

Temporary Accommodation Strategy

2012-2015



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1.0 Introduction

An outcome of the Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016 is that ***Homelessness is minimised through prevention and early intervention.*** In order to achieve this outcome West Dunbartonshire Council has developed a temporary accommodation strategy.

The Temporary Accommodation Strategy is for the period 2012 till 2015. The strategy sets out how the council aims to ease the homeless process for homeless households through a supply of temporary accommodation that is efficient and appropriate to meet individual needs, is easily accessible and well managed. The temporary accommodation strategy aims to see a reduced length of time spent in temporary accommodation, but at the same time ensuring that the length of time spent in the accommodation is appropriate to the individuals needs. If required, housing support is provided for households in temporary accommodation to support them to maintain their accommodation.

The following strategy looks at the current supply of temporary accommodation, where we want to be in the future, and how the supply is managed effectively. The strategy sets out a number of outcomes that the council wants to achieve over the next few years.

Other strategies that are linked to this one include the

- Homeless Strategy 2008-2013
- Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016

If you have any queries on the Temporary Accommodation Strategy please contact

Jennifer MacMahon, Policy Officer, 01389 737721

jennifer.macmahon@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Stefan Kristmanns, Performance and Continuous Improvement Officer, 01389 737545

stefan.kristmanns@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

2.0 Background

2.1 Nationally

Legislative Background

As a local authority West Dunbartonshire Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003. This is a duty to temporarily accommodate anyone who is believed to be homeless until an assessment decision has been made. Anyone found to be unintentionally homeless has the right to remain in temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation has been sourced by the council. For households found to be intentionally homeless, temporary accommodation is provided for a reasonable period of time for the households to source their own accommodation. The council should be in constant contact with them providing information and advice on how to do so.

In order to ensure households, especially those with children, were being placed in appropriate temporary accommodation the Government introduced the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in 2004. Under the regulations set out by the Unsuitable Accommodation Order 2004, temporary accommodation is assessed as unsuitable by looking at 3 main criteria:

- Physical standard - such as toilet and cooking facilities; and that the accommodation is within the local authority area.
- Proximity standard – such as the accommodation being near health and education facilities that households use.
- Safety standard – such as the accommodation being suitable for children and pregnant women. Only under exceptional circumstances, should such households be temporarily accommodated in a B&B.

The unsuitable accommodation order is breached when a family with children or a pregnant female are in B&B accommodation for more than 14 days

Section 11 of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 places a duty on landlords and creditors to notify the local authority when they raise proceedings for possession due to rent or mortgage arrears. This commenced in April 2009 and from a strategic perspective Section 11s should be used to improve the local authority's approach to preventing homelessness. It is important that processes for dealing with Section 11s are effective in preventing homelessness where this could occur as this has an impact on the temporary accommodation stock.

The 2001 Act gave local authorities the power to require RSLs to provide permanent housing to homeless households who are unintentionally homeless through section 5 referrals. This is an

important process in ensuring households are not in temporary accommodation for any longer than necessary.

Current Agenda

➤ **Homelessness**

Preventing homelessness is a key priority for the Scottish Government and local authorities. The main agenda is the abolition of priority need by 2012. The 2012 homelessness commitment states that local authorities should have abolished priority need assessments by 31st December 2012. Applicants assessed as priority have a right to settled accommodation, by abolishing it all homeless households, who are unintentionally homeless, will have the right to settled accommodation. West Dunbartonshire Council was one of the first councils to achieve this.

➤ **Supported Accommodation Working Group**

The 2012 Joint Steering Group set up a Supported Accommodation Working group to look at youth homelessness and supported accommodation. This group produced a report in 2011 and have now set up an Implementation Group. This report can be seen by following the link below.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/362458/0122666.pdf>

➤ **Housing Benefit Changes**

The June 2010 Budget and the October 2010 spending review announced a series of measures that would be introduced to allow the UK Government to reduce its expenditure on housing benefit. There are a number of changes that have been introduced to housing benefit and local housing allowance. These include

- Up-rating of non-dependents to reflect rent increases since 2001/02. The size criteria for disabled claimants have been amended to allow for an extra room for overnight care from a non-registered carer. This was due to come into effect in April 2011.
- From April 2012 housing benefit of claimants at working age will be restricted if the property size is larger than the family size.
- 2013 will also see the introduction of universal credits. Universal credit is a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring. There will be an overall capping on the full amount of benefit claimants can receive. A family will be able to receive a maximum of £500 per week and a single person £350 per week.

