

Three large, light grey gears are positioned in the top left corner of the slide, partially overlapping each other.

UK homelessness statistics: How we are improving clarity of definitions and comparisons

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Office for National Statistics*

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Introduction



- Introducing ourselves and our teams
- Homelessness harmonisation and the interactive tool
- Cross-UK homelessness analysis
- Improving user understanding of statistical comparability



GSS Strategy Delivery Team



- The GSS Strategy Delivery Team
- Housing, Planning and Homelessness statistics
- Cross-UK Collaboration & Working Groups
- Connected Open Government Statistics (COGS)



GSS Harmonisation



- GSS Harmonisation Team is part of the GSS Best Practice and Impact Division
- Work on a number of different topics, for example Health, Gender Identity, Housing
- GSS website contains agreed survey questions ('harmonised principles') and user guidance
- Run the Harmonisation Champions Network
- Workplan approved by Heads of Profession



Why harmonise?



Improve comparability and coherence of statistics

Our strategy has three main goals:

1. Increase consistency in definitions and classifications used in data collection across government
2. Improve communication on coherence in statistical publications
3. Enhance the value of data through the integration and combination of distinct data sources



Background

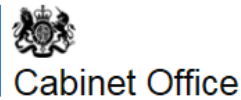
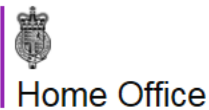


- OSR's systemic review highlighted that there was 'limited advice' about the comparability of homelessness statistics and that existing advice was 'confusing and incoherent'
- As part of cross-GSS Housing Work Programme, conducted research to develop an understanding of UK definitions of homelessness and potential for creating a harmonised definition

Stakeholder engagement



Some of the organisations that contributed to the report:



Across the four UK countries, there are differences in:

- the legal definitions used e.g. priority need
- the data collection systems used e.g. applicants vs outcomes



Report recommendations

- Develop more comprehensive guidance within statistical publications
- Create a homelessness ‘conceptual framework’
- Long-term, consider how to overcome barriers to harmonisation and explore other ways to improve UK comparability





Approach to interactive tool development



- User-focussed
- A cross-GSS effort
- Agile
- Published in order to gain wider feedback
– not a finished product



User testing



- Statistical presentation experts
- Statisticians
- Design experts
- Academics
- Charities
- Non-expert users

Interactive tool demonstration

Challenges



- Complexity
- Resource
- Maintenance
- Approach





UK Homelessness: 2005 to 2018



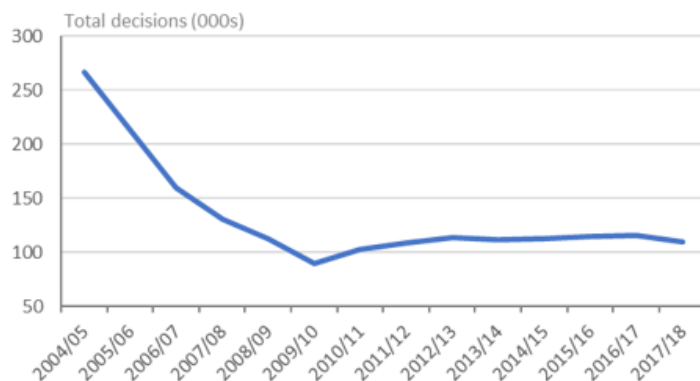
- Why?
- UK figure for homelessness
- Cross UK comparisons



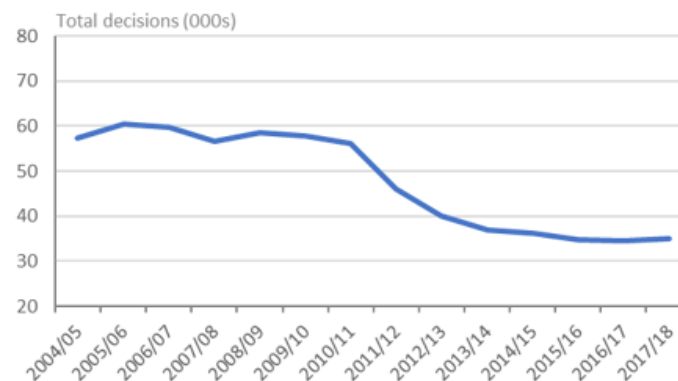
- Impossible?
- Nothing is impossible, if you try
- But even then you can't always succeed

