Centre for
Homelessness Impact

What is a Hostel in 21st Century Britain?

In Brief

There is no universally accepted definition of what a hostel is. This report summarises the characteristics of a large sample of hostels in the United Kingdom.

Most hostels in the UK are small with relatively few bed spaces - around a third of projects had 10 bed spaces or fewer.

Residents in hostels were almost universally offered their own private bedroom, and around a quarter also had access to a private kitchen and bathroom.

Four in five of hostels are mixed-gender and three in four accepted residents of any age between 18 and 55.

Women's only, and young people's hostels made up a substantial minority and most hostels provide 24 hour staffing, **with three in four offering either waking or sleeping night-time cover.**

Only 1 in 10 projects had a ratio of more than 10 residents per staff member and three in five of projects use volunteers in some capacity.

The majority of hostels (61%) allow residents to consume alcohol on the premises, but a significant proportion (37%) do not allow consumption of drugs or alcohol. Notably, 23% permit consumption of drugs on the premises.

The most frequent length of stay **was between one and two years. Longer stays of two to five years were common.** Residents often **stayed longer than expected** given what the hostels were set up to provide.

Most hostels (62%) had more than 30% moving into long-term housing. Only a relatively small group (28% of hostels) had 20% or more of their clients experience negative outcomes such as eviction, or abandoning their accommodation.

Overall, the data suggests a mixed picture where, for many (if not most) residents, **a hostel stay is often not the final step on a pathway to settled housing.**

Hostels are primarily publicly funded. 86% received funding from Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit and 64% received direct funding from local authorities via housing-related support funds. Only 38% of projects received funding from charitable sources such as grants (9%) or donations (29%).

The average cost of a hostel bed per year was £27,785, with the majority costing less than £33,000 per year. Smaller hostels cost more per bed space.

Recommendations

This survey is a first step towards developing a framework for defining what a hostel is. By describing their characteristics of a large sample of hostels in the UK, this offers a base to build a more sophisticated typology.

A typology could seek to explore further some of the relationships identified here, including:

- the relationship between bed space cost, size of project, and outcomes. This could also explore how both very small and very large hostels intersect with other categories of accommodation-based services, such as smaller and more intensively staffed supported housing projects.
- the relationship between approaches to move-on (e.g. duration of stay for different cohorts and support services offered), their outcomes, and costs.
- the relationship between varying types of staffing and support to cater to the needs of different populations, their outcomes, and costs. This could also explore how hostels support individuals with specific needs (e.g. learning disabilities), especially considering many hostels offering accommodation do not explicitly target these groups but accept them in practice.

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Foreword

It is with a mix of pride and sorrow that I present this report on the state of hostels in 21st century Britain. This study not only explores the current landscape but also looks ahead to the future of this vital segment of the homelessness sector. The report stands as a testament to the dedication, insight, and passion of my late colleague, Jeremy Swain, whose vision and hard work were instrumental in bringing this project to fruition.

Jeremy spent 34 years working at Thames Reach, which helps people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and for 19 years was its chief executive. He joined the then Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, first as Deputy Director of its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Directorate and then as a Senior Adviser to its Covid-19 Rough Sleeping Taskforce. He was also an associate at the Centre for Homelessness Impact.

His unwavering dedication to improving and innovating within the homelessness sector is why he was so committed to this project to map the typology of homelessness hostels, as a first step towards evaluating their efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Like me, he believed in the ideal of rapid rehousing, ensuring people don't need to go through temporary accommodation. However, when this isn't possible or desirable for whatever reason, it is crucial that hostels offer positive experiences, with a strong community focus.

In crafting this report, we have drawn upon extensive research and data analysis to provide a thorough examination of the current state of hostels in the United Kingdom.

We believe that this is the largest study of its kind, drawing as it does on data from 317 hostel services in 104 local authorities areas in all parts of the UK. Much of its reach is a tribute to Jeremy's work on this project: his deep knowledge of the homelessness sector, his relationships with people working within it, and his empathy and instinctive respect for individuals who navigate this system to receive support. He knew from experience what it is like, as a manager or senior member of staff on shift in a busy hostel, to find time to fill in a survey form when a hundred and one priorities and real life crises seem to be stacking up around you. But he knew, too, how to convince busy professionals working in people-facing roles in homelessness that collecting accurate data can be the key to unlocking system-wide improvements.

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It is fitting that we dedicate this report to Jeremy, whose legacy will continue to inspire and guide us. His belief in the power of the best hostels to provide a platform for permanent exits from homelessness was profound, and it is our hope that this report honours his memory by contributing valuable insights and direction to the sector he loved so dearly.

May this report serve not only as an informative resource but also as a tribute to Jeremy's enduring impact on the hostel sector and his indelible mark on all of us who had the privilege of working with him.

Sincerely,

Ligia Teixeira

Dr Ligia Teixeira is Chief Executive of the Centre for Homelessness Impact

Centre for
Homelessness Impact

What is a Hostel in 21st Century Britain?

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and Rob Anderson

October 2024

About the Centre for Homelessness Impact

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

Person-first language
This report uses person-first language, putting a person before their circumstances. This is to avoid defining an individual by homelessness, which should be a temporary experience.

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Summary

Hostels play a significant role in the response to homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK. However, evaluating the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of hostels poses a challenge due to the absence of a universally accepted definition of what a hostel is. To address this gap, the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) launched a research project with the ambition of building an evidence-based typology of hostel provision with data from hostels across the UK. This typology offers a framework for defining the characteristics of a hostel as well as systematically comparing different models and allowing for better evaluation and learning.

As a first step on this journey, we conducted a survey on hostel models. The survey, a collaborative effort between the CHI and the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR) took place between April and July 2022. Data were collected from 317 individual services in 104 local authorities spanning England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The survey covered a wide range of topics including physical attributes, client demographics, support services, policies, staffing, legal and tenure matters, management practices, regulations, funding sources, costs, resident data collection, and outcome measurement

This data from 317 hostel projects, provides for the first time an empirical basis for defining a 'typical hostel' and highlighting the ways in which future research could develop a more sophisticated typology to map variations in hostel provision. Additionally, the data presents a range of insights to assist policymakers, practitioners and researchers in understanding the characteristics and activities of hostels in the UK today.

In terms of the **physical characteristics**, despite examples of large projects (50+ beds), **most hostels were small** with relatively few bed spaces — around a third of projects had 10 bed spaces or fewer. **Residents in hostels were almost universally offered self-contained accommodation units with a private bedroom,** and around a quarter also included access to a private kitchen and bathroom.

The survey found most hostels (78%) were mixed-gender, and 75% accepted residents of any age between 18 and 55, reinforcing the notion that hostels consist of primarily **generalist accommodation that accepts a broad range of people**. That said, **women's and young people's hostels made up a substantial minority** of the sample; 8% of projects accepted women only, and around 25% accepted only residents aged 18 to 25.

Hostels frequently **accepted cohorts who were not part of their target population**. For example, individuals with learning difficulties were only targeted by 39% of hostels, but they were accepted in the majority (79%). This suggests that, although intended for a general needs population, hostels frequently support individuals with specific specialist needs.

Relatedly, we found that most hostels shared a **similar core support offer**, focused on **move-on, welfare and budgeting advice, and emotional wellbeing support**. That said, **the majority (66%) offered a more holistic range of services, including mental health, substance use services, among others**.

In terms of how hostels are managed, we found **that most hostels provide 24 hour staffing**, with three in four offering some level of 24-hour staffing. The **intensity of staffing** support varied, but notably few projects reported very low numbers of staff compared to residents: only 1 in 10 projects had a ratio of more than 10 residents per staff member. Volunteers play an important role in hostel staffing, with 60% of projects using volunteers in some capacity. Volunteers appear to be used to complement paid staff, rather than as substitutes.

The data also highlights that **hostels vary considerably in how they manage substance use on their premises**. The majority (61%) allow residents to consume alcohol, but a significant proportion (37%) do not allow consumption of drugs or alcohol. Notably, 23% permit consumption of drugs on the premises; this is likely to take the form of de facto tolerance of drug use amongst residents rather than formal managed consumption.

Duration of stay in hostels were **often fairly long**. The most frequent length **was between one and two years. Longer stays of two to five years were common.** Residents often **stayed longer than expected** — for example, residents expected to stay for 6 to 12 months most commonly stayed for between one and two years.

