

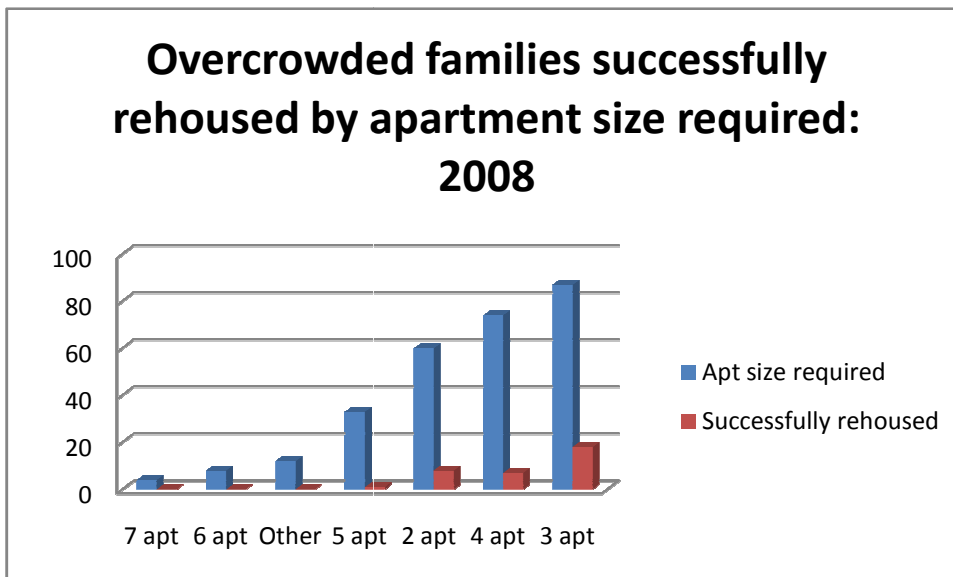
**Report to David Webster, Glasgow City council
 Resolving the problem of overcrowding in Glasgow
 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008**

Introduction

Overcrowding is now the biggest problem reported to Positive Action in Housing’s casework team and has been persistently highlighted in all our reports, yet failed to be properly addressed for decades. We have a historical backlog of cases of settled minority ethnic families who have spent years in overcrowded conditions. There is also a disproportionately greater demand for large housing within minority ethnic communities. The problem has increased dramatically due to the increased refugee and new migrant population in Scotland’s major cities. Racism and poverty combine to disproportionately reduce rehousing opportunities for visible minorities.