Cross UK Comparisons

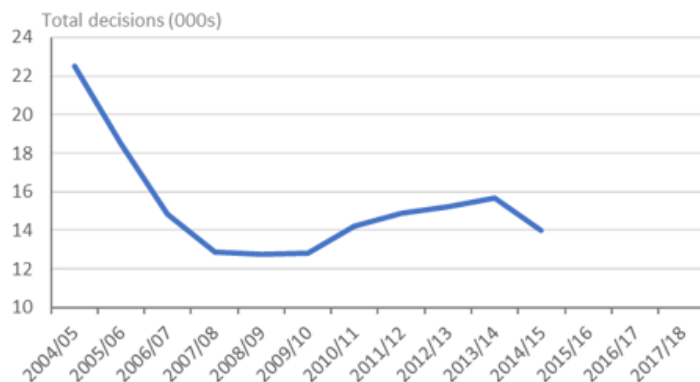
Total decisions on applications:
England 2004/05 – 2017/18



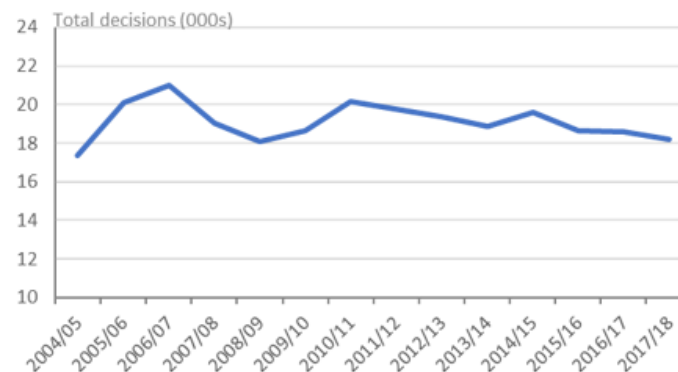
Total decisions on applications:
Scotland 2004/05 - 2017/18



Total decisions on applications:
Wales 2004/05 - 2014/15



Total presentations for homelessness:
Northern Ireland 2004/05 - 2017/18



- Compromise

Coverage and feedback

This is a great permanent resource.

Homelessness rockets among the over 60s as the number of older people seeking help rises by almost 40% in five years, alarming new figures show

- There's been a rise in older people in the UK asking for help with homelessness
- At the same time, number of people aged 16-24 asking for assistance has fallen
- According to the figures, 2,500 people over 60 have asked for help in England

Major rise in homeless older people as thousands of over-60s seek help

ONS figures show a 39% increase in over-60s seeking help, up from 1,800 in 2012-13 to 2,500 five years later

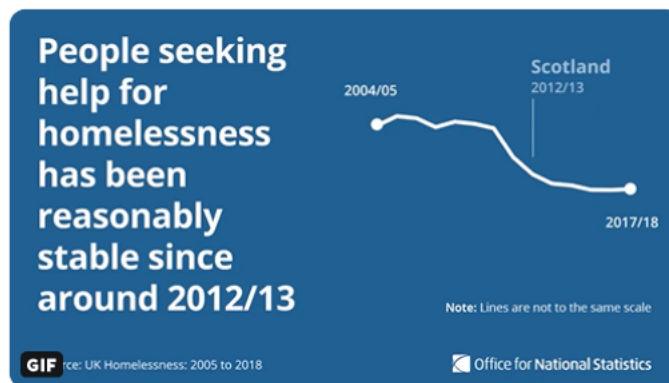
Office for National Stati...
@ONS

Follow

For the first time, we're able to begin building a UK-wide picture of homelessness.

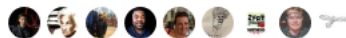
Trends in individual country data provide insight into the number of homeless households over time

ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulati...



1:30 am - 17 Sep 2019

12 Retweets 17 Likes



4 12 17

The ONS said the data should be treated with caution due to variations in recording practices across the UK.





