

West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2016

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Foreword



Thank you for reading the Homelessness Strategy 2013-2016. This is the third homelessness strategy and replaces the previous strategy published in 2007.

The new strategy builds on our successful strategic approach which has led to a 40% drop in homeless presentations and sets out what the Council and its partners will do to prevent homelessness from happening, how

we will provide support to ensure people stay in their homes and the information and advice we will provide about a range of housing options

The strategy will be implemented during an uncertain economic landscape with the introduction of welfare reform and the strategy highlights actions to mitigate some of the impacts around this.

As the convener of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee, I am committed to the successful implementation of this strategy and look forward to working in partnership with my fellow elected members, council departments, and statutory and voluntary sector agencies to develop services and initiatives to tackle homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.

David McBride

Councillor David McBride

Convener - Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee

1.0 Introduction

The most acute form of housing need is homelessness. While the overall level of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire has fallen continuously since the introduction of the Homelessness Strategy in 2008, many households still present as homeless in West Dunbartonshire every year.

The experience of homelessness significantly impacts on an individual's life in a magnitude of different ways. People who have been homeless are more likely to experience mental illness, addiction issues and legal / debt problems. They are more likely to have limited training and employment opportunities. And they have greater potential for becoming homeless again in the future.

Homelessness strategies are now incorporated within the Local Housing Strategy. However some local authorities will

still have their own Homelessness Strategy to ensure a full action plan is implemented. West Dunbartonshire as an area with one of the highest homelessness rates per population level is one of these authorities.

The homelessness strategy 'Ending Homelessness in West Dunbartonshire: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013' has been reviewed and a new homelessness strategy has been developed for the period 2013-2016.

The focus in this homeless strategy is very similar to the previous one. The main focus is on

1. Prevention
2. Housing support and tenancy sustainment
3. Housing options
4. Commitment and partnership working

2.0 Legislative background

The 1977 Act placed the responsibility for meeting homeless persons' needs on local authority housing departments subject to national guidance.

This Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 brought about a series of changes that included:

- Local authorities had to assess homelessness within their area and to submit strategies and approaches for its prevention and mitigation of homelessness.
- Local authorities had a duty to ensure advice and information is available in their area and free of charge.
- New single regulatory framework for Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and local authorities defined to cover local authorities' homelessness functions.
- Rights of individual homeless people strengthened with the right to temporary accommodation even if in non-priority need.
- All homeless applicants are given the right to internal review of adverse conditions.
- Minimum rights given to people living in hostels.
- RSLs were given a duty to comply with requests from local authorities to accommodate unintentionally homeless households in priority need within six weeks.

The Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 brought about fundamental changes to homelessness in Scotland. One of these changes was the ambitious target of abolition of priority need by 2012. This meant that anyone who is unintentionally

homeless will be given the right to temporary accommodation and a statutory duty to have permanent accommodation found by the local authority. In December 2005, the then Scottish Executive issued a Ministerial Statement on how the Act was to be implemented. The main requirements of the Act were;

- Priority need assessment is to be abolished by 2012
- The requirement of landlords and creditors to notify the relevant local authority when they raise repossession proceedings

The Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 took five of the Homelessness Task Force's recommendations into legislation. Local Authorities are monitored against the other 54; principally their performance against the 5 high level national outcomes designated by the Homelessness Monitoring Group in 2004:-

- No one need sleep rough
- Existing homelessness becomes more visible
- Sustainable resettlement is secured for people who become homeless
- Fewer people become homeless in the first place
- The duration of homelessness is reduced

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 placed a duty on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of homeless or threatened with homeless households where they believe that households are in need of a prescribed housing support service. It also states that local authorities must ensure that this support is provided. This duty was enacted in 1st June 2013.

3.0 Strategic links

Homelessness is a complex issue that is rarely solved by just housing. The response to it therefore must come from the Council as a whole, and in partnership with other statutory and voluntary organisations. There was some pre-consultation with all partner agencies invited to have their say in how this new strategy should look and what they felt were the main priorities.

It is therefore essential that the Homeless Strategy has links to other Council and Partnership strategic plans.

