

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 24 August 2022**

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**Subject: “Home at the Heart 2019-24” West Dunbartonshire’s Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan update and new approaches to homelessness progress report**

**1. Purpose**

**1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on “Home at the Heart” our Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan (RRTP) for the period 2019-24 and new approaches to homelessness.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

- (i) Note the progress made in the first three years of “Home at the Heart”, which has informed an update report submitted to the Scottish Government at the end of June 2022 and note the main objectives for Year 4 attached as Appendix 1;
- (ii) Approve that our Year 3 underspend outlined at 4.11 is used to meet the objectives of the West Dunbartonshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, together with the Year 4 funding allocated by the Scottish Government;
- (iii) Approve our spend and activity template of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan attached as Appendix 2 to this report;
- (iv) Note the uncertainty around future funding and specifically the risk to our Housing First approach;
- (v) Note that an annual update and progress report will be provided to the Housing and Communities Committee in May 2023.

**3. Background**

**3.1** Our current approach to tackling homelessness is outlined in our RRTP “Home at the Heart”. This approach builds on the good progress made within West Dunbartonshire by previous strategies, most recently our “More than a Roof” approach which covered the period 2017/2020. It reinforces the challenges set by the renewed commitment to tackle homelessness to end rough sleeping and to transform temporary accommodation.

**3.2** “Home at the Heart” was developed in response to a key recommendation from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) that was adopted by the Scottish Government, for Local Authorities to develop and submit a RRTP for the period 2019-24.

**3.3** It was developed in partnership with key stakeholders, including the West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership and the West Dunbartonshire Housing Solutions Partnership, which includes local Registered Social Landlords and was submitted to the Scottish Government on 31 December 2018 and approved by the Housing and Communities Committee on 6 February 2019.

**3.4** Regular reports have been provided to the Housing and Communities Committee, initially detailing and seeking approval for our RRTP and subsequently providing updates in terms of progress being made and approving the use of Scottish Government funding in order to deliver our key objectives.

#### **4. Main Issues**

**4.1** The aims of “Home at the Heart” in terms of tackling homelessness are influenced by the Scottish Social Housing Charter and consistent with the Scottish Government’s “Ending Homelessness Together” approach and are structured around the following 4 strategic objectives:

- Deliver a whole systems approach to the prevention of homelessness;
- Enable service users with low or no support needs to access settled housing quickly;
- Develop interim housing options which enable independent living and tenancy sustainment; and
- Implement a Housing First model which enables the most excluded service users to achieve housing sustainment.

**4.2** The feedback received from the Scottish Government in relation to our RRTP has been positive and highlighted a number of areas of good practice including:

- The comprehensive temporary accommodation modelling undertaken as part of our wider “More than a Roof” approach;
- The strategic approach to tackling homelessness;
- The introduction of the supported tenancy model;
- Prioritising and scaling up of Housing First;
- Our award winning Leaving Care Housing Protocol; and
- The fact that we have never breached the unsuitable accommodation order.

## “Home at the Heart” Year 3 progress

### 4.3 Objective 1: Deliver a whole systems approach to the prevention of homelessness:

- FTE staff member to provide an enhanced proactive homeless prevention role now permanent part of the service;
- Pilot Prevention Fund received over a 100 referrals in 2021/22 with 22 receiving payments from the fund which has helped households at risk of homelessness remain in their social or private tenancies;
- Tenant Hardship Fund was fully utilised;
  - 239 grant awards have been made totalling £263,000;
  - 133 awards were made to RSL tenants totalling £123,718, an average of £930 per case;
  - 102 awards were made to WDC tenants totalling £131,003, an average of £1284 per case;
  - 4 awards were made to tenants in private lets totalling £8760,
- Our prevention initiatives have led to a 68% increase in approaches being dealt with by our Housing Options Service during 2021/22, with over half of these resulting in homelessness being prevented;
- Review of our Housing Allocation policy, it was agreed to create an additional reasonable preference group for young people at risk of homelessness and that a certain proportion of available properties should be allocated to this group.