The new housing benefit and LHA changes will also affect supported accommodation. There is a planned reduction to levels of subsidy payable to the department. The Government recently produced a consultation paper. The paper recognised two groups of supported housing.

1. The first is for people who have a low level of personal care and support to allow them to remain in the community. This includes refuges, hostels, foyers and purpose-built sheltered accommodation. For this group the DWP are proposing to pay the LHA but with fixed additions to accommodate the extra costs involved in this type of housing.
2. The second is for people who require a much high and more intense level of personal care support to enable them to live in the community. Such people often require specific housing that often has to be adapted or built to fit their needs. For this group the DWP are proposing that additional help will be provided above the LHA rate. The cost of the additional help will be decided upon by the local authority by those with the knowledge of housing procurement and the cost of specialist housing.

The Government wants to empower people who require personal care and support and to remove barriers to allow them to live independently. It is about giving people choice and control over the support they require and the equipment they may need to go about their daily life.

➤ **Housing Options**

In 2010 the Scottish Government and the Convention of Local Authorities (CoSLA) 2012 Steering Group held a joint seminar where they discussed homeless prevention actions, particularly focussing on housing options approaches. At the seminar the Scottish Housing Options (SHO) funding programme was launched.

The SHO Funding programme has £500,000 of funding available, over a 14 month period to enable housing options initiatives to get off the ground. The funding is to encourage local authorities to move towards a holistic housing options funding approach to prevent homelessness.

In September 2010 five *hubs* were, as a result, set up to develop housing options in their area, to look at priorities and share good practice. The idea was that they would take forward Housing Options initiatives that are tailored to suit each individual authority.

One of these *hubs* is the West of Scotland Housing Options Hub. The West Hub consists of East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and local authorities. Glasgow Housing Association is also included in the West Hub. The West Hub submitted a plan and was awarded £113,000 of the funding to be used up by the end of March 2012.

➤ **Housing Support**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives local authorities the power to fund housing support services that are provided for a person's sole or main residence. The Housing Bill 2010 places a duty on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of those who are in priority need (at least until Dec 2012) and unintentionally homeless. The bill also states that local authorities must ensure that this support is provided.

The Housing Enabling Unit is funded by the Scottish Government to provide support and assistance to housing support providers. The Housing Support and Enabling Unit developed Better Futures – a housing support outcomes framework. This framework can be used by local authorities to identify and measure the impact of housing benefit

➤ **Health and Homelessness**

Homeless people are just one group of people who experience health inequalities. Many people who experience homelessness are more likely to have poor health and a shorter life expectancy than those who do not.

In 2005 the Scottish Government introduced the health and homelessness standards and in 2011 a Health and Homelessness Steering Group was established to assist NHS boards in implementing the standards. West Dunbartonshire has a health and homelessness action plan. The action plan looks at indicators to see if the work the council is doing is having a positive result.

➤ **The National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders**

The Management of Offenders Etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 places a legal responsibility on local authorities, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), the police and other statutory partners, such as health and housing, to work together to manage offenders. They are required to take a cross-agency approach with appropriate information sharing, communication and robust risk assessment and management processes in order to carry through the aims of the Act. The Management of Offenders Etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 introduced the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs) - a statutory arrangements for managing sexual and violent offenders to minimise any potential risk.

The National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders was introduced in January 2012 and forms part of MAPPAs. The strategy explains how housing contributes to MAPPAs and explains how offenders subject to the sex offender notification requirements should be housed.

2.3 At a local level

West Dunbartonshire successfully abolished priority need in January 2011 so that all unintentionally homeless households have the right to permanent accommodation. It was one of the first local authorities to achieve this. As a result of this the council is looking to develop a new homeless strategy a year earlier than previously stated. The homeless service has also seen an improved homeless prevention and advice illustrated by an overall reduction in presentations.

In 2011 West Dunbartonshire Council commissioned Arneil Johnston, a housing consultant, to look at the current provisions of temporary accommodation and how we can ensure that the council meets everyone's needs. Section 4 will discuss this in more detail.

As a result of the above, West Dunbartonshire have decided to develop a temporary accommodation strategy.

Key facts and figures about homeless WDC in 2010/2011

- There were 2001 homeless presentations and 2010 assessments
- A third of homeless applications come from Clydebank
- Two thirds of applications were from single person households, the majority of which were male
- The majority of households with children had a female as head of households
- 41% of homeless applications were from young people who were under 25
- 6% of the 41% were 16 and 17 years old
- Over two thirds of households were made homeless because they were asked to leave their accommodation, of which over 60% were from households aged under 25
- 502 cases assessed as homeless had a support need

3.0 Current Temporary Accommodation Provision

West Dunbartonshire Council has a mixture of temporary furnished flats and supported accommodation across all its areas.