Hostels are often considered a stepping stone to long-term housing for people experiencing homelessness. We found that **most hostels (62%) saw higher rates (30%+) of positive move ons** into long-term housing, and only a relatively small group (28% of hostels) saw high rates (20%+) of negative outcomes such as eviction, or residents abandoning their accommodation. We also noted that a substantial minority (39%) of hostels indicated more than a fifth (21%+) of their residents experienced a 'sideways move', meaning their stay ended with transitioning to different emergency or temporary housing. Overall, the data suggests a mixed picture where, for many (if not most) residents, **a hostel stay is often not the final step on a pathway to settled housing**.

The data shows that **hostels are primarily publicly funded**. 86% received funding from Housing Benefit/Universal Credit and 64% received direct funding from local authorities via Housing-related Support funds. Only 38% of projects received funding from charitable sources such as grants (9%) or donations (29%).

The **average cost of a hostel bed per year was £27,785**, with the majority costing less than £33,000 per year. There was **considerable variation between projects in overall expenditure**, with a notable sub-group (22%) of very large projects with a total expenditure of over £1 million annually.

We found some evidence of **economies of scale**. Hostels with fewer than 30 bed spaces cost more per bed space than in the largest hostels with 75 or more bedspaces. It is important to note that we were not able to assess the relationship between these economies of scale and outcomes for residents i.e. the relative value for money of different hostel sizes.

Conclusions

As a first step towards developing a framework for defining the characteristics and features that constitute a hostel, we have drawn upon the above analysis of the characteristics and features of this sample of hostel provision in the UK. We propose a set of hostel provision typical characteristics, constituting a 'base type' upon which a more sophisticated typology might be built through future research.

Hostels could be typified as primarily **generalist accommodation with fairly open acceptance criteria**, noting there are clearly defined sub-categories targeting women and young people exclusively. To build on this, a typology should seek to better understand how hostels work with individuals with specific needs (e.g. learning disabilities), especially those that don't explicitly target these groups but accept them in practice. This should explore whether such hostels constitute distinct sub-types, or if this activity is driven by a need for generalist provision to backfill in the absence of more appropriate specialist provision.

Hostels could be typified as providing a **'core service' of move-on support, welfare and budgeting advice, and emotional support**. As most offer some level of specialist support beyond this, a typology should seek to systematically assess variations in additional services offered and how these relate both to populations served and outcomes.

In terms of physical characteristics, hostels could be typified as generally encompassing **fairly small sites providing self-contained accommodation of 10–20 bed spaces, often with private access to facilities**. A typology could helpfully seek to refine how both very small and very large hostels intersect with other categories of accommodation-based services, such as smaller and more intensively supported housing projects.

Hostels are typified by a **24-hour staffing model**. A more sophisticated typology should explore how variations in staffing support interact with populations served, services provided, outcomes, and costs.

Hostels could be defined using **target outcome** and **typical duration of stay**, with most hostels aiming to provide **temporary housing of 6 months to 2 years with the goal of moving on to settled housing**. Further work on a typology would seek to better understand the variations in approaches to move-on (e.g. duration of stay for different cohorts and support services offered) and outcomes, and comparisons with other accommodation types which seek similar outcomes.

Finally, in terms of **cost and funding structure**, hostels can now be understood as costing typically **around £27,000 per bed space per year, primarily funded by Housing Benefit**. A typology could seek to further explore the **relationship between bed space cost, size of project, and outcomes** to better assess the value for money of different types of provision. It could also seek to compare the cost of hostel-type beds to other forms of accommodation-based services, such as statutory Temporary Accommodation or supported housing.

Acknowledgements

We are particularly grateful to providers of hostels services who supported this project. The active support and participation of The Salvation Army was central to achieving data returns from a critical mass of organisations. We are also grateful to the Single Homeless Project, Two Saints Limited, Framework, Centrepoint and St Mungo's and to all other organisations that took part.

Introduction

Hostels play a significant role in the response to homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK. However, we lack a universally accepted definition of a hostel. In response, the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) launched a research project aiming to build an evidence-based typology of hostel provision with real data from hostels across the UK. This typology will offer a framework for precisely defining the characteristics and features that constitute a hostel. To begin, we conducted a survey to gather data on hostel characteristics and performance indicators.

The survey, conducted by Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR) and commissioned by CHI, took place between April and July 2022. Data were collected from 317 individual projects situated across 104 local authorities spanning England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The survey covered a wide range of topics including physical attributes, client demographics, support services, policies, staffing, legal and tenure matters, management practices, regulations, funding sources, costs, resident data collection, and outcome measurement.

The data were utilised to examine differences and similarities across hostels, and identify key characteristics that differentiate various types of hostels in important ways. These core attributes form the basis for creating a typology.

Survey participants and methods

The purpose of this survey was to describe the features of UK hostels, and inform the development of CHI's hostel typology.

The online version of the survey was designed and administered using Qualtrics, a survey software, and was available for a period of five weeks. We employed a convenience sampling method, distributing the survey link directly to the hostel providers in the CHI database and circulating it among various hostel projects. Hostels were also given the option to complete a paper survey. Questionnaires were available in both Excel and Word.

Survey instrument

The questionnaire, consisting of 44 questions and covering 8 areas can be found in Appendix 1. The topics addressed include:

1. Respondent's contact details
2. Data relating to the identification of the hostel project
3. Physical dimension of the hostel project
4. Type of groups targeted, accepted and excluded
5. Support services offered
6. Legal and tenure-related matters
7. Funding, management and regulation of the hostel
8. Outcomes measured and data collection.

Because winter shelters and severe weather shelters are very short term, very communal, and likely to include only camp beds or cubicles, these types of accommodation were excluded from the survey. Additionally, self-contained flats or bedsits with housing-related support provided on a visiting basis (e.g. Housing First), whether dispersed within general needs housing or in a single building, were also excluded from the survey on the basis that these are intended as long-term/permanent housing and there is no communal shared space on site.

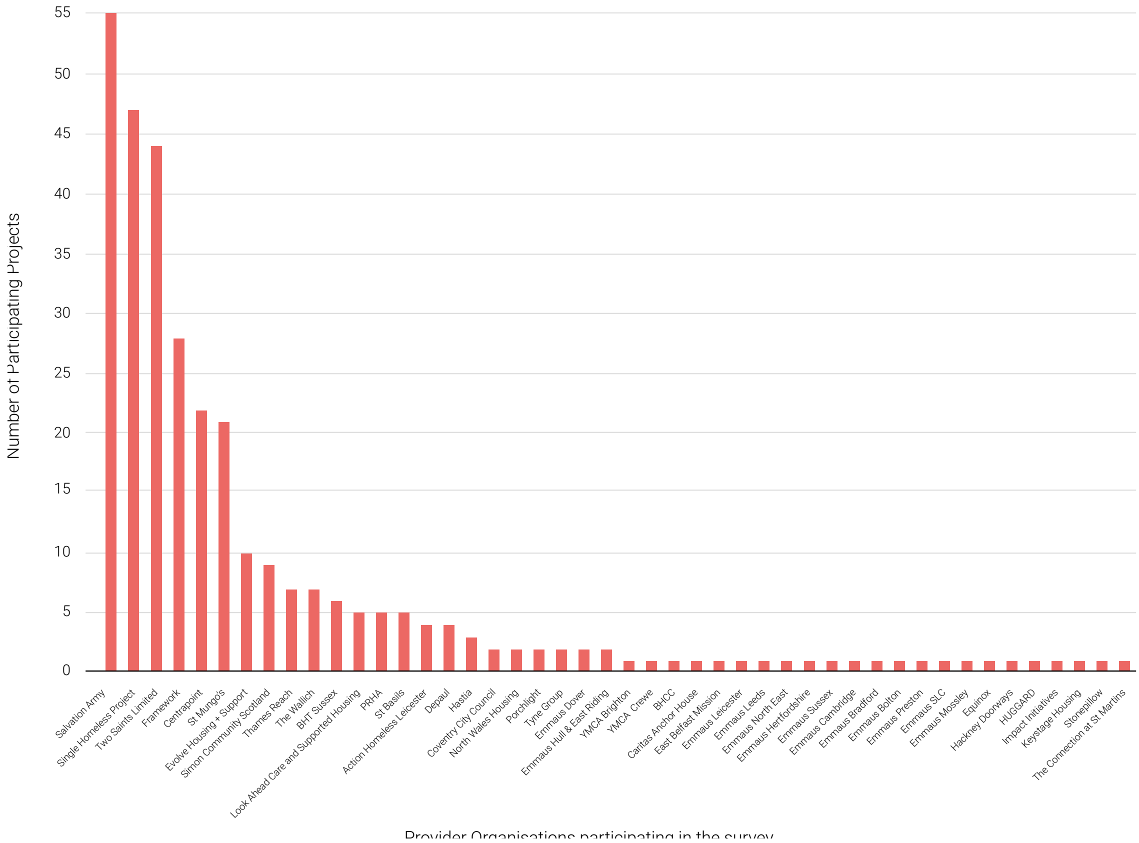
Survey Findings and Insights

1. Survey respondents

Characteristics of survey respondents

Responses from 317 projects associated with 45 provider organisations were included in the study (Figure 1). Nearly half of the surveyed hostels (46%) were linked to three organisations: The Salvation Army (55 hostels), Single Homeless Project (47 hostels), and Two Saints Limited (44 hostels). Approximately 22% of the surveyed hostels were affiliated with Framework (28 hostels), Centrepoint (22 hostels), and St Mungo's (21 hostels). 24 organisations each reported a single hostel project (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of projects by provider organisation