### 4.4 Objective 2: Enable service users with low or no support needs to access settled housing quickly:

- Reviewed and updated the lettings targets for homeless households with all social landlords across West Dunbartonshire, however letting activity remained lower than expected;

Calculation of homeless lets required and % of expected letting activity required to meet need - split by LA & RSL		
	Year 3 target	Year 3 actual
Lets required to meet demand	867	733
Split LA	567	515
Split RSL	300	218
% Allocation of lets required		
LA	56%	57%
RSL	55%	46%

We continued to deliver a quick and efficient assessment process to help meet our targets;

- Despite the impacts of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns and restrictions, 592 homeless households with no/low support needs were rehoused and were supported to move into settled accommodation;
- The average length of time these households spent in temporary accommodation was 17 weeks.

**4.5** Objective 3: Develop interim housing options which enable independent living and tenancy sustainment:

- Continue to monitor the following protocols; Prison Discharge, Leaving Care, and Hospital Discharge
- Reviewed our “No Home for Domestic Abuse” approach, to ensure that victims are supported to pursue their most appropriate housing option;
- Continue to offer a Conversion Programme to provide settled accommodation for more homeless households, 45 in Year 3 which was 15 above our indicative target;
- Supported Accommodation Initial Review completed with a committee agreeing to FTE to take forward the recommendations to provide the new required provision.

**4.6** Objective 4: Implement a Housing First model which enables the most excluded service users to achieve housing sustainment:

- We have recruited and trained a dedicated Housing First Support Team, ended Year 3 with 8 Housing First support workers;
- Fully assessed 51 Housing First referrals jointly with clients, with 23 being suitable and agreeing to participating in the Housing First approach;
- Created 28 new Housing First tenancies, in addition to the 20 created in Year 1 and 2;
- Our Housing First approach has a tenancy sustainment rate of 94%, with the only tenancies ending sadly being due to the deaths of the tenants.
- We have also had 3 tenancies “stepped down” term used by the Scottish Government to describe with all parties agree the housing first client no longer requires support due to positive progress made.

**4.7** With the protections that the Scottish Government had created for most renters during lockdown to help prevent evictions from taking place ending in September 2021. The number of section 11 notices have started to see a significant increase particularly since the start of 2022 and will continue to rise.

**4.8** The impact of the pandemic continued to have an impact on letting activity across West Dunbartonshire in Year 3 (see table in 4.4). Within West Dunbartonshire Council we are still seeing lower than normal voids being returned ready for let.

- 4.9** A key consequence is an increase in the overall number of homeless households in temporary accommodation and an overall increase in the average time spent in temporary accommodation.
- 4.10** At the time of writing in early July 2022, we had 72 households who had spent over a year in temporary accommodation an increase from 53 in August 2021. Most of these have complex need and we are actively working with these households providing high levels of support and are focused on securing long term housing solutions so that every household has safe and secure accommodation.
- 4.11** These have then contributed to a Year 3 underspend in our RRTP less an over spend of conversions as outlined in the table below, however as highlighted later in this report the underspend for Year 3 will be utilised to deliver Year 4 RRTP ambitions:

RRTP Year 3 spend	Year 3 plan	Year 3 spend	Year 3 underspend
Housing First West Dunbartonshire	£480,657	£417,000	£63,657
Interim Supported Tenancies	£31,200	£31,200	£0
Additional Resettlement Support Service	£38,500	£38,500	£0
Enhanced Prevention Service	£38,500	£38,500	£0
Pilot Prevention Fund	£16,633	£8,350	£8,283
Shared Living Initiative	£28,810	£28,810	£0
Review of Residential Supported Accommodation	£18,000	£16,048	£1,952
Conversion Programme	£75,000	£112,500	- £37,500
<b>Year 3 totals</b>	<b>£727,630</b>	<b>£690,908</b>	<b>£36,392</b>