The **West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership Community Plan 2007-2017** is the overarching strategic plan for the whole of West Dunbartonshire and it reflects the close links between the council and a wide range of planning and service delivery partners from the public, private, and voluntary sectors. All other strategic plans prepared by West Dunbartonshire Council and its partners are linked to and integrated with the Community Plan to ensure that they complement and support community planning at all levels.

The Community Plan has several links to the Homelessness Strategy such as the aim to resettle homeless households in sustainable tenancies and minimise the level of repeat homelessness. This will be realised by developing a range of programmes and joint services to prevent homelessness and support households when and as required.

The **West Dunbartonshire Council Strategic Plan 2012-2017** provides a sense of direction that will guide the work of Council's services over the next 4 years. It sets out a vision for a West Dunbartonshire, shared by all our partner agencies. The key priorities are:-

- Improve economic growth and employability.
- Improve life chances for children and young people.
- Improve care for and promote independence with older people.
- Improve local housing and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.
- Improve the wellbeing of communities and protect the welfare of vulnerable people

The **Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016** (LHS) identifies the housing issues that affect communities of West Dunbartonshire Council and set out an action plan for tackling these over the period of the strategy. Homelessness strategies are now incorporated within the Local Housing Strategy. However some local authorities will still have their own Homelessness Strategy. Some of the key actions to take forward from the LHS are;

- Develop and Implement a new West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2013-2016;
- Implement a new temporary accommodation strategy;
- We will develop and implement an Empty Homes Strategy which will seek to bring empty properties back into use in West Dunbartonshire;
- Strengthen partnership with WD CHCP and Employability Services;
- Continue to work in partnership to tackle homelessness in West Dunbartonshire;

3.0 Strategic links

- We will introduce a housing options approach to ease access to suitable accommodation for West Dunbartonshire households;
- improve tenancy sustainment levels in West Dunbartonshire;
- We will carry out a review of Housing Support in West Dunbartonshire to plan for future service provision

The **Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2012 – 2016** is to ensure that West Dunbartonshire Council and its partners are able to deliver a range of temporary accommodation across the local authority area to meet the divergent needs of our customer base. The keys expected outcomes from the strategy are;

- We will ensure there is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households.
- Temporary accommodation is accessible, affordable and well managed.
- Support is provided where necessary, that meets the needs of homeless households in temporary accommodation.

- 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.
- The views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation are considered, especially for service development.
- We will ensure a consistent spread of temporary accommodation across West Dunbartonshire to avoid concentration and stabilise communities

There are a number of other strategies and action plans that work alongside the Homelessness Strategy.

- Anti-social behaviour Strategy
- Homelessness and Health Action Plan
- Adopting a common approach to tenancy sustainment
- Homelessness Prevention Action Plan

3.1 Equal opportunities

The planning and delivery of good quality housing and appropriate advice and information services in West Dunbartonshire embraces the principles of equal opportunities. The Council's Equality Scheme sets out how the Council will meet objectives in relation to race, disability, gender, age, religion & belief, sexual orientation and transgender status.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act. The act came into force on 1 October 2010 and provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. It simplifies, strengthens and removes inconsistencies in the current legislation to provide Britain with a new discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

The act covers nine protected characteristics, which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. Every person has at least one of the protected characteristics, so the act protects everyone against unfair treatment. The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race

- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

It is recognised that homelessness is an area where prejudice and discrimination is common. Individuals at risk from homelessness include people with alcohol and drug issues, people involved with the criminal justice system and people with mental health issues. Homeless people are themselves by definition disadvantaged and frequently experience more difficulty than others in accessing mainstream services. It is recognised that some groups of individuals can be subject to 'double oppression' for example Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community and minority ethnic groups.

Therefore, all the actions proposed in this and related strategies are aimed at overcoming disadvantage and tackling the exclusion of groups of individuals experiencing homelessness. The diversity of individuals is recognised therefore the homelessness strategy aims to ensure that in the development and delivery of services to end homelessness in West Dunbartonshire, the needs of individuals and particular groups are addressed.