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Projects participating in the survey were situated across 104 local authorities throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. A significant proportion, 37% of projects, were concentrated in nine English local authorities: Portsmouth City, Southampton City, Nottingham City, Brighton and Hove and the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Islington, Camden, Lewisham and Hammersmith & Fulham. Over half, 53%, of the local authorities represented in the survey only included information for one hostel.

The geographic distribution reflects the operational areas of the service providers through which the survey was distributed (e.g. Thames Reach is London only, but St Mungo's are nationwide).

2. Physical Characteristics of Hostel Projects

Structures Utilised for Hostels

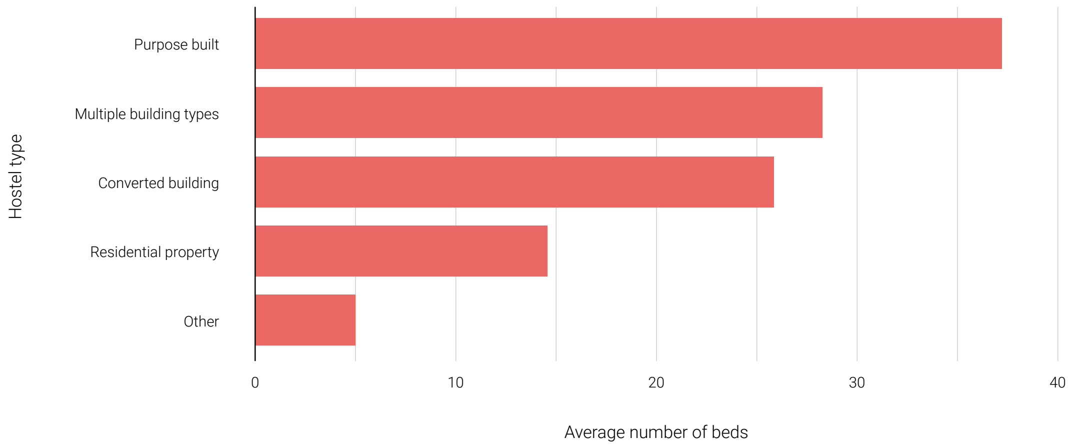
Hostel projects were primarily located in purpose-built housing (49%) and adapted residential properties (42%) (Table 1), with purpose-built accommodations tending to be larger than adapted residential properties (Figure 2.)

Table 1: Building type used for hostel

Building type	% of total, n= 317[a]
Purpose-built housing	49%
Residential property	42%
Converted building	5%
Hotel/guesthouse	1%
Other	9%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] *Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding*

Figure 2: Average number of bed spaces by type of building



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

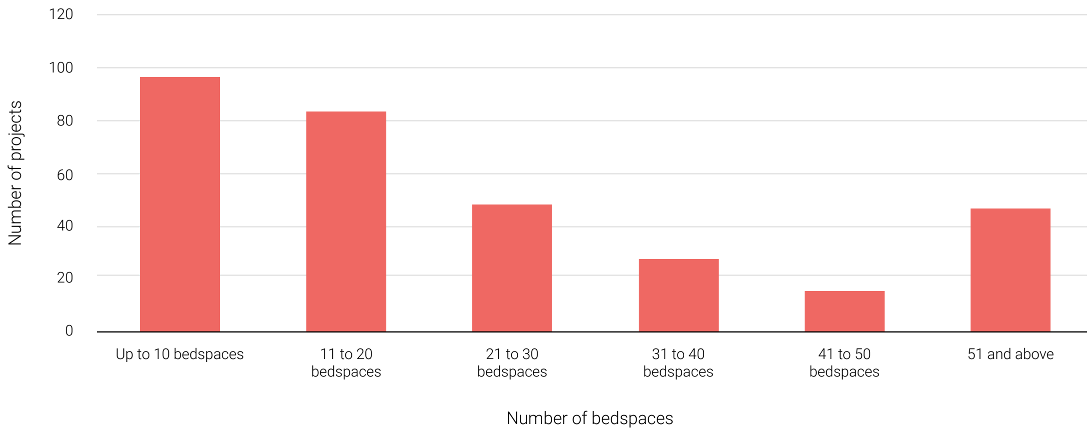
Bed spaces

As shown in Figure 3, while hostels in the sample varied significantly in the number of beds they offered, most were either relatively small or very large.

About one third (97 projects, 30.6% of the sample) offered 10 or fewer bedspaces, with one in four (84 projects, 26.5%) providing between 11 and 20 bedspaces. Some projects reported only two beds; such a small project might be regarded as falling into the category of Supported Housing rather than 'hostel' project. This underscores the lack of consensus amongst practitioners regarding what counts as a 'hostel'.

In contrast to these smaller hostels which made up the majority of projects, the next largest group of projects were comparatively large, with more than 51 bed spaces (46 projects, 14.5%).

Figure 3: Number of hostel projects by number of bed spaces



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Sharing facilities

About a quarter of all units had exclusive use of bedroom, bathroom and kitchen; another quarter had exclusive use of bedroom and bathroom (ensuite) but shared kitchens. The most common type of facility are those where people have their own room with shared use of all other facilities including bathrooms and kitchens (around 43%).

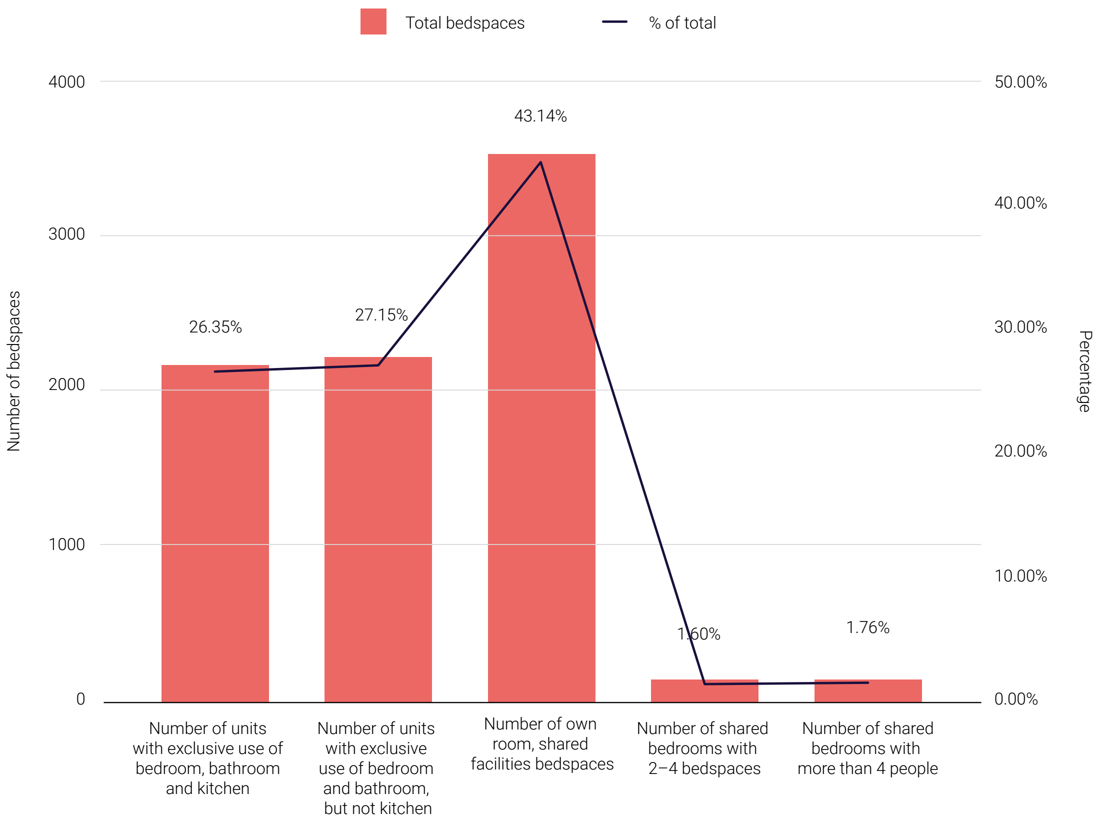
Projects with shared bedrooms were rare. Only 3.8% of all projects had at least one unit with shared bedrooms for more than 4 people, and 6% had at least one unit with shared bedrooms with 2–4 people. (Data not shown). Together, these represent just around 3.5% of all units in the sample. (Table 2, Figure 4). Hostels usually tend to have most (but not all) of their units in a single category.