#### Review and update of “Home at the Heart”

- 4.12** All local authorities were asked to provide the Scottish Government with a written report outlining how they had spent their allocation of Year 3 funding and progress to date.
- 4.13** West Dunbartonshire Council submitted this report in June 2022 and we have taken this opportunity to fully review and update our existing RRTP to take account of the progress made in the first three years, the homelessness context within West Dunbartonshire, the impacts of the remains of the pandemic and cost of living crisis and the following funding that is available for Year 4:

RRTP Year 4 funding	
Year 3 underspend	£36,392
SG funding for Year 4	£238,000
Housing and Homelessness contribution	£200,000
<b>Year 4 total funding</b>	<b>£474,392</b>

- 4.14** Our fully updated plan is attached as Appendix 1. We have now managed to mainstream most of the initiatives and enhanced service provision introduced as part of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. This means that the £238k funding received from the Scottish Government, along with any

underspend from the previous year, can now be used to fund Housing First in West Dunbartonshire.

Whilst this funding will allow us to scale up Housing First, it will not be to a level that fully meets identified demand and the service will need to operate with a targeted capacity.

RRTP Year 4 costings	
Housing First West Dunbartonshire	£391,109
Pilot Prevention Fund	£8,283
Conversion Programme	£75,000
<b>Year 4 total cost</b>	<b>£474,392</b>

#### RRTP Year 4 main objectives

#### 4.15 Objective 1: Deliver a whole systems approach to the prevention of homelessness:

- The implementation of our revised allocations policy and close monitoring of impact on youth homelessness;
- Recruitment of an additional resettlement officer to ensure that those young people housed via this route get appropriate support to move into and sustain their tenancy;
- We will continue to monitor the impact of the pilot prevention fund and consider options to identify and provide longer term funding;
- Our Enhanced Prevention Service will become more community focussed and interventions will include an increase in home visits.

#### 4.16 Objective 2: Enable service users with low or no support needs to access settled housing quickly:

- Reduce time in temporary accommodation for those with no or low support needs down to 15 weeks by end of Year 4;
- We have updated our modelling and asked all social landlords to agree to 69% of all lets to households experiencing homelessness;

Calculation of homeless lets required and % of expected letting activity required to meet need - split by LA & RSL	
	Year 4
<b>Lets required for to meet demand</b>	<b>986</b>
Split LA	641
Split RSL	345
<b>Projected turnover</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
Split LA	929
Split RSL	500
<b>% Allocation of lets required</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
LA	<b>69%</b>
RSL	<b>69%</b>

- This was based on an expected 1150 demand for homelessness during 2022/23.

**4.17** Objective 3: Develop interim housing options which enable independent living and tenancy sustainment:

- Recruit the Senior Housing Development Officer to take forward the recommendations of the full review of our provision of temporary and supported accommodation as agreed by the Housing and Communities Committee in February 2022;
- Senior Supported Accommodation worker post now mainstreamed to continue to deploy the resources to additional support required with higher numbers of temporary ongoing since the pandemic due to lower letting activity;
- Implement our Year 4 Conversion Programme to provide settled accommodation for more homeless households.

**4.18** Objective 4: Implement a Housing First model which enables the most excluded service users to achieve housing sustainment:

- We have continued with 8 FTE HF Support Workers and removed the planned increase that would be needed for fully meet identified demand;
- Following feedback from the Housing First Pathfinder and other networking opportunities we have reduced the HF tenancy set-up costs from £2500 to £1500;
- Due to available funding we have replaced the annual Housing First tenancy sustainment budget of £1000 per HF tenancy, with a Diversionary Activities Budget of £18,000 to cover all HF clients.

**4.19** Short-term financial uncertainty remains in terms of our RRTP as at present Scottish Government funding only covers a 2 year period 2022/23 – 2023/24, the remainder of the period of our RRTP. Our Year 4 funding allocation of £238,000 is expected to be the same in Year 5 with no current funding commitment beyond year 5.