The Council's commitment to equalities and mainstreaming as well as its equality outcomes for 2013-2017 are set out in its Mainstreaming Report

3.2 Minority ethnic communities

We continue to receive low numbers of homeless presentations from the minority ethnic communities as detailed below:-

Ethnicity	Homeless Unintentional		Homeless intentional		Not homeless		Applicant resolved		Lost contact		Withdrawn		Grand Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
White Scottish	879	83%	98	98%	26	70%	3	100%	10	100%	286	87%	1302	
White other British	30	3%	2	2%	4	11%	0	0%	0	0%	10	3%	46	3%
White Irish	6	0.5%	0	0%	3	8%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	9	
White other	28	2.6%	0	0%	4	11%	0	0%	0	0%	4	1%	36	
Black, black Scottish or black British: African	20	1.9%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	20	
Black, black Scottish or black: Other	7	0.7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	7	
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Indian	8	0.8%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	8	
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Pakistani	18	1.7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	18	
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Chinese	11	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	11	
Other	41	3.9%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	28	9%	69	
Not Known	15	1.4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	15	1%
Grand Total	1063		100		37		3		10		328		1541	

Table 3.1: Ethnicity and homelessness decisions in West Dunbartonshire in 2012/13 (HL1)

From the table above it can be seen that 1302 (84%) of homeless presentations in 2012/13 were from households who were white Scottish. This is a decrease from the previous year where 95% of homeless presentations were from white Scottish. In 2012/13 46 were White British other, 36 were white other, and 9 were white Irish. The table also shows the homeless decisions in the same year. It also shows that all intentional homeless decisions were from white Scottish households/White British other ethnic groups.

3.3 Eligibility for assistance

The majority of homeless households who present to the council are eligible for assistance. There were no households who presented as homeless who were not eligible for assistance in 2012/13.

Eligibility status	Number	%
They are British citizens or nationals of one of the EEA countries, pre EU expansion in 2004, or Switzerland	1358	99.1%
They are nationals of one of the A8 countries (which joined the EU in 2004) or other countries to have joined the EU since	6	0.5%
They are not nationals of one of the above countries, but are lawfully present in the UK (e.g. because they have been granted refugee status or leave to remain) and meet the criteria for eligibility	5	0.4%
Grand Total	1369	100%

Table 3.2: Eligibility status for homelessness assistance in 2011/12 in West Dunbartonshire

3.4 LGBT community

National evidence suggests young LGBT people are more likely to become homeless. At present homeless presentations from the LGBT community are not monitored. However, we recognise evidence that suggests that homelessness is a major issue, especially among the young LGBT population.

There is a lack of monitoring surrounding the LGBT community which can lead to a lack of awareness of the housing need of this particular community. We aim to improve on this and enable this community to access the appropriate help and support to prevent homelessness.

3.5 Gypsies/travellers

In 2012/13 17 households who presented as homeless stated that they were a gypsy/traveller. Gypsy/Traveller communities are regarded by West Dunbartonshire Council as a minority ethnic group, and as such come under the protection of the Equality Act 2010 and the Councils Race Equality Scheme. There is currently no explicit legal recognition of this in Scotland although there are strong arguments that Scottish Gypsies/Travellers are a racial group in terms of the RRA, with specific needs and aspirations.

In the West Dunbartonshire area there is one established Gypsy/Traveller community,

based on a 20 pitch site in Dumbarton. The site is for permanent residents and is very popular with mainly long standing residents. There are also a number of families who travel through the area throughout the year, and we are aware that some Gypsies/Travellers have settled in housing in the area. A count undertaken in July 2007 showed 5 households in unauthorised encampments in West Dunbartonshire. As of 2007/08 we began collecting information on the number of Gypsies/travellers making homelessness presentations within West Dunbartonshire.

4.0 Review of current strategy

The homelessness strategy 'Ending Homelessness in West Dunbartonshire: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013' was structured around the following strategic aims:

- To prevent homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire
- To improve the range of housing options available in West Dunbartonshire and to respond effectively to households in homelessness crisis
- To ensure a sustainable solution for individuals who have experienced homelessness
- To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

Aim 1 - To prevent homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire

Prevention always has and always will be high on the agenda of any homelessness service. It is widely recognised that if we can support people to remain in the home they are in, or move to a new more appropriate home, then we can prevent a homeless episode. Ending Homelessness in West Dunbartonshire: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013' recognised that prevention is a long term goal and one which the council is still working on.

Some achievements so far.....