Table 2: Percentage of bedspaces by the level of sharing

Level of sharing	Total bedspaces in the sample	% of total
Number of units with exclusive use of bedroom, bathroom and kitchen	2155	26.35%
Number of units with exclusive use of bedroom and bathroom, but not kitchen	2220	27.15%
Number of own room, shared facilities bedspaces	3528	43.14%
Number of shared bedrooms with 2–4 bedspaces	131	1.60%
Number of shared bedrooms with more than 4 people	144	1.76%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
Note: This includes data for 256 projects. Information for 61 projects had to be excluded due to data quality concerns. For example, in some cases the number of bedspaces in each category of sharing facilities exceeded the reported total number of bedspaces.

Figure 4: Distribution of bed spaces by accommodation type



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
Note: This includes data for 256 projects. Information for 61 projects had to be excluded due to data quality concerns. For example, in some cases the number of bedspaces in each category of sharing facilities exceeded the reported total number of bedspaces.

3. Demographics and profiles of groups targeted, accepted, and excluded by hostels

Demographics

Most provision is generalist, accepting most adults from a wide range of age groups, with two notable exceptions: hostels focusing on women, and young people aged up to 25.

Table 3 shows the majority of hostels accepted both men and women (78%), with only one in twelve focusing exclusively on women (8%). A little more than a quarter (27.1%) of all the hostel projects surveyed accepted residents who qualify as legally classified minors.

Most projects (236 out of the 317) have a maximum age requirement. About one quarter of the projects (24%) focus exclusively on young people as they have a maximum age of up to 25 years of age. (Table 3).

Table 3: Demographics of hostel residents

Demographics	Statistic
Gender composition	% of total, n= 317[a]
Women only	8%
Men only	14%
Mixed	78%
Minimum age accepted by hostel	% of total, n= 317[a]
<18 yrs	27%
18+ yrs	73%

Maximum age accepted by hostel	% of total, n= 317[a]
18 to 21 yrs	7%
22 to 25 yrs	17%
26 to 54 yrs	< 1%
55+ yrs	50%
No age limit	25%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] *Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding*

Groups targeted, accepted and excluded

We also explored hostel admissions approaches, assessing whether projects targeted specific groups, and what their acceptance and exclusion criteria were.

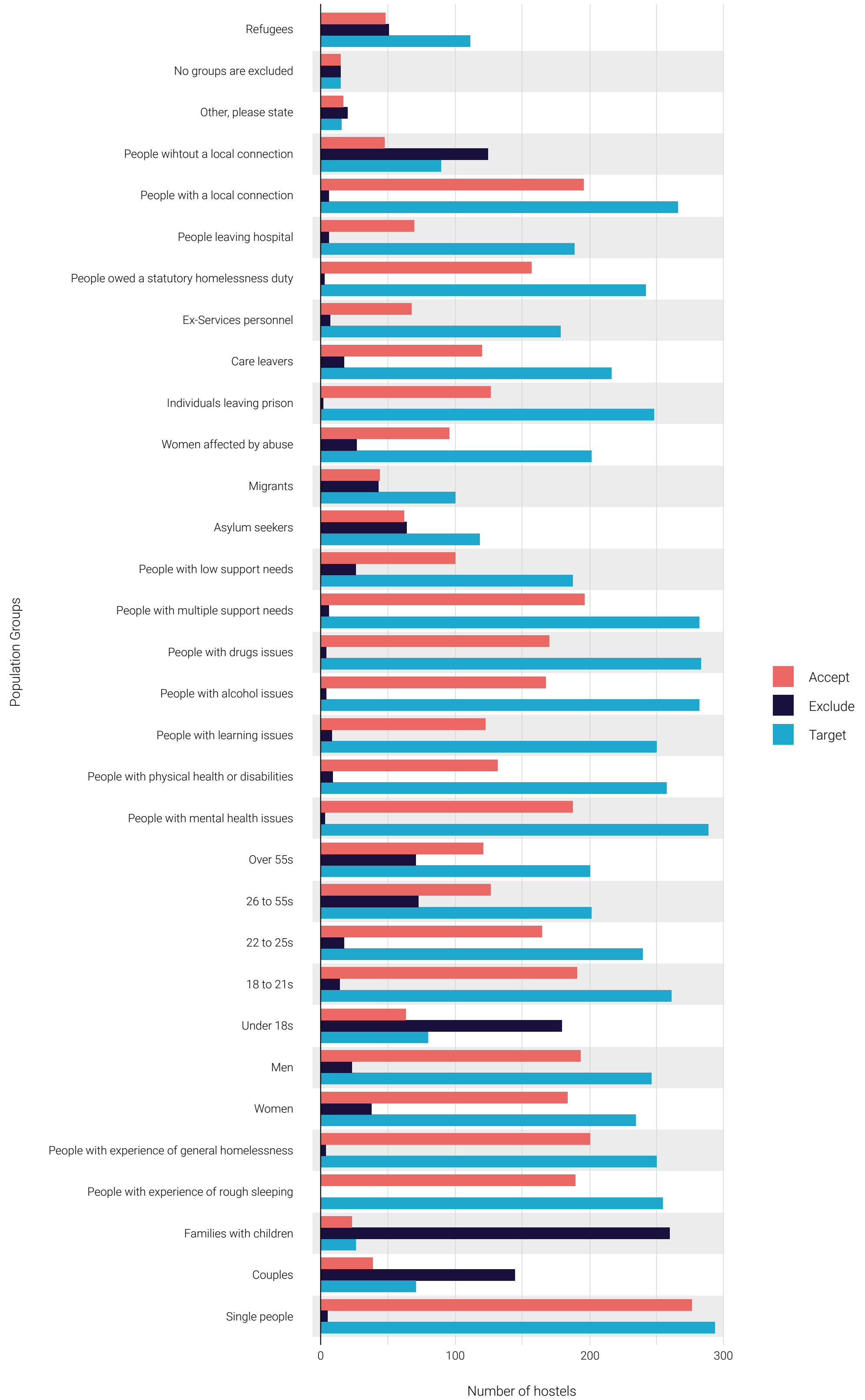
The most commonly used criteria for targeting, acceptance, and exclusion were age and household composition (e.g. families with children, couples, or single individuals).

Most hostels targeted single individuals (88%) and excluded families with children (82.1%). Other groups that were often excluded are people aged under 18 years (56.7%), couples (39.2%), and people without a local connection (20%).

The data also highlights that hostels exhibit significant flexibility, often accepting individuals they are not specifically targeting (Figure 5). Groups exhibiting the highest level of disparity between targeting strategies and admission policies are:

- Individuals leaving hospital: Targeted by 22% and accepted by 60% of hostels
- Individuals leaving prison: Targeted by 40% and accepted by 78% of hostels
- Individuals with learning difficulties: Targeted by 39% and accepted by 79% of hostels
- Individuals with physical health issues or disabilities: Targeted by 42% and accepted by 81% of hostels

Figure 5: Groups targeted, accepted, and excluded by hostels



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

4. Hostel support services, policies and staffing

Types of services offered

Hostels included in the survey offered a large range of services, whether in-house or through other organisations.

A wide range of support services were offered in-house, with the most common ones focusing on housing, welfare, budgeting, employment, and emotional wellbeing (psychologically informed support). The services least frequently offered in-house included immigration advice, peer support, and assistance for women affected by abuse (Figure 6).