**4.20** Despite taking actions to mainstream some elements of our transition plan within our wider service provision, future sustainable funding for Housing First remains a key challenge. With current funding from the Scottish Government and Housing only sustaining the service until 2023/24 but not being able to expand to meet demand.

**4.21** Whilst we continue to explore long term funding options to continue our Housing First support service, we are aware of some national discussions through colleagues within COSLA looking at reviewing funding to deliver homelessness and housing option services which would include future funding to deliver the RRTP outcomes.

**4.22** Recent report from Drug Death Task Force to the Scottish Government notes one of the Actions (no 26) for funding to continue and expand housing first (<https://drugdeathtaskforce.scot/news-information/publications/reports/final-report/>).

**4.23** Regular progress reports will be provided to the Council's Housing and Communities Committee, the Health and Social Care Partnership Board and the Housing Solutions Partnership, chaired by the Convenor of the Housing and Communities Committee.

#### New approaches to homelessness and impacts of Covid-19

#### HARSAG2

**4.24** Due to the risks posed by the Covid-19 the Scottish Government assessed that the national plan to end homelessness needed to be looked at again and in June 2020 the Housing Minister asked the Housing and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) to reconvene and look at what more can be done to tackle homelessness.

**4.25** The Scottish Government agreed in principle to all the 105 recommendations HARSAG made and subsequently published an updated Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan on 8 October 2020.

**4.26** The Scottish Government's Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group will oversee the implementation of this plan. Whilst some of the key recommendations are directed towards Scottish Government future policy, some recommendations, such as those around benefits and support for people regardless of their immigration status, are requests of the UK Government.

**4.27** In addition, many of the recommendations will require to be delivered by each individual local authority. Work has been on-going to develop and implement an action plan in response to these recommendations and the current version of our "HARSAG2 recommendations tracker" is available as a background paper to this report.

**4.28** We can update the following of the 105 actions;

Action Stage	Number of Actions
Actions completed by WDC	73
Actions in progress by WDC	1
Actions not started by WDC	0
Actions requiring Scottish Government action with possible WDC action	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>

#### Local Connection

**4.29** The policy intention of suspending local connection referrals between Scottish local authorities is to remove barriers to support for people who are homelessness or rough sleeping so they can resettle successfully, and avoid repeat homelessness. If people are living in an area of their



choosing, they are more likely to integrate successfully into a local community and access the services and support they require.

- 4.30** The pandemic has delayed this legislation and was due to be laid during this session of parliament however there are no further timings as the impact of the Ukrainian Refugee resettlement programme also being considered. The Scottish Government will monitor the impact of these changes and respond to any local authorities that report undue pressure on service provision.

#### Public Sector duty to prevent homelessness

- 4.31** Another proposal from HARSAG being taken forward by the Scottish Government is to look at developing legislation focussed at introducing a Public Sector duty to prevent homelessness.
- 4.32** The Scotland Prevention Review Group was convened and has worked with public bodies, housing providers and other partners to develop proposals for a new duty on public bodies and delivery partners aimed at the prevention of homelessness.
- 4.33** This work was initially due to be completed in the Summer of 2020 though was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. A report was published in February 2021 with a series of recommendations around actions that could be taken to prevent homelessness and that these should start up to six months before someone faces losing their home.
- 4.34** The Scottish Government has committed to consider these proposals and to work with local authorities over the coming months to seek further input to carry out further consultation with partners. We await discussion on and the introduction of guidance.
- 4.35** The Scottish Government carried had a consultation open until end of March 2022 for all services to respond on the proposals. West Dunbartonshire Council responded to the consultation and encouraged partners to do the same but we are awaiting outcomes from the consultation.

## **5. People Implications**

- 5.1** There are no additional people implications in this report.