- An improved homeless prevention and advice and assistance service shown by an overall reduction in the number of homeless presentations;

- There has also been a reduction in the number of presentations from young people throughout West Dunbartonshire;
- The introduction of a Homelessness prevention and mediation pilot;
- The introduction of an housing education pilot in partnership with our Education partners;
- A number of discharge protocols have been put in place successfully;

Although there has been a significant improvement in the number of young people (16-25 year olds) presenting as homeless the numbers are still significantly high and remains an area where we will continue to focus developments.

Aim 2 - To improve the range of housing options available in West Dunbartonshire and to respond effectively to households in homelessness crisis

Ending Homelessness in West Dunbartonshire: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 aimed to develop processes which would enable us to meet the needs on the local community. While this strategy was being implemented Housing Options grew on the national and local homelessness agenda, and is an important part in the new strategy.

Some achievements so far.....

- A housing options guide was developed
- Extended use of Short Scottish Secure tenancies to promote successful independent living;
- An increase in temporary flats offering more choice homeless households;

4.0 Review of current strategy

- A new Blue Triangle supported accommodation project has been opened as a response to increased numbers of homeless households with support needs;
- A revised allocations policy;
- Improved standards in temporary accommodation;

There has been a lot of work put in to increasing options for people in housing need but there is still great pressure on the housing stock. This pressure will only intensify because of the impact of welfare reform.

Aim 3 - To ensure a sustainable solution for individuals who have experienced homelessness

The previous strategy emphasised that homelessness was not purely a housing issue and that a network of support is required for a sustainable solution. Often homelessness is the result of a much wider issue in an individual's life. The strategy worked to develop sustainable long term solutions and stop repeat homelessness.

Some achievements so far.....

- Income Maximisation through the Welfare Rights Team;
- Increased use of the private rented sector to provide sustainable housing solutions;
- We have developed a temporary accommodation action plan
- We work in partnership with the HNS to ensure the homelessness and health action plan is fully implemented

Aim 4 - To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

Ending Homelessness in West

Dunbartonshire: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 was committed to delivering the obligations set out in the 2001 Act and 2003 Act. West Dunbartonshire was one of the first councils in Scotland to abolish priority need in January 2011. This was achieved by developing a corporate approach and all agencies played a key role in this outcome.

Some achievements so far.....

- All unintentionally homeless households have had a right to settled accommodation since January 2011 – making WDC one of the first local authorities to achieve the Scottish Governments 2012 homelessness target;
- West Dunbartonshire have established a Homelessness and Housing Access Forum which meets on a regular basis and consists of internal and external partners;
- West Dunbartonshire Council has had no breaches of unsuitable accommodation order;
- Developing a number of supported accommodation projects as a result of the temporary accommodation review.

5.0 Overview of WDC

In 2010 the estimated population of West Dunbartonshire was 90,570 – a drop of 0.4 from 2009. From the table below it can be seen that there is an overall projected decline in population between 2008 and 2025. However, the number of people aged over 60 is expected to increase. This is consistent with Scotland as a whole. The total number of households in West Dunbartonshire is projected to change from 41,450 in 2008 to 43,060 in 2033, which is an increase of 4%.

	2008	2016	2025
0-15 yrs	16,382	15,600	15,515
16 to 59/64	57,097	55,285	51,554
60/65 to 74	10,649	12,013	13,696
75+	6,812	7,244	9,084
Total	90,940	90,142	89,849

The number of people migrating to Scotland has increased over the years, and been higher than the number of people leaving. This has not been replicated in West Dunbartonshire. The table below shows the migration of people coming in and out of West Dunbartonshire. From table 5.2 it can be seen that more people migrate out of the local authority area than in.

Age Group	In	Out	Net
0-15	478	-499	-21
16-29	727	-796	-69
30-44	616	-677	-61
45-64	352	-355	-3
65+	118	-141	-23
All Ages	2291	-2468	-177

The total number of households in West Dunbartonshire is projected to change from 41,450 in 2008 to 43,060 in 2033, which is an increase of 4%.

5.0 Overview of WDC

Housing Tenure in West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire has just over 44,500 houses divided between the tenures. Over half of the housing stock in west Dunbartonshire council is owner occupied and a quarter of the stock is council housing. 13% of the housing stock is housing association stock and only 4 % is from the private rented sector.