Some services were not delivered in-house. The most common services provided by external organisations were substance use, mental and physical health support, with more than 70% of hostels bringing in external providers to deliver to residents. By contrast, family reconnection, peer support and pre-tenancy training were less often delivered by external providers (Figure 6).

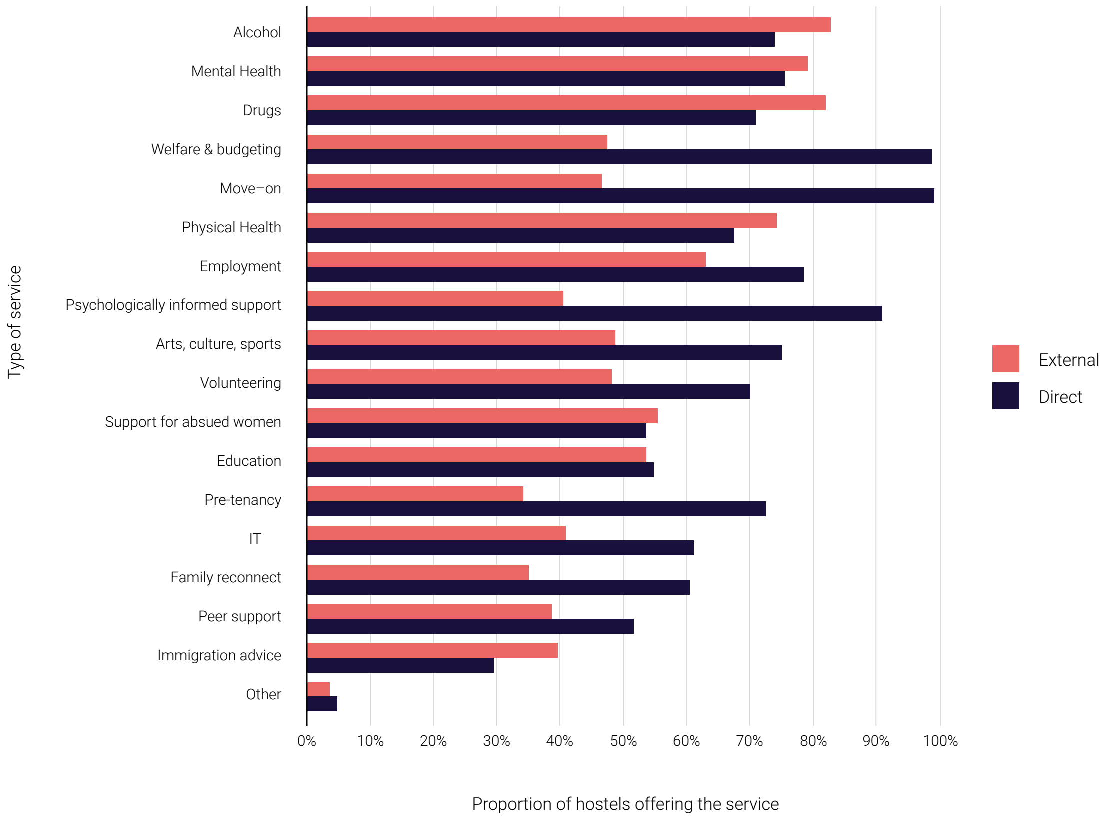
As shown in Figure 6 and summarised in Table 4, the frequency in which these are offered suggests at least two groups.

1. Hostels offering standard services, which are offered by nearly all the hostels and includes move-on, welfare and budgeting, and psychologically informed support services. About a third of hostels only offer these services.

2. Hostels with a more comprehensive offer of support. Between 67% and 80% of hostel providers included support for mental health issues, alcohol-related issues, drugs and related issues, or physical health, employment and training, Arts/Crafts/Music/Sports engagements, pre-tenancy training and support and volunteering opportunities for clients.

Other services are less common, being offered by between 50% and 65% of hostel projects. These include IT training and literacy support, family reconnection, education services, support for women affected by abuse (including domestic violence and sexual abuse).

Figure 6: Services offered by hostel, whether directly or through other organisation



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Table 4: Hostel Support Services

Services	Statistic
Level of services	% of total, n= 317[a]
Standard services offered (low level)[b]	34%
Standard and additional services offered [c]	66%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding

Policies

Overall, the majority of hostels restrict the use of drugs and alcohol on the premises. Particularly, 77% of hostels in the survey do not allow any drugs and in 39% of the projects, residents are not expected to drink in the hostel. In 37% of the hostels, both drug and alcohol use is not permitted. 40% of hostels permit alcohol consumption in some parts of the building, but not drugs.

Managed consumption of either drugs and alcohol is permitted in around one in every five hostels (21%). Only five projects allowed a managed use of drugs but did not permit alcohol use.

53.4% of hostels allowed residents to keep pets while 46.6% did not. (Table 5).

Table 5: Hostel policies

Policies	Statistic
Substance use policies	% of total, n= 315[a]
No drugs or alcohol permitted	37%
Alcohol consumption managed, no drugs	40%
Drug consumption managed, no alcohol	2%
Both alcohol and drugs managed	21%
Pets permitted	% of total, n= 305[a]
Yes	53%
No	47%

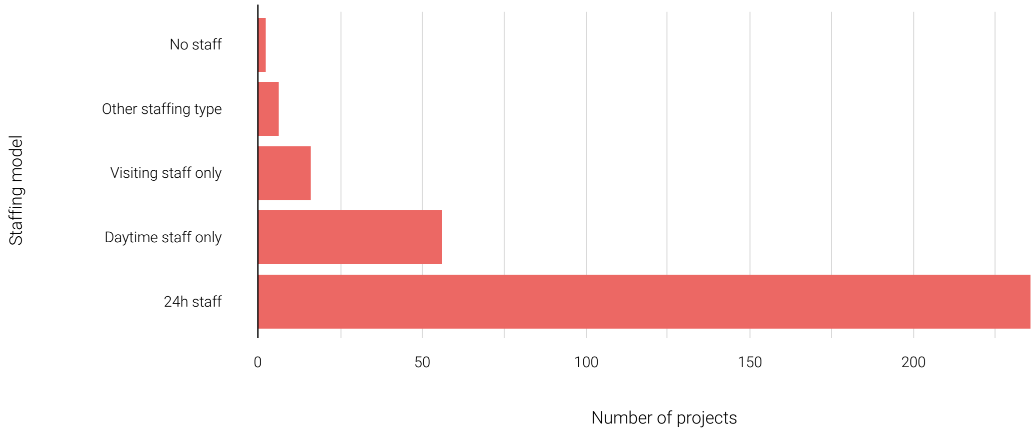
Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] *Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding*

Staffing

Almost three quarters of hostels (74%) provide some form of 24-hour staff cover (including 24 hour waking nights — single staff, 24-hour cover, more than single staff, 24-hour sleepover or 24-hour but security staff only at night). The most common type of which was 24 hour cover provided by more than one staff member (40%).

Offering only daytime staff was comparatively uncommon, as was relying on visiting staff (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Number of projects by type of staffing



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Staffing ratios, defined as the number of clients per member of staff, varied greatly. A significant proportion of projects (40%) maintain a low client-to-staff ratio (1–3 residents per staff), while 48% operate with a medium ratio (4–9 residents per staff) (Table 6).

Many projects employed volunteers in their hostels: about 60% of facilities reported having volunteers (Table 6). However, this did not appear to impact levels of staffing. Projects including volunteers had similar staffing ratios to those that did not involve volunteers. This suggests that volunteers might be used to complement services provided by paid staff rather than as an alternative.

Table 6: Staffing ratios

Staffing	Statistic
Client-to-staff ratio[b]	% of total, n= 306[a]
Low (between 1 and 3 residents per staff)	40%
Med (between 4 and 9 residents per staff)	48%
High (10 or more residents per staff)	11%
Volunteers	% of total, n= 316[a]
Yes	60%
No	40%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] *Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding*
[b] *Client-to-staff ratio* $= \dfrac{\text{total num. of bedspaces}}{\text{total num. of staff}}$

5. Hostel tenure and referral sources

Tenure and referral routes

Licences were by far the most common form of tenure, accounting for 84% of projects. It should be noted that tenures originating from Scotland were under-represented in the sample (Table 7).

Hostels reported that access to accommodation was obtained through a range of referral routes, with the majority of hostels accepting referrals from 2 or 3 sources. Most commonly, these referrals originated from local authority housing or homelessness services (76%), while a smaller percentage of projects allow for self-referrals (14%) (Table 7).