3.1 Temporary Furnished Flats

Table 3.1 shows that there are 249 temporary furnished flats in West Dunbartonshire. Of these 249 125 (50%) are in the Clydebank area. In 2010/11 961 homeless households were temporarily accommodated in one of these flats with an average stay of 79 days.

Table 3.1: Number of temporary furnished flats by area

Area	Total
Alexandria	61
Clydebank	125
Dumbarton	64
Grand Total	249

There are 20 furnished flats from the local housing associations that are used as temporary accommodation. In 2010/11 86 homeless households were accommodated within them with an average stay of 78 days.

West Dunbartonshire Council is pursuing a partial housing stock transfer. There are four package areas: Dumbarton; Clydebank East, Clydebank West and Vale of Leven – a transfer of any of these packages may result in the loss of some stock currently used as temporary accommodation. The Council's assessment of the potential transferring landlords includes the requirement that the transfer landlord will provide the Council with a supply of temporary accommodation that meets the Council's needs.

3.2 Supported accommodation

There are a number of supported accommodation projects within West Dunbartonshire Council area.

Blue Triangle Housing Association

There are 3 projects across the council that are managed by Blue Triangle Housing Association.

- Alexander Street Project in Clydebank that can accommodate 13 single person households
- Braehead House Project in Alexandria that can accommodate 8 single person households
- Alexandria Project in Alexandria that can accommodate 10 single person households

There is a service specification signed by both Blue Triangle and West Dunbartonshire Council. Each project will take anyone who is 16 and over who requires some extra support to learn to live independently before moving on to their own accommodation. The project in Clydebank also has a couple of flats where clients can stay for a while before they move on. In these flats they can live independently but there is still support available 24 hours a day. There is talk of extending this approach to Alexandria.

Action for Children – Prep for Life Project

Action for children have a young person's project called Prep for Life. This project will accommodate young persons aged 16 to 25 years of age. The project can accommodate 12 young people at any one time. Here the young people are taught how to live independently. When a young person is ready to move on support staff from the Prep for Life provide outreach support.

Usage of Supported Accommodation

In 2010/11 there 126 homeless households who were accommodated in one of the above supported accommodation units, almost exclusively single person households.

3.3 B&B and Rosshead House

If there is a homeless household who is roofless but there are no spaces in the dispersed temporary flats or in the supported accommodation then they will be accommodated in a B&B or in Rosshead house. More than one local authority can refer to the B&Bs used by West Dunbartonshire Council and to Rosshead House.

Over the course of 2010/11 there 15 homeless households placed in a B&B, none of which breached the unsuitable accommodation order. It is Council policy to where possible restrict the use of B & B accommodation and between 2008-2010 this was achieved in full.

4.0 The way forward for West Dunbartonshire Council

4.1 Review of Temporary Accommodation Provision

In 2011 West Dunbartonshire undertook a review to assess the current provision of temporary accommodation against the need for temporary accommodation. This work was undertaken due to the changing needs of homeless households, the changes to the housing benefit system, the possibility of a partial stock transfer, the housing options agenda and more.

They reviewed the type, location and amenity of temporary accommodation available. This was compared with a review of all the households who were assessed as homeless in 2009/10 and where they would be best accommodated to ensure a successful housing outcome.

The results stated that the current model of temporary accommodation does not meet the needs of homeless households in West Dunbartonshire today. As a result a number of temporary accommodation categories were derived. Each category was looked at in turn and compared with support needs, family composition, age, gender, area, etc, of homeless households.

Temporary Accommodation Category	
Direct Access Accommodation	Very chaotic - unlikely to sustain any form of tenancy
Dispersed Self Contained	No or low level support needs - can sustain tenancy independently
Hostel – Supervision	Chaotic - need on site supervision to manage challenging behaviour
Hostel – Support	Vulnerable/high support needs - need self contained space
Shared Accommodation	Vulnerable/need support based accommodation
Specialist Supported Accommodation	Need specialist housing based supported accommodation

4.2 Moving Forward

Following on from the consultancy work West Dunbartonshire has decided to increase its options of temporary accommodation to homeless households. Proposals have been developed to support 3 new supported accommodation projects run by the council across West Dunbartonshire. WDC are now looking to open up three supported accommodation projects. This is likely to be one in each

main town, and for different cliental. For example one may be for chaotic families and one for chaotic single persons

Another way the council is hoping to increase the options available to homeless households is by setting up a private sector leasing scheme. The council is hopeful that it will have one set up in early 2012, and that it will be run by a management agency.