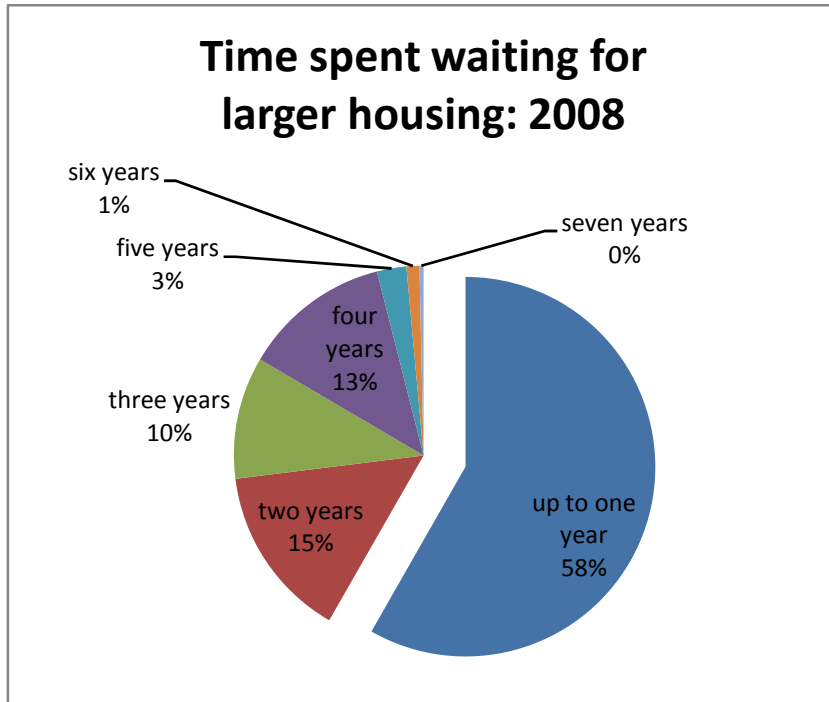
Our statistics

- In 2008, 278 families approaching our casework team were living in overcrowded housing conditions (34% of all cases).
- Only 34 out of 278 overcrowded families on our list were successfully rehoused (12%). Of those successfully rehoused, 76% (26) secured 2 and 3 apartment accommodation. Seven secured a 4 apartment, and only one family secured a 5 apartment. Severely overcrowded families, i.e. those needing four, five, six or more bedrooms stood little chance of ever being rehoused.



Time spent waiting

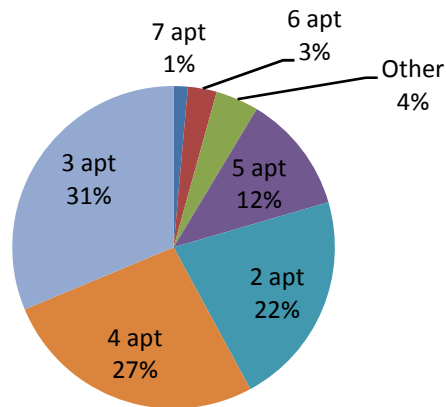
- In 2008, Positive Action in Housing took up 69 **new** cases of families living in overcrowded accommodation. The remainder of cases have been on our waiting list for several years.
- The majority of overcrowded families face a wait of up to three years. One in five severely overcrowded families face waiting between 4 and 7 years. This is clearly unacceptable. 83% of all overcrowded families have been waiting up to three years. 46 overcrowded families (17%) have been waiting between 4 and 7 years for larger accommodation.



Apartment size required

- 53% of overcrowded families required 2 – 3 apartment housing.
- 27% required 4 apartments.
- 12% required 5 apartments.
- 4% required 6 to 7 apartments.

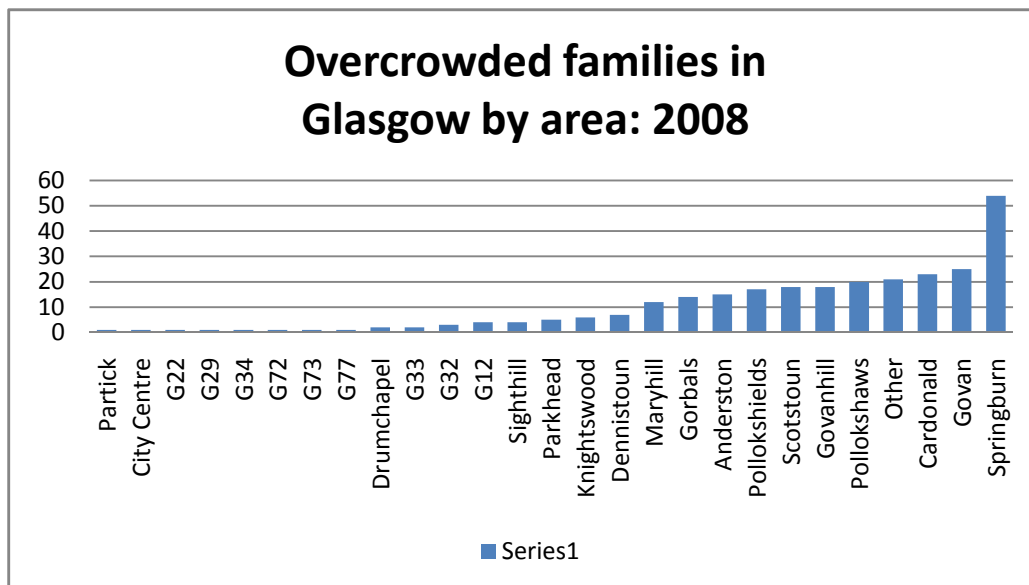
Apartment size required: 2008



Overcrowding by area

In Glasgow, where most, but not all, of our casework is carried out, the highest levels of overcrowding were found in Springburn, Govan, Cardonald, Pollokshaws, Govanhill, Scotstoun and Pollokshields.