Table 7: Hostel tenancy and referral routes

Tenancy	Statistic
Type of tenancy offered by hostels	% of category total[a]
Licences	84%
Assured shorthold	11%
Unsecured tenancy	2%
Assured tenancy	1%
Tenancies originating in Scotland	< 1%
Other tenancies[b]	4%

Referral	Statistic
Referral routes	% of category total[a]
Direct from local authority housing/ homelessness services	76%
Local authority gateway	35%
Direct from outreach teams	25%
Direct from local authority adult care services	22%
Direct from local authority children's services	19%
Direct from health services	18%
Direct from probation services	16%
Direct from voluntary	15%
Self-referral	14%
Direct from housing association	12%
Other	8%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] Respondents had the option to choose more than one category, so the sum of percentages across all categories exceeds 100%. Each percentage represents the proportion of respondents who selected a particular category out of the total number of survey respondents. For example, for self-referral, 14% = [number of hostels that selected self-referral/ the total number of hostels in the survey (317)].
[b] Other tenancies include: guest agreements, occupancy agreements, assured shorthold supported, excluded and protected licence and unprotected and protected licence.

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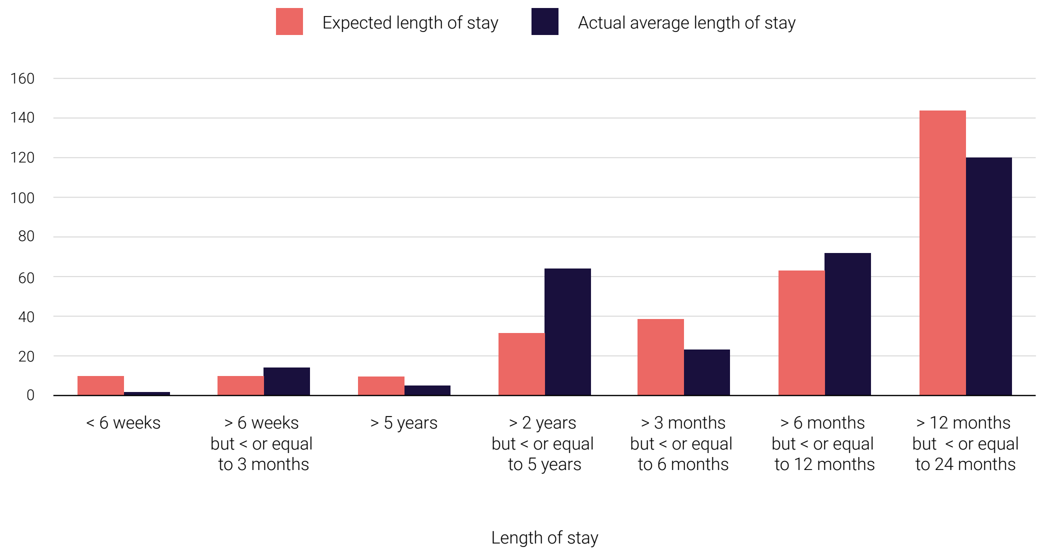
6. Hostel residency duration and transition outcomes

Expected and average actual length of stay

The majority of hostels (46.8%) expected people to stay for between one and two years, and a fifth (20.5%) expect them to stay for six to twelve months. Relatively few hostels expected clients to stay for shorter periods of between three and six months (12.7%), or for longer periods of two to five years (10.4%). Generally, very short (less than 3 months) or very long (more than 5 years) were rare, with only 1 in 25 of the hostels expecting clients to stay for that long.

Figure 8: Length of stay by number of hostel projects [expected (n=308, actual (n=302)]

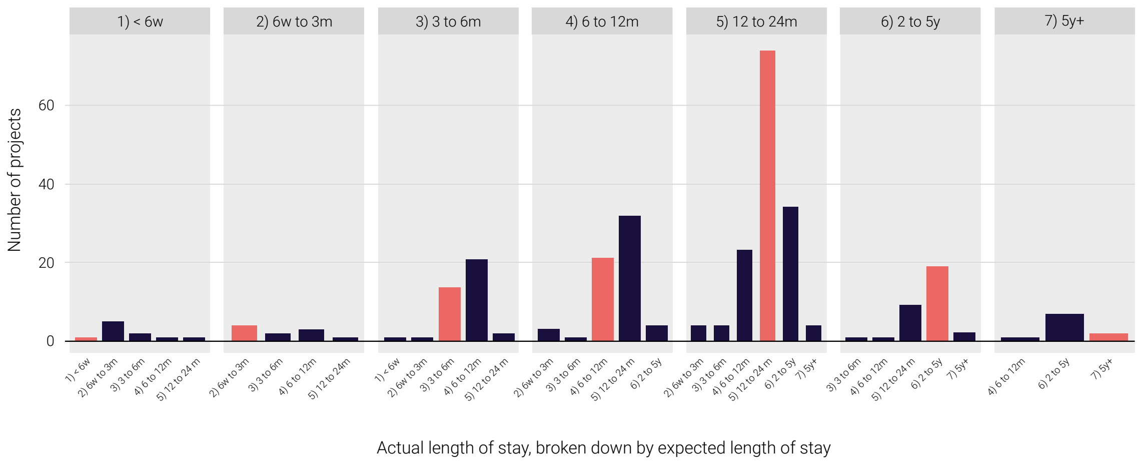


Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
Note: 308 hostels provided responses regarding the expected length, either agreed internally or set out by their commissioner (such as the local authority) (shown by the blue bar in Figure 8), while 302 supplied data on the actual average length of stay at their hostel in 2021/2022 (shown by the orange bar).

Overall, a large fraction of residents stayed for longer than originally intended.In particular, projects where residents were expected to stay for a shorter time, we tended to see residents stay longer. Among hostels where residents were expected to stay 3 to 6 months, the most frequently reported average length of stay was 6 to 12 months (Figure 9, Graph 3). Where residents were expected to stay 6 to 12 months , the most commonly reported average length of stay was 12 to 24 months (Figure 9, Graph 4).

The greatest consistency between expected and actual length of stay was for residents expected to stay 12 to 24 months; however, many residents in this group also stayed longer than expected.(Figure 9, Graph 5).

Figure 9: Average actual length of stay of hostel residents by expected length of stay [expected (n=308), actual (n=302)]*



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
Note: Figure 10 shows 7 graphs. The time period listed at the top of each graph indicates the expected length of stay represented in the graph. The time periods listed at the bottom of each graph represent all possible actual average stays a hostel could report in the survey. Each graph shows the distribution of the average actual lengths of stay within the corresponding expected time period. The highlighted column indicates the number of hostels where the expected and the average actual length of stay are the same. To the right of that column, we find the proportion of hostels where, on average, residents stayed a longer time than expected, and to the left of the blue column are the proportion of hostels where, on average, residents stayed a shorter time than expected.

Move-on options

Hostels provided information on the destinations of residents 'moving on' from their hostels. This is an important outcome area as hostel projects are often explicitly geared towards supporting residents to secure long-term housing.

The majority of hostels (62%) reported that at least a third of their residents successfully transitioned to long-term housing, with comparatively few hostels (18%) reporting that only a small number of residents (under 15%) achieved this positive outcome.

However, a substantial minority (39%) of hostels indicated that more than a fifth (21%+) of their residents experienced a ‘sideways move’, meaning their stay ended with transitioning to different emergency or temporary housing. This indicates that, for many, hostels are not the final step on a path to settled housing.

Finally, the data suggests that the majority of hostels (67%) see 11–20% of their residents experience a ‘negative move-on’, either through an unplanned departure (‘abandonment') or being required to leave (eviction).

During the 2021/22 financial year, an average of 6.8% of residents left the project voluntarily and 9.4% were evicted. However, the median (meaning that 50% of hostels had a higher number and 50% a lower number) was 2% for abandonments and 5% for evictions. The averages are higher than the medians because a few places had much higher rates of both abandonments and eviction.

