

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services

Social Justice Committee: 14 June 2006

Subject: Homeless Applications

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report provides the Committee with information on the reasons for the increase in homeless applications.

2. Background

- 2.1** At a meeting of the Social Justice Committee on 12 April 2006, a report was submitted by the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services on Voids and Lettings statistics and providing information on homelessness.
- 2.2** The Committee instructed the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services to prepare a further report for consideration at the Social Justice Committee on 14 June 2006 giving information on the reasons for the increase in homeless applications.
- 2.3** The Housing (**Scotland**) Act 2001 introduced a range of new measures in terms of homelessness. The Act very much promoted a more inclusive approach and encouraged Local Authorities to take radical steps to assess and address homelessness within their areas.
- 2.4** The legislation came in to force in 2002 and since that time, year on year, the number of homeless applications has increased. However, in 2005/2006, the increase was more marked with Homeless Services receiving 2272 applications - an increase of 60% on the previous year.

3 Main Issues

- 3.1** The Communities Scotland Inspection Report (2004) highlighted the fact that the Homeless Services Section were under reporting homelessness within West Dunbartonshire. At that time, cases were only recorded following an assessment interview. Therefore, applicants who made an initial contact and then failed to attend for interview were not being recorded on either the Scottish Executive's HL1 computer system or on the in house Saffron system.

3.2 From 1 April 2005, the Homeless Services Section changed its recording practice to comply with the Communities Scotland recommendation. All approaches are now being recorded whether or not they actually result in a homeless assessment.

3.3 The main effect of this change in recording practices has been a substantial increase in the number of cases closed before a homeless assessment has been made. This includes applicants who do not attend for interview, who lose contact after an initial interview or who resolve their homelessness before an assessment decision is made.

3.4 Statistics on assessment decisions illustrate that in 2005/2006, Homeless Services made 2209 assessment decisions compared with 1444 in 2004/2005, this an increase of 53%.

3.5 In 2005/2006, 40% of cases were closed prior to assessment. In 2004/2005, before the recording practices were changed, 16% of cases were closed prior to assessment. Therefore, although there has been a significant increase in the number of recorded applications, the number being housed in permanent accommodation has risen by only 9%.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications.

5. Personnel Issues

5.1 There are no personnel issues.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The report outlines the reasons for the increase in homeless applications.

7. Recommendation

7.1 **Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.**

David McMillan

Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services

Date: 23 May 2006

Wards Affected: All

Appendix: None

Background Papers: Minutes of Social Justice Committee on 12 April 2006
Communities Scotland Inspection Report

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