

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by the Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 1 May 2019**

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**Subject: More than a Roof – West Dunbartonshire Council’s Homelessness Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2017 – 2020: Annual Report**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This purpose of this report is to provide members with an annual progress report in relation to achieving the aims and objectives of our Homelessness Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Strategy entitled ‘More than a Roof’.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:
- (i) Note the progress and achievements made in implementing the second year of the ‘More Than A Roof’ strategy; and
  - (ii) Note the direction of travel which is set within the context of an ongoing re-design of housing access and homelessness services and influenced by the Scottish Government’s desire to move towards Rapid Rehousing and Housing First Models as part of their Ending Homelessness Together agenda.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** The West Dunbartonshire Homelessness, Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Strategy-More than a Roof - 2017-2022 was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee on 1 February 2017. It details the actions the Council and its partners intended to take to tackle homelessness, including preventing homelessness and providing good quality temporary accommodation.
- 3.2** “More than a Roof” is West Dunbartonshire Council’s fourth strategy relating to homelessness and is designed to deliver one of the key outcomes of the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 that, *Homelessness is minimised through prevention and early intervention measures* and builds on the progress delivered by previous homelessness strategies. The strategy reflects the latest statutory framework and recent developments in the housing sector such as the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the development of Housing Options Hubs.

### 3.3 More than a Roof is structured around the following strategic aims:

- People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness
- Homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice
- Homeless people are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed
- Homeless people are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to, and
- People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and about the range of housing options available to them






**3.4** Since More than a Roof was approved the Scottish Government has established the short-term Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) to identify the actions needed to achieve Ending Homelessness Together. HARSAG made 70 recommendations, all of which were accepted in principle by the Scottish Government.




**3.5** Key recommendations related to Rapid Rehousing and Housing First and all local authorities were tasked with submitting a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan with full costings to the Scottish Government by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018. West Dunbartonshire Council's plan was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019.



## 4. Main Issues

**4.1** The strategic direction set by 'More Than a Roof' in terms of tackling homelessness is consistent with the key themes from the work of HARSAG. One of the key actions within the 'More Than a Roof' strategy is to carry a review of our supported and temporary accommodation provision and ensure provision of appropriate supported accommodation. This has coincided with development of West Dunbartonshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in February 2019.

**4.2** We continue to make good progress in terms of delivering on the strategic aims of 'More than a Roof'. Since the strategy was approved in February 2017 a number of performance and service improvements have been achieved. A summary is provided in the table below and a full progress report against the actions contained within 'More than a Roof' is attached in Appendix 1.





More than a roof 2017/20						Total
Progress at end of Year 2	10	15	0	0	0	25

Action Status	
	Cancelled
	Overdue; Neglected
	Unassigned; Check Progress

	Not Started; In Progress; Assigned
	Completed

### 4.3 Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Performance Summary 2018/19

The main strategic and operational focus of the service area is to provide sustainable housing solutions for all West Dunbartonshire citizens, as can be seen below this has had a positive impact in improving or maintaining performance in the key performance indicators highlighted below which demonstrate a reduction in the overall levels of homelessness and youth homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.

Performance Indicator	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Target Achieved
The number of incidences of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire is reduced - presentations	1,135	1,048	1,037	
The incidences of youth homelessness in West Dunbartonshire is reduced	360	290	280	
% of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	100%	
% of all homeless cases issued with a decision within 28 days of initial presentation	99%	100%	100%	

#### 4.3.1 Aim 1: People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness

Key achievements so far:

- Year 1 of the strategy saw the introduction of a young persons housing options service. This service was established to target a Housing Options service dedicated to helping young people 16-21 identify and realise their full potential and plan for a successful housing future;
- The service continued to be monitored during Year 2 and is now being extended to include Dumbarton and Vale of Leven following the success of the pilot in Clydebank.

#### 4.3.2 Aim 2: People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and about the range of housing options available to them

Achievements in Year 2:

- The 'Help to Rent' scheme was launched in order to aid access to the private rented market for those who may not have the necessary deposits required to access this market;
- A housing options approach is continues to be embedded as a key element of the Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention service area;
- A programme of conversions from temporary accommodation to settled accommodation was identified and continues to be implemented allowing homeless applications to remain in a tenancy where they have already began to settle.