Table 8: Transition outcomes

Move-on outcomes, 2021/ 2022	**Statistic**
Negative movement (evicted from or abandon hostel)	% of total, n= 317[a]
≤ 10% of residents	6%
11%–20% of residents	67%
21% + of residents	28%
Sideways movement (move to emergency or temporary housing)	% of total, n= 317[a]
≤ 10% of residents	34%
11%–20% of residents	26%
21% + of residents	39%
Positive movement (move to long-term housing)	% of total, n= 317[a]
≤ 15% of residents	18%
16%–30% of residents	21%
31% + of residents	62%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] *Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding*

7. Funding and costs

Hostel funding

The survey found more than 4 in every 5 hostel projects were funded by Housing Benefits and/or Universal Credit. Nearly 60% are funded by both Housing related support and rent and service charges paid by residents. A little above a quarter of surveyed hostels are funded by fundraising and donations (27%).

For Housing Benefit/Universal Credit purposes, among those who responded, the majority (63%) were classified as Specified/Exempt accommodation, 22% were classified as local authority-funded hostels and 10.2% were classified as General needs social housing. Moreover, 2% of the hostels were classified as ineligible for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element (Table 9).

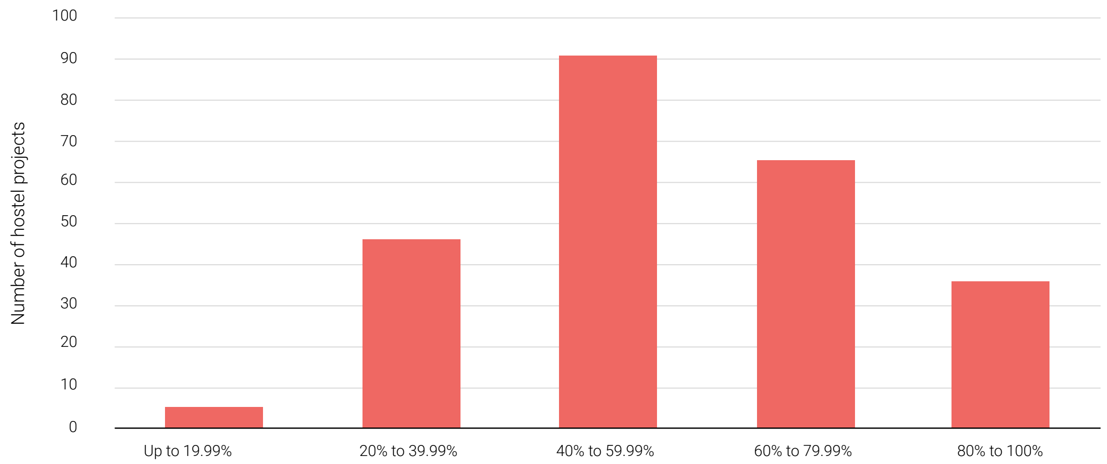
Table 9: Hostel funding

Hostel Funding	Statistic
Funding source	% of total, n= 294a,b
Housing benefit/Universal credit	86%
Housing-related support(formerly supporting people)	64%
Fundraising and donations	29%
Charitable grants	10%
Children's services	19%
Adult social care	7%
Corporates/businesses	2%
Health (e.g. CCGs, NHS Trusts)	2%
Criminal Justice	1%
Rent and service charges paid by residents (excluding Housing Benefit/Universal Credit)	1.2%
Other	12%

Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding
[b] Respondents had the option to choose more than one category, so the sum of percentages across all categories could exceed 100%. Each percentage represents the proportion of respondents who selected a particular category out of the total number of survey respondents. For example, for criminal justice, 1% = [number of hostels that selected criminal justice/ the total number of hostels in the survey (314)].
[c] Other includes: General needs social housing, General needs private rented accommodation, Leased or nightly paid temporary accommodation, and Bed and Breakfast.

The majority of projects (38%) have rental incomes that covered between 40% and 59.99% of the total annual cost. In about a quarter (27%), rental income covers between 60% and 79.99%. (Figure 10)

Figure 10: Share of total annual project cost covered by rental income



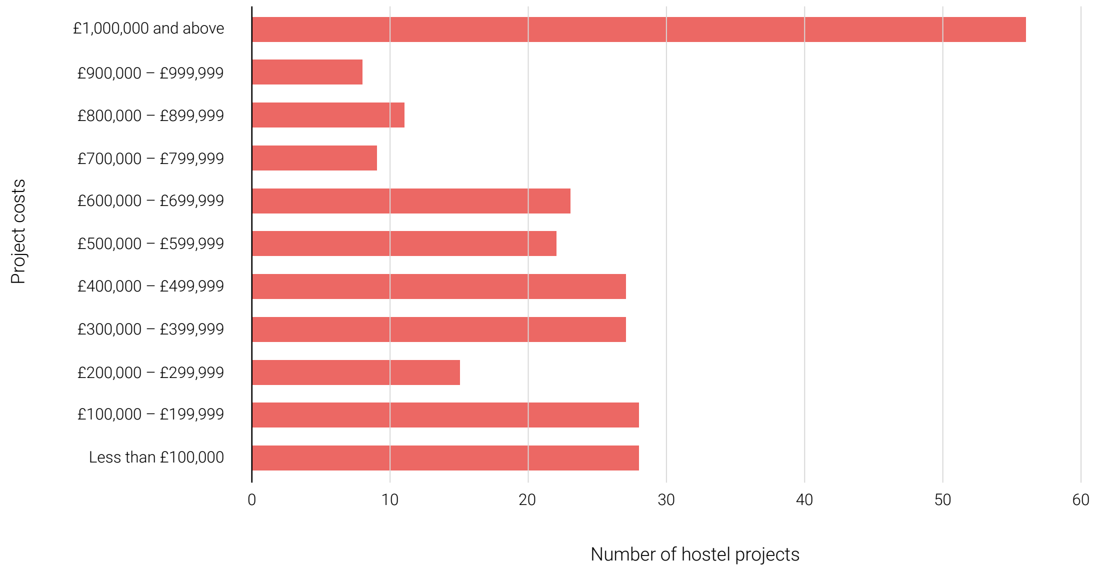
Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Annual costs

A total of 254 projects reported the annual cost of hostel projects incurred during the 2021/22 financial year and it represents 80.13% of the overall survey sample.

The survey revealed significant variation in the total annual costs for the fiscal year 2021–2022, ranging from less than £100,000 to £1 million and above. 22% of hostels reported costs of £1 million and above, representing the highest proportion (Figure 11). The rest seem to be fairly evenly distributed, with about 1 in 10 hostels falling in each of the £100,000 brackets up to £500,000.

Figure 11: Total annual cost of projects for fiscal year 2021–2022

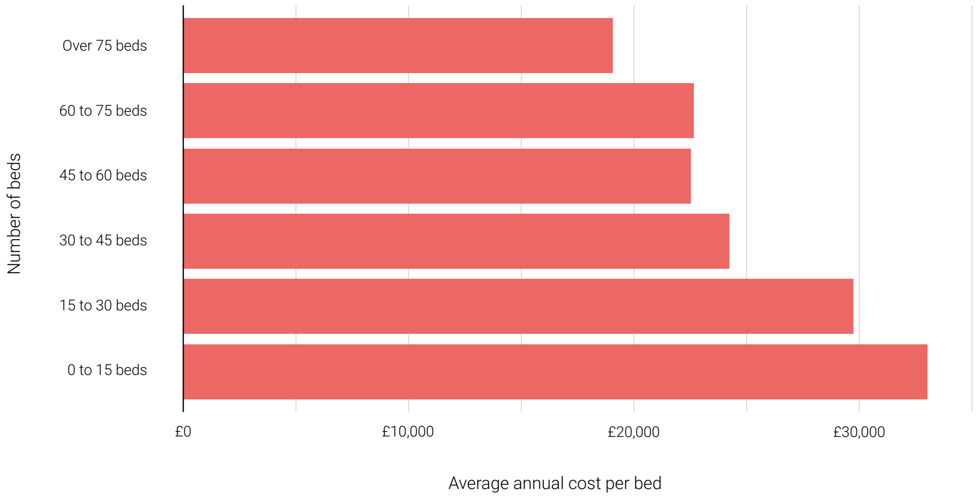


Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Cost per bed

On average, the yearly cost for a hostel bed was £27,785, with half of the projects having costs per bed ranging from £18,000 to £33,000. Larger projects appeared to benefit from economies of scale, resulting in lower costs compared to smaller ones. Hostels with fewer than 30 bedspaces were more costly per bed space than compared to the largest hostels with 75 beds or more (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Average annual cost/bed by hostel size



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
Note: This includes information for 254 hostel projects that provided both data on the total budget of the hostel and the number of beds.