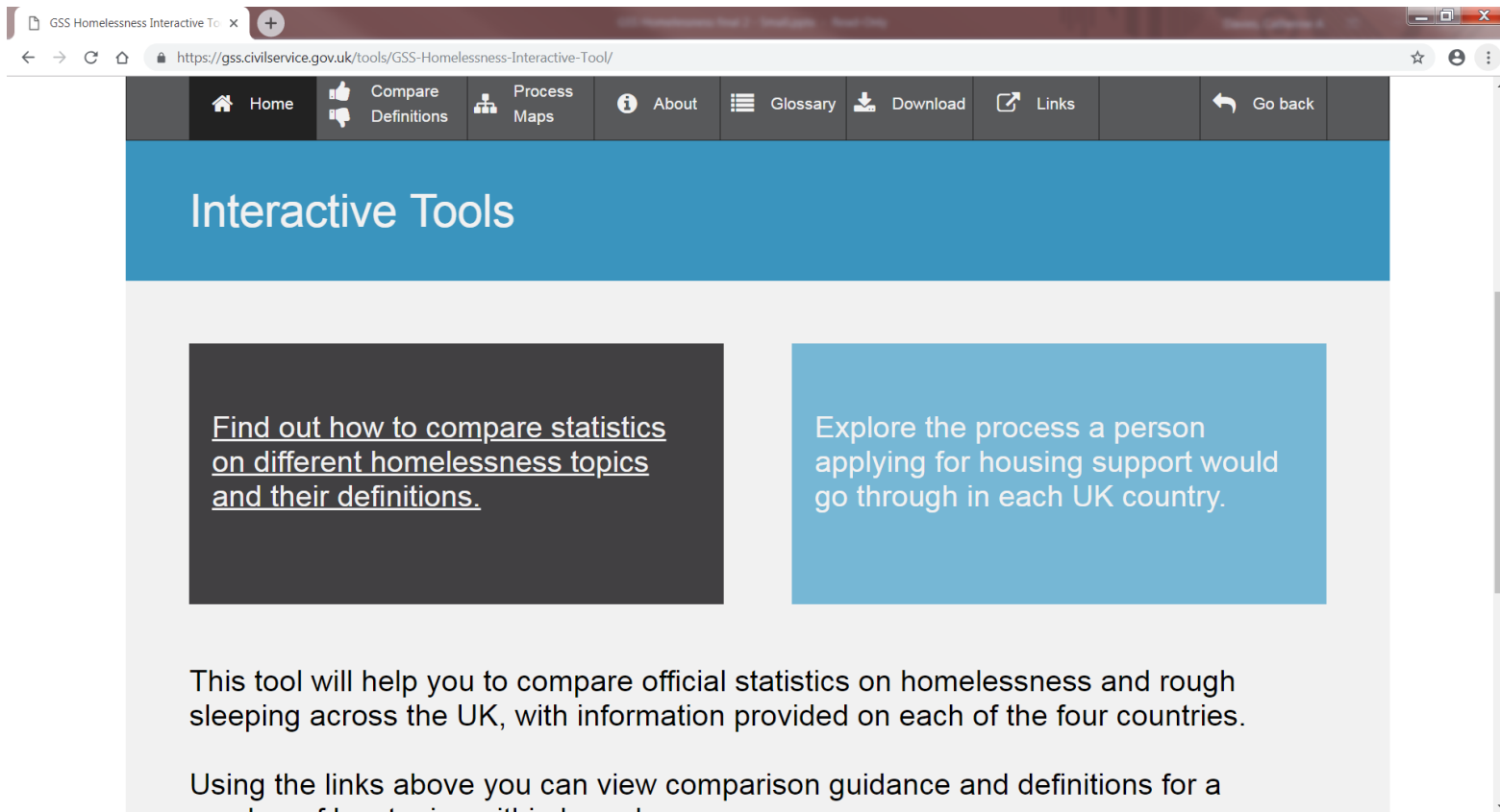
Learning



- Embrace Imperfection
- Working Collectively
- Understand your users



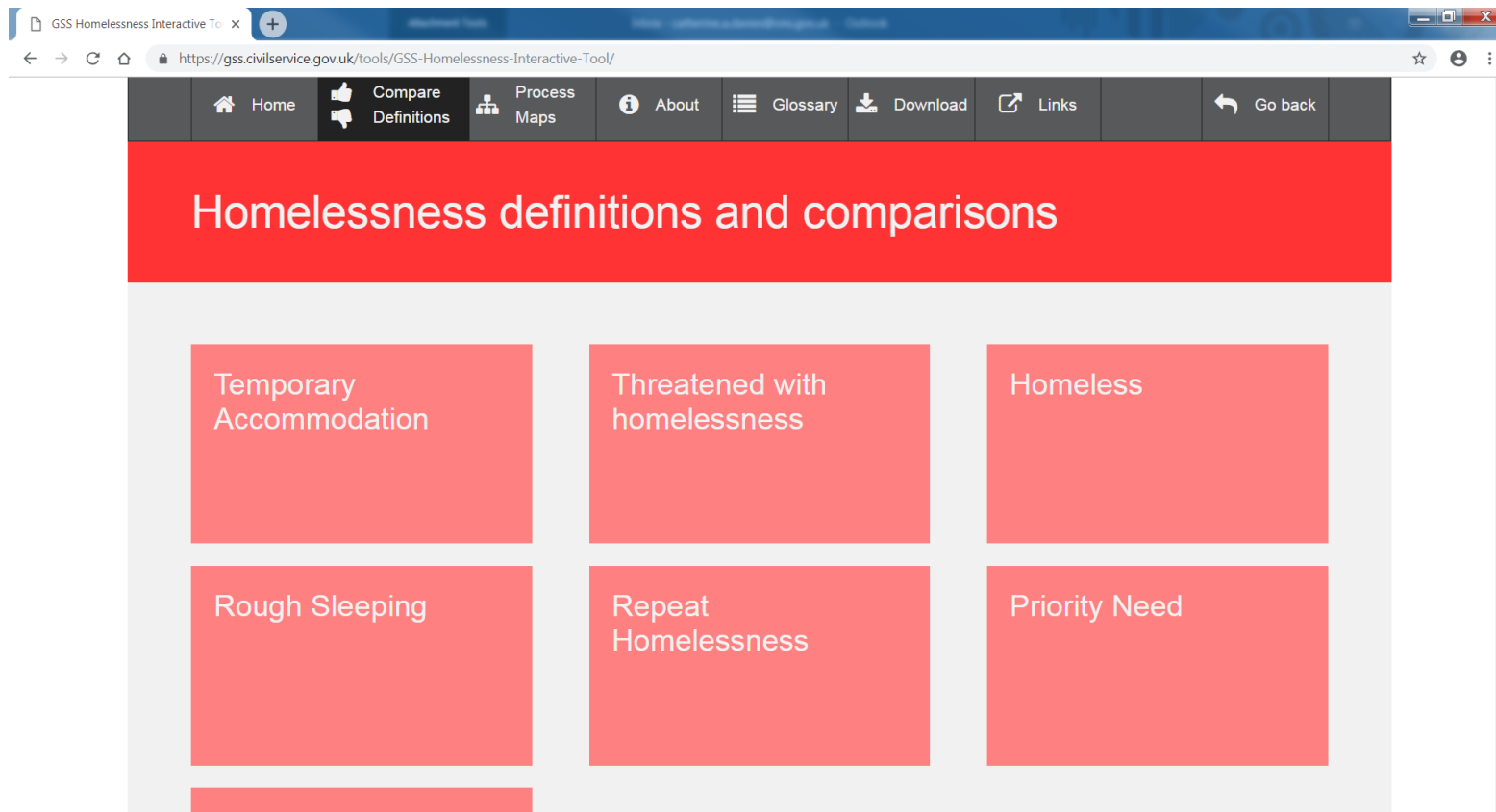
- Harmonisation Report & Interactive tool:
 - <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/homelessness/>
- UK Homelessness: 2015 to 2018
 - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/ukhomelessness/2005to2018>
- Improvements to Homelessness Statistics
 - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/improvinghomelessnessandroughsleepingstatisticsacrosstheuk>
- Contacts
 - GSSHelp@statistics.gov.uk
 - GSS.Housing@ons.gov.uk



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/tools/GSS-Homelessness-Interactive-Tool/>. The page features a navigation bar with the following items: Home, Compare Definitions, Process Maps, About, Glossary, Download, Links, and Go back. The main content area is titled "Interactive Tools" and contains two primary links:

- [Find out how to compare statistics on different homelessness topics and their definitions.](#)
- [Explore the process a person applying for housing support would go through in each UK country.](#)

Below these links, a paragraph states: "This tool will help you to compare official statistics on homelessness and rough sleeping across the UK, with information provided on each of the four countries." A second paragraph begins with "Using the links above you can view comparison guidance and definitions for a number of key terms within homelessness".