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

- 6.1** The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government wrote to West Dunbartonshire on 20 December 2021 advising of the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan funding allocation for 2022/23 and 2023/24 of £238k.
- 6.2** The delivery of the wider Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan will be from within existing budgets noting the Scottish Government funding for 2022/23, the contribution from Housing and utilising the underspend from Year 3.

**6.3** There is further financial uncertainty as at present Scottish Government funding as funding covers the last 2 years of the RRTP. There is also an expectation that Housing First becomes a permanent part of all Homeless services however, there is no committed further funding past 2023/24 to cover part of the costs and therefore to continue to provide the service and expand to meet demand requires long term funding.

**6.4** There are no procurement implications in terms of this report,

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** There are financial and regulatory risks associated with not being able to fully deliver our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, including the Housing First element of the approach.

**7.2** The decision to award funding in Year 4 and 5 again was based again on a formula which focuses on homelessness assessments (and not the content of the RRTP's), arguably benefits larger local authorities who receive a higher proportion of homeless assessments and could discourage local authorities from implementing initiatives aimed at preventing homelessness.

**7.3** There is no confirmation of funding for RRTP past Year 5 therefore long term funding is required to be sourced to continue with the transformation and continuing our Housing First service.

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

**8.1** There are no negative equalities impacts due to this update to our RRTP however preventing and responding to homelessness has a significant positive impact on individuals and communities. The aim of the policy is to create positive impacts to all homeless households, but it is recognised that to do this equality considerations must be taken into account to meet different needs and circumstances. Section 2 of EIA 511, details potential positive impacts for a number of groups and actions to support. No negative impacts have been identified.

## **9. Consultation**

**9.1** The first draft of our RRTP was developed in collaboration with key partners, including the Health and Social Care Partnership, local Registered Social Landlords and third sector organisations, via a series of well attended stakeholder events held in November and December 2018.

**9.2** Consultation and communication have continued since the submission of the first iteration of the RRTP through the Housing Solutions Partnership. Further engagement has also taken place with other local landlords via the Strategic Housing Providers Forum, engagement has continued with the Health and Social Care Partnership and also a dialogue with the WDTR0 regarding the implementation of the RRTP and Housing First has also taken place.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

**10.1** Having considered the Council's strategic priorities, this report contributes significantly to all strategic priorities.

**Peter Barry**  
**Chief Officer, Housing and Employability**

**Date: 9 August 2022**

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**Appendices:** 1: WDC RRTP Year 2 update; June 2022  
2: RRTP monitoring report, activity and funding; June 2022

**Background Papers:** RRTP Equalities Impact Assessment  
RRTP Delivery Action Plan – June 2022  
Ending Homelessness Together updated action plan; Scottish Government October 2020  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-updated-action-plan-october-2020/>  
West Dunbartonshire Council's Revised Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan including Action Plan and Equalities Impact Assessment, [Home at the Heart](#)  
Housing and Communities Committee Report 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018 "Rapid Rehousing Transition Paper position paper"  
Housing and Communities Committee Report 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019 "Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20 to 2023/24"  
Housing and Communities Committee Report 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019 "Rapid Rehousing Transition Paper 219-24 update report"  
Housing and Communities Committee Report 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020 "Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and new approaches to homeless update"  
Housing and Communities Committee Report 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 "New approaches to homelessness update report – "More than a Roof 2017-20" final report and "Home at the Heart 2019-24" Year 1 update on our Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan"

Housing and Communities Committee Report 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 “Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan and new approaches to homelessness update report”

HARSAG2 recommendations tracker, West Dunbartonshire Council Housing Development and Homelessness Team, June 2021

Housing and Communities Committee Report 2nd February 2022 “Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan and new approaches to homelessness update report”

Letter from Kevin Stewart, MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning on Distribution of Funding for Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans for 2021/2; 10 December 2020

Letter from Kevin Stewart, MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning on Additional Funding for Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans for 2020/1; 18 December 2020

Letter from Shona Robson, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government on Distribution of Funding for Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans for 2022/3 and 2023/24; 20 December 2021

**Wards Affected:** All