Overcrowded families in Glasgow by area: 2008



The experience of other organisations

- Southside HA** only has 527 properties for rent. Out of the 1366 applicants applying for housing, 311 are looking for larger properties between 4 apartments to 7 apartments. They require sufficient funding to be able to build sufficiently large housing.

- **Shelter** in Glasgow have a number of families who have been overcrowded for over 2 years in Temporary Furnished Flats i.e. a family with 9 children who have been in a 4 apt for 2 and a half years; a family originally with 7 children placed in 2 adjacent 2appt TFFs for 2 years, causing family breakup; a woman who lives with her sister and her daughter, has 2 children of her own, waiting 4 years for tenancy. Shelter also states that the problem is getting worse as housing stock is used up. Families are staying overcrowded in TFFs longer than previously known. Shelter reports that social housing over 3 bedrooms are required all over Glasgow.
- **The Refugee Support Team** in Glasgow reported that they had *“over 200 cases on the system....but the numbers have been increasing dramatically due to the legacy and NAM cases..... 40 families who require 4 apt or more and have been waiting for over a year (in some cases several years). We also have two 4-apt families who have disabled children and require 4 apt ground floor accommodation suitable for a wheelchair. They have been waiting several years”*.
- **Access Apna Ghar** has had 10 referrals from various sources for every 4 apt property they have bought. Evidence is also cited by Access Apna Ghar of very low numbers of 4 apt properties being built Scotland-wide (stats for last year's tenders by RSLs have recently been published by the Scot Govt, to justify their recently adopted benchmark grant level (£73k for a 3-p property), showing the average house size per approved scheme, and of hundreds of schemes, only a handful have average sizes over 4 person (i.e. 2 bed properties). In their view,

“no matter what the various Councils' LHS states - are larger houses being delivered? Glasgow is probably better than most Councils and there is some evidence that the strategy in Glasgow is producing some results but there is a long way to catch up, given the number of larger properties in reasonably good areas which have been lost due to right to buy - often it is these properties which we are buying "back”.

Solutions to overcrowding in Glasgow

Although Glasgow has development funding targets for larger housing, and some Registered social Landlords are trying to develop larger housing, we are not seeing a major difference for service users, and it will take political will not just targets to resolve the problem.

The Scottish Government's Housing Section should have considered the equalities issue in its latest grant reduction decision.

It has been suggested that a special revenue "allowance " be built in to the system (a bit like the special needs allowance available in the grant calculation) in order to mitigate the higher rent effect (of larger properties) on grant levels and that's before we even address the capital disincentive (in terms of the cost limits calculations on build costs) of building larger properties, which is commonly believed to be the main difficulty as it is more apparent than the effect of rent levels on grants.

We believe that the Scottish Government should ringfence money for the building of larger social housing and do this in consultation with agencies like Positive Action in Housing, Access Apna Ghar and Registered social landlords who have an awareness of the problems of overcrowding which disproportionately affect Glasgow's minority ethnic communities, including refugees and new migrants.

In practical terms, we could refer families, alongside other organisations, in order to have their needs addressed.

Finally

More campaigning is also needed to change the current mindset that waiting years for a larger apartment is acceptable. Positive Action in Housing is keen to work with the Scottish Government and Glasgow City council to resolve this growing problem.

Positive Action in Housing
Tuesday, 07 October 2008