5.0 Outcomes

As a result of the current agenda both nationally and locally, and as a result of the consultancy work carried out the following outcomes have been agreed.

1. There is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households.
2. Temporary accommodation is accessible, affordable and well managed.
3. Support is provided where necessary, that meets the needs of homeless households in temporary accommodation.
4. The length of time spent in temporary accommodation is appropriate to the individuals needs, but that overall the length of time spent in temporary accommodation is reduced.
5. The views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation are considered, especially for service development.

5.1 Achievement of the Outcomes

In order to achieve these outcomes an action plan has been developed that will ensure the effective delivery of the temporary accommodation strategy. The action plan involves joint working between the council, RSLs, supported accommodation providers and homeless households.

For the outcomes to be achieved the management of there must be efficient management of the temporary accommodation. There must be procedures in place to ensure that the length of stay in the temporary accommodation is appropriate to the homeless households needs. In order for this to happen there must be support in place to enable the move on.

When a property becomes void it must be re-let as quickly as possible. RSLs and the council should work towards their section 5 or lettings plan targets.

There must also be effective management of section 11, discharge from prison and hospital, and leaving care procedures to ensure that there is appropriate temporary accommodation available

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Draft Temporary Accommodation Strategy – Draft Action Plan

Outcome 1 - There is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households				
Ref	Action	Who will do this ?	Performance indicator	Timescale
1.1	Develop plan to reconfigure current and planned supply of temporary accommodation to meet needs of homeless households as determined by model	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelled updated with up to date data • Identify surplus accommodation • Identify gaps in provision 	tbc
1.2	Develop a process of recording and monitoring the demand for temporary accommodation, including refusals, in order to identify trends and regularly review and update model	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process developed and model updated at agreed intervals 	tbc
Outcome 2 - Temporary accommodation is accessible, affordable and well managed				
Ref	Action	Who will do this ?	Performance indicator	Timescale
2.1	Develop a temporary accommodation standard to ensure all temporary accommodation is of a good consistent quality standard.	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard agreed and identified • Improved satisfaction rates 	tbc
2.2	Develop a process to analyse reasons why temporary accommodation is refused	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process developed • Barriers to access are identified 	tbc
2.3	Maximise take-up of Housing Benefit for all households	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of households in rent arrears in 	tbc

	accessing temporary accommodation		temporary accommodation	
2.4	Ensure households accessing temporary accommodation have adequate budgeting skills in order pay fuel charges and accommodation remains affordable	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports needs assessed and budgeting plan developed if appropriate 	tbc
2.5	Minimise void periods for all temporary accommodation	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the monitoring and reporting system in relation to void temporary accommodation to ensure system is robust 	tbc
2.6	Agree appropriate level of visits by visiting officers for households in dispersed flats	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and record visits 	tbc
Outcome 3 - Support is provided where necessary, that meets the needs of homeless households in temporary accommodation				
Ref	Action	Who will do this ?	Performance indicator	Timescale
3.1	Support needs of all households assessed prior to moving into temporary accommodation	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support matrix introduced as part off assessment process 	tbc
3.2	Care Plan developed for all homeless households in temporary accommodation with identified support needs	tbc	Care plan in place for 100% of all households in temporary accommodation.	tbc
3.3	Ensure support provided meets with legislative requirements	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued compliance with Care Inspectorate inspections and recommendations 	tbc
3.4	Develop Service Level Agreement for each supported accommodation project	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SLA's agreed for all projects 	tbc

<p>Outcome 4 - The length of time spent in temporary accommodation is appropriate to the individuals needs, but that overall the length of time spent in temporary accommodation is reduced</p>				
Ref	Action	Who will do this ?	Performance indicator	Timescale
4.1	Ensure support includes regular reviews of progress against Care Plan whilst household in temporary accommodation	tbc	Recognised review procedure in place	tbc
4.2	Review of move-on process to ensure households are fully prepared to move within specified timescales	tbc	Full review undertaken and established monitoring system established	
4.3	Introduce Housing Options approach across Housing Service	tbc	Integrated Housing Options service across all housing providers in West Dunbartonshire	
<p>Outcome 5 - The views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation are considered, especially for service development</p>				
Ref	Action	Who will do this ?	Performance indicator	Timescale
5.1	Customer satisfaction survey introduced to seek the views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation	tbc	Increased satisfaction levels in place	tbc

5.2	Customer Satisfaction rates reported as part of wider performance management framework and used to identify area for service improvement	tbc	Regular customer satisfaction reporting and procedures in place for rectifying any failings.	tbc

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