to build 90,000 social homes a year for 10 years—to really end the housing emergency for good.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Obviously building those homes will take time, and right now we have more children experiencing homelessness than ever before, so in the interim we would absolutely support what Jasmine has mentioned around unfreezing LHA and abolishing the household benefit cap. We need to unlock homes now for those households who are disproportionately stuck in temporary accommodation to go to, and to stop children from encountering homelessness.

Professor Bramley: May I follow that up? A few years ago, I argued for the target of 90,000 social homes in a report that the House of Commons Select Committee and MHCLG thought was the best available estimate. I updated that about a year or so ago in the Chartered Institute of Housing's UK Housing Review, still making that case.

In order to achieve that figure, not only do we need to have investment through the affordable homes programme, and at a higher level than we are getting at the moment, we need assertive use of the planning obligations system. In my personal view, that is very important, and it must not be sacrificed in short-term bargaining with the house-building industry.

Drawing on another piece of research, in the Homelessness Monitors I produce projections each year of homelessness and core homelessness, and analyse how much difference different policies would make. The six big asks include indexing the local housing allowance, which you have mentioned, and increasing housing supply, but also perhaps diversifying that supply of social housing so that some of it is appropriate for people who we are trying to get out of rough sleeping and out of hostels and so on, and so that we have bigger family homes for families that are stuck. It cannot just be all two-bedroom flats.

On the welfare front, apart from the LHA, there are a number of other measures. We talk about the destitution-inducing features of universal credit like the five-week wait and so on, but also the benefit caps and the two-child limit. These were included in our modelling this year, and they all make a contribution.

A bigger roll-out of Housing First is important to support people with various complex needs, such as mental illness, and to cut down repeat homelessness, which is particularly important for some of the groups that would benefit from that—more consistent support that is personalised to them in more appropriate, regular housing, rather than in a congregate hostel somewhere. There should be more direct rehousing of more core homeless single people into social rented housing, and the renters reform legislation should be effectively implemented. Those are the key asks, and in the report, I have demonstrated how much impact that would be likely to have over time.

Chair: Thank you very much. I think that is a good place to draw this to an end. Are there any other questions from Committee members?



Q27 David Burton-Sampson: It was great to hear from you three about how you think we should move forward, but I would like to ask Uche the same question. As someone who has experienced homelessness, can you give us your opinion on what you would like to see the Government doing to address this situation?

Uche Eneke: I would have to agree with what everyone has said from the professional side of it, and definitely about building more affordable homes and suitable homes. They do not have to be in London, because London seems to be getting cramped at the moment; there are all these new builds coming up, which are necessary because we need housing, but maybe we should look at other areas as well. More properties and more social homes should be built around the outskirts of London.

I know that would be displacing a lot of families, but at some point, you start to think, "Well, I want to leave London, I do not mind living in Cambridgeshire, I do not mind living in Brentwood, just to have a home." The crime rate in London is getting worse at the moment, and I am thinking about raising my children in a safer environment. I think the Government should consider building more social homes in other areas apart from London, because London seems to be getting a lot cramped at the moment.

Chair: Thank you very much. Some people—some of our London MPs—might dispute the idea that crime, particularly serious crime, is going up in London, but if those are people's experiences and fears, that is absolutely valid.

I would like to bring this session to a close. Thank you all very much for your time.