#### **4.3.3 Aim 3: Homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice**

Achievements in Year 2:

- Training needs analysis of staff was carried out in Year 2 to develop training plans, identify gaps and ensure our staff are appropriately trained and equipped to provide help and advice to homeless people;
- Recruitment of specialist housing support workers for our Housing First initiative has been completed and will be implemented from Year 3;
- A reviewed and updated 'Help to Rent' scheme has been developed and implemented to assist with access to the private rented sector.

#### **4.3.4 Aim 4: Homeless people are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed**

Achievements in Year 2:

- We have reviewed and assessed our temporary and supported provision, this coincided with the development of West Dunbartonshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and changes to the use of temporary and supported accommodation will commence in Year 3 of this strategy;
- We have developed a 5 year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which complements our 'More than a Roof' approach and which will be implemented from April 2019.

#### **4.3.5 Aim 5: Homeless people are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to**

Achievements in Year 2:

- We continue to take actions to mitigate against the impacts of welfare reform. Year 2 saw the full roll out of Universal Credit in West Dunbartonshire and staff from Homeless Services and Housing Operations received relevant training to enable them to provide appropriate advice to tenants and those accessing housing,
- Analysis around the high number of applicants losing contact with the service was carried out and actions identified to reduce this going forward.

**4.5** The delivery of the 'More Than a Roof' strategy continues to be overseen by the Homelessness and Housing Options Strategic Implementation Group which is chaired by the Housing and Communities Committee Convener. During the course of this year it is planned that this group will evolve into a Homelessness Prevention Partnership.

**4.6** In Year 2 a Temporary Accommodation Modelling exercise was carried out to establish a realistic income profile for temporary accommodation this was informed by:

- the profile of current and projected demand for temporary accommodation in West Dunbartonshire, including a detailed assessment of support requirements;
- the sufficiency and suitability of existing temporary accommodation relative to the extent and nature of needs identified; and
- changes to the Housing Benefit subsidy framework, particularly given the Department for Work & Pensions' definition of "exempt accommodation".

**4.7** The modelling exercise was used to inform the development of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and Housing First approaches to deliver more dynamic responses to prevention, early intervention and the resolution of homelessness through the redesign of our services.

**4.8** Our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan identifies 4 key objectives to ensure that a transition to rapid rehousing in West Dunbartonshire is achieved. These objectives are noted below and compliment the More than a Roof strategic approach:

- Implement a Whole System approach to the prevention of homelessness
- Enable service users with no/low support needs to access settled housing quickly
- Develop interim housing options which enable independent living and tenancy sustainment
- Implement a Housing First model which enables the most excluded service users to access and sustain a tenancy.

**4.9** Initial feedback received from the Scottish Government has been positive and a meeting with government officials has been arranged to discuss our plans in more detail and will inform the funding that is awarded.

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** There are no direct people implications from this report.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

**6.1** The Strategy highlights the economic challenges including the potential impacts of Welfare Reform. In addition, the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan highlights that there are funding gaps in order to provide the transition to rapid rehousing as desired by the Scottish Government. Funding is being made available from the Scottish Government to assist with this transition however the funding has been oversubscribed by all local authorities. At the time of preparing this report the funding award for West Dunbartonshire is not yet known. As these become clearer, it is anticipated that these will put greater financial pressures on the Council and this will lead to an ongoing review to how we deliver homelessness services within greater financial constraint.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** There Council has statutory obligations to deliver services to meet the needs of homeless people. It is essential that the More Than A Roof strategy and Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan are managed effectively to ensure this does not happen.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** An Equalities, Health and Human Rights Impact Assessment was carried out on both the Homelessness Strategy and Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and found no substantive negative impacts and both are applicable to this report. The assessment is available on the Council's website.

## **9.1 Consultation**

- 9.1** The 'More Than a Roof' strategy was the subject to a widespread consultation exercise which is summarised in a report on the Council's website. The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan was developed in consultation with key stakeholders including local Registered Social Landlords, Health and Social Care Partnership and 3rd sector organisations who provide support to homeless households. Ongoing consultative processes are key to the successful delivery of the More Than a Roof strategy and these are delivered through the Implementation Group.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** The Homelessness Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Strategy sets out the strategic direction for homelessness, homelessness prevention and housing options in West Dunbartonshire. Having considered the Council's strategic priorities, this report contributes significantly to all five strategic priorities.

**Peter Barry**  
**Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability**  
**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1 – Updated Homelessness, Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Strategy Action plan 2017-20

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** All