8. Ownership and Governance of Hostels

Ownership, management and oversight

Respondents provided information on what kinds of organisations owned the buildings in which hostels projects were being delivered, who was responsible for the management of the hostel itself, and how each project was overseen and regulated.

Most hostels (74%) were owned by registered housing associations, with half managed by a charity other than the owning association. Only 29% of projects were also managed by the Registered Housing Association who owned the property. Regulatory oversight for hostels was most often undertaken by the local authority (Table 10), or by the Regulator for Social Housing.

Table 10: Hostel ownership and governance

Hostel ownership and governance	Statistic
Ownership of hostel projects	% of total, n= 303[a]
RHA[b] that is not the support provider	47%
RHA that is the support provider	27%
A charity other than a RHA	12%
Local authority	11%
Private landlord	2%
Other	2%

Management of hostel projects	% of total, n= 303[a]
A charity other than the RHA that owns the project	54%
RHA which owns the project	29%
Local Authority	3%
Private Sector	<1%
Prison and Probation Service	<1%
Other	14%
Regulators of hostel projects	% of total, n= 303[a]
Local authority inspection and audit	50%
Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) inspection and audit	17%
Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection and audit	1%
Inspection and audit by the owning Housing Association	15%
Internal Inspection and audit	12%
Other	3%
None of the above	3%

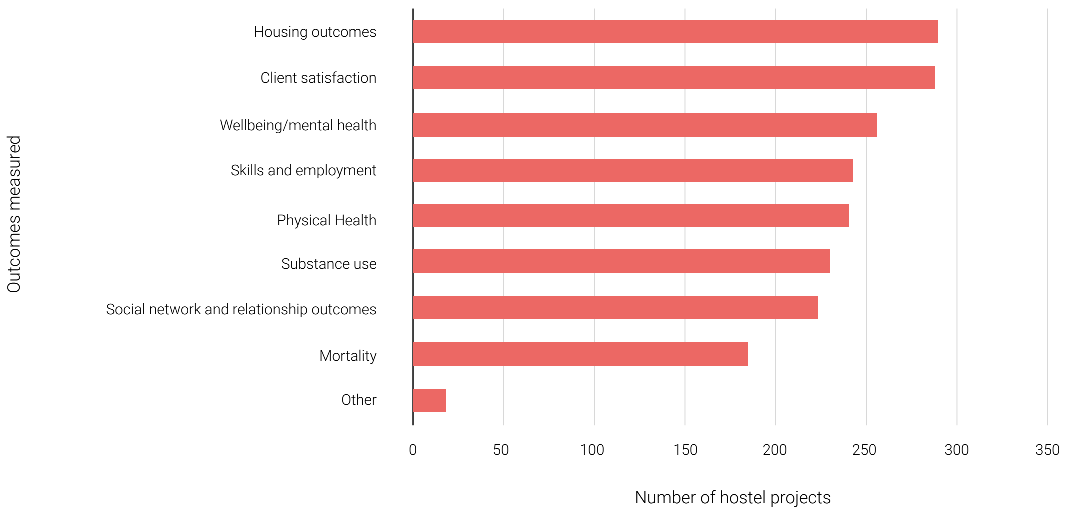
Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)
[a] Percents do not add to 100% due to rounding
[b] RHA is registered housing association

9. Data collected

Outcome measures data

Hostels collected similar data from their residents, with housing-related performance indicators unsurprisingly the most commonly assessed measures (92%). Client satisfaction (91%), and wellbeing and mental health indicators (81%) were also frequently recorded (Figure 13). A little more than two thirds of hostels measure skills and employment (77%) and physical health (76%). Substance use (73%) and social networks and relationships (71%) are also measured by a slightly smaller number of hostels.

Figure 13: Resident outcome measures by the number of projects

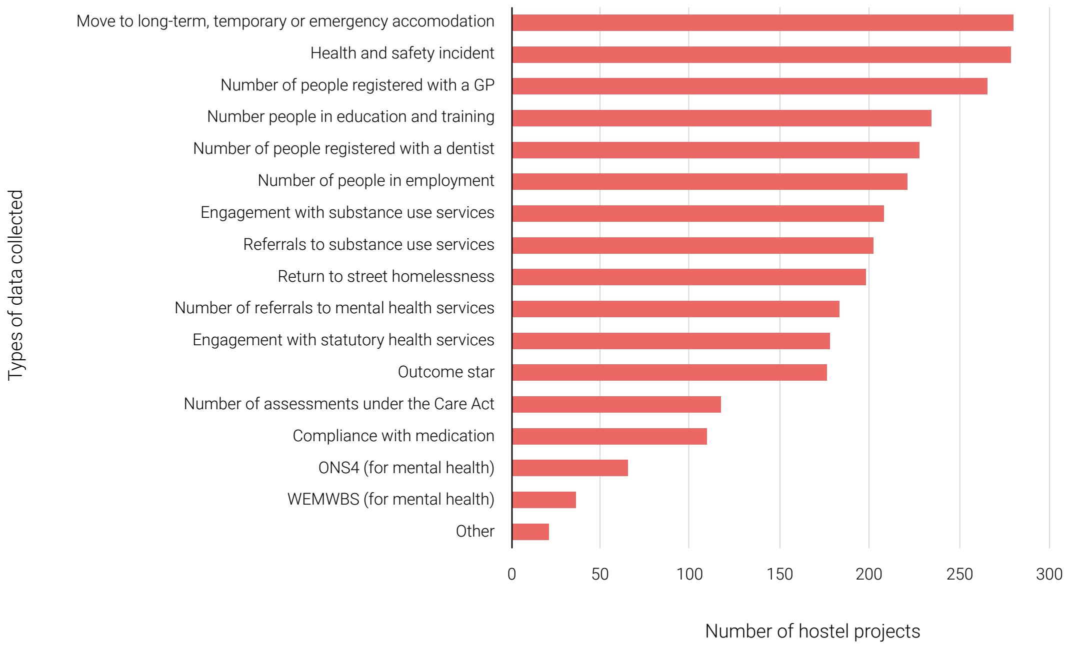


Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Administrative and management data collection

Hostels reported collecting a wide range of other data on residents. (Figure 14). As with outcome measures, projects were found to broadly collect similar data. The most commonly collected information included movements to long-term, temporary, or emergency accommodation, as well as evictions (88.3%), health and safety incidents (88%), and the count of individuals registered with a GP (83.9%) (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Resident management data by hostels by the number of projects



Source: CHI Nationwide Hostel Survey (April–July 2022)

Conclusions

Using the analysis above, we propose some typical characteristics of hostel provision. These provide a 'base type' upon which a more sophisticated typology can be built through future research.

- Hostels could be typified as primarily **generalist accommodation** with **fairly open acceptance criteria**, noting there are clearly defined sub-categories targeting women and young people exclusively. A typology should seek to better understand how different hostels work with individuals with specific needs (e.g. learning disabilities), especially those that don't explicitly target these groups but accept them in practice. This should explore to what extent such hostels constitute distinct sub-types, or if this activity is driven by a need for generalist provision to backfill in the absence of more appropriate specialist provision.

- Hostels could be typified as providing a '**core service' of move-on support, welfare and budgeting advice, and emotional support**. As most offer some level of specialist support beyond this, a typology should seek to systematically assess variations in additional services offered and how these relate both to populations served and outcomes.

- Hostels could be typified as generally encompassing **fairly small sites providing self-contained accommodation of 10–20 bed spaces, often with private access to facilities**. A typology could helpfully seek to refine how both very small and very large hostels intersect with other categories of accommodation-based services, such as smaller and more intensively supported housing projects.

- Hostels are typified by a **24-hour staffing model**, and a more sophisticated typology should explore how variations in staffing support interact with populations served, services provided, outcomes, and costs.

- Hostels could also be defined in terms of **target outcome** and **typical duration of stay**, with most hostels aiming to provide **temporary housing of 6 months to 2 years with the goal of moving on to settled housing**. Further work on a typology should seek to better understand the variations in approaches to move-on (e.g. duration of stay for different cohorts and support services offered) and outcomes, and comparisons with other accommodation types which seek similar outcomes.

- Finally, in terms of **cost and funding structure**, hostels can be understood as costing typically **around £27,000 per bed space per year, primarily funded by Housing Benefit**. A typology could seek to explore further the **relationship between bed space cost, size of project, and outcomes** to better assess the value for money of different types of provision. It could also seek to compare the cost of hostel-type beds to other forms of accommodation-based services, such as statutory Temporary Accommodation or supported housing.

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