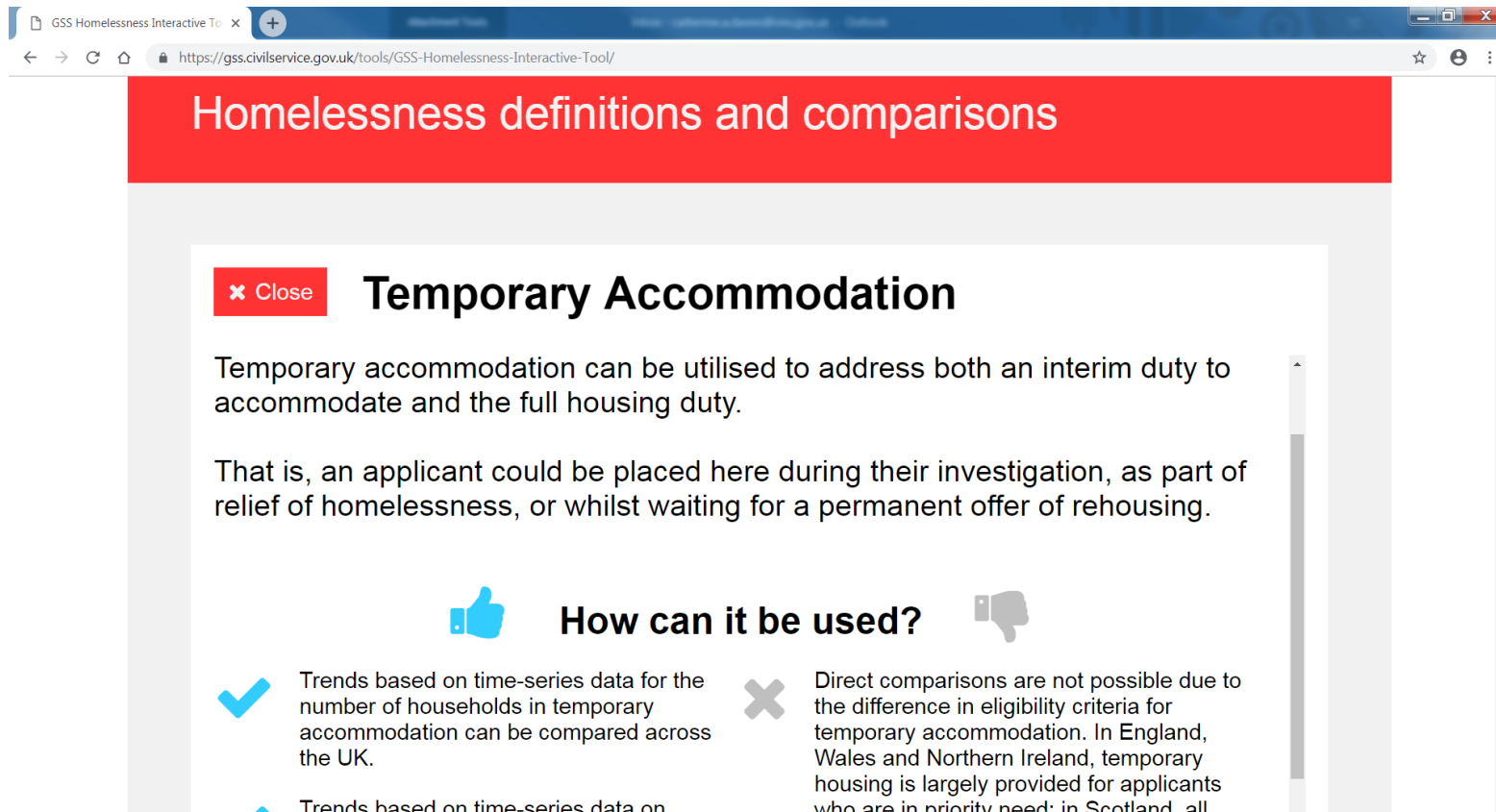
GSS Homelessness Interactive Tool

https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/tools/GSS-Homelessness-Interactive-Tool/

Home Compare Definitions Process Maps About Glossary Download Links Go back

Homelessness definitions and comparisons

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Temporary Accommodation | Threatened with homelessness | Homeless |
| Rough Sleeping | Repeat Homelessness | Priority Need |



GSS Homelessness Interactive Tool

https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/tools/GSS-Homelessness-Interactive-Tool/

Homelessness definitions and comparisons

Close **Temporary Accommodation**

Temporary accommodation can be utilised to address both an interim duty to accommodate and the full housing duty.

That is, an applicant could be placed here during their investigation, as part of relief of homelessness, or whilst waiting for a permanent offer of rehousing.

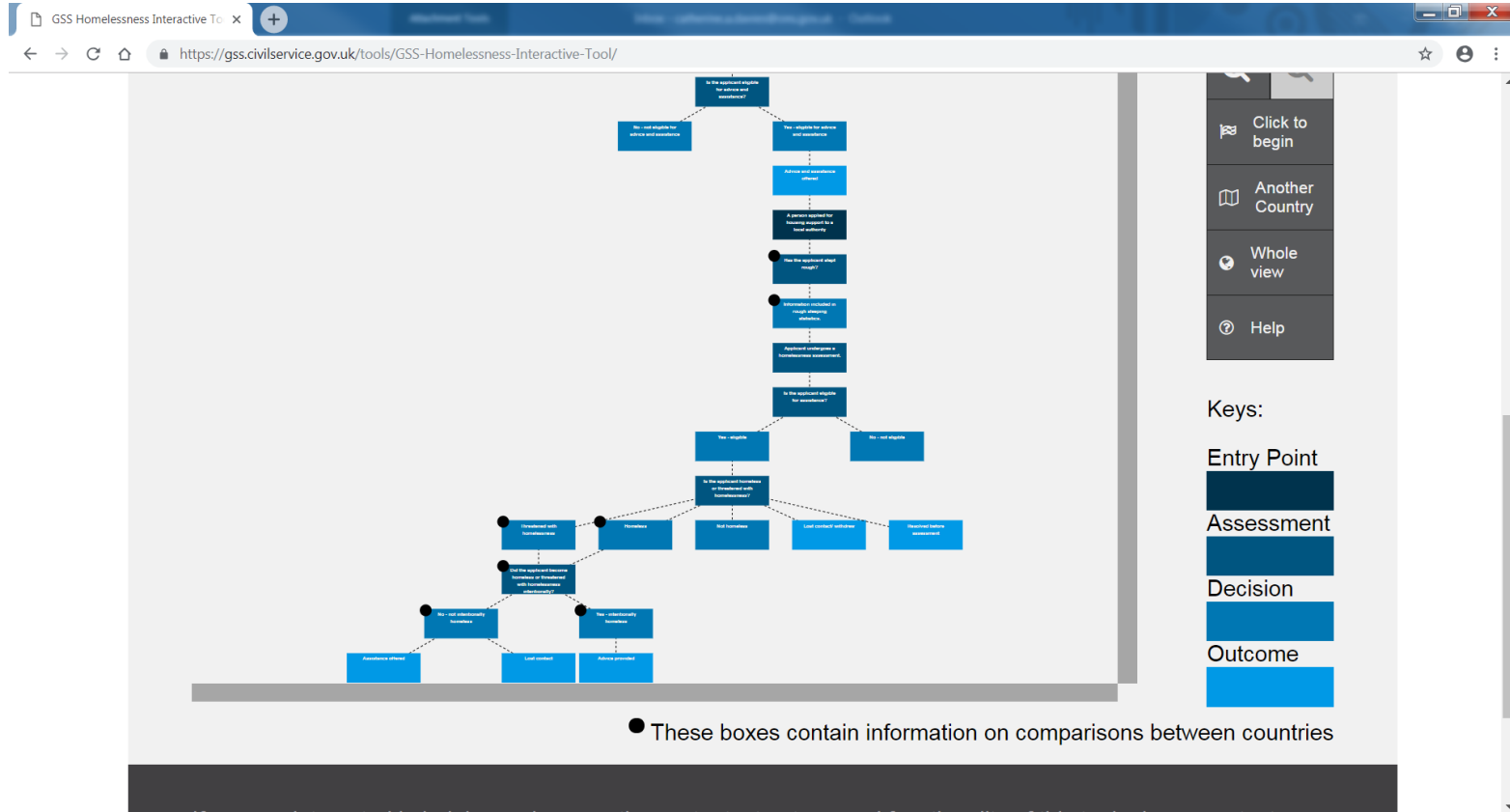
How can it be used?

- ✔ Trends based on time-series data for the number of households in temporary accommodation can be compared across the UK.
- ✘ Direct comparisons are not possible due to the difference in eligibility criteria for temporary accommodation. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, temporary housing is largely provided for applicants who are in priority need; in Scotland all



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following elements:

- Browser tab: GSS Homelessness Interactive Tool
- Address bar: <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/tools/GSS-Homelessness-Interactive-Tool/>
- Page title: Applicant process journeys for each UK country
- Content area: A 2x2 grid of colored boxes representing UK countries:
 - England (Red box)
 - Wales (Green box)
 - Scotland (Blue box)
 - Northern Ireland (Grey box)



GSS Homelessness Interactive Tool

https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/tools/GSS-Homelessness-Interactive-Tool/

Click to begin

Another Country

Whole view

Help

Keys:

Entry Point

Assessment

Decision

Outcome

● These boxes contain information on comparisons between countries