Tenure	Total Number	%
Council Housing	11,323	25.5%
Registered Social Landlords	5,679	12.8%
Private Rented Sector	1,799	4.0%
Owner Occupation	25,672	57.7%

Table 5.3: Housing Tenure (Source LHS)

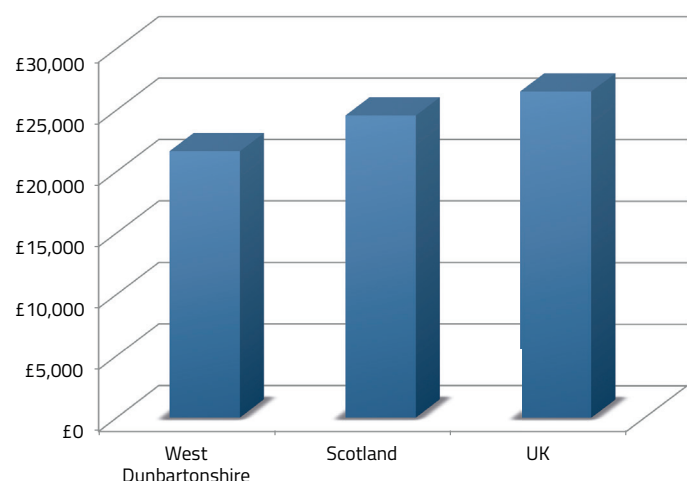
Social and economic context

West Dunbartonshire incomes and house prices are generally below the Scottish average. House prices are among the fourth lowest council in Scotland. The figure below compares the income of West Dunbartonshire to Scotland and the United Kingdom. There is a difference of £5000 between West Dunbartonshire and the UK as a whole.

According to the Social and Economic Profile 2012/13 there were 39,800 people in employment at the end of September 2012. This represents 67.2% of the working age population. This is lower than last year's figure, and also 3.6% below the Scottish average. The level of unemployment has dropped to 6.1% compared to 3.9% for Scotland and 3.7% for the UK.

The number of people of working age on benefits is increasing. In 2011 in West Dunbartonshire 20% of working age people were claiming benefits as all or part of their income. This increased to 23.8% in 2012.

Annual Earnings 2010 Comparison



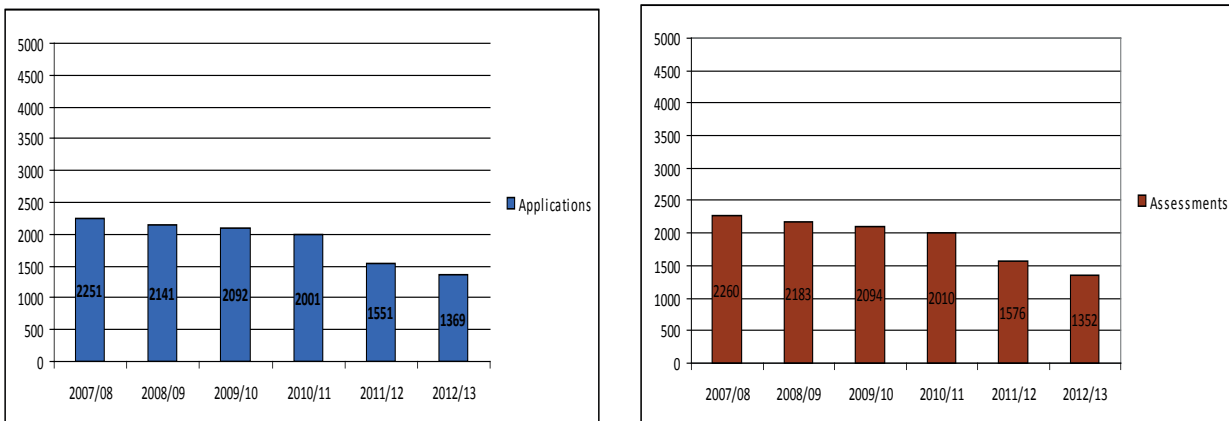
6.0 The scale of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire

The information below has been taken from the councils AVD system. This system records all homeless presentations and cases as HL 1 Data and provides the government with this information for analysis.

Figure 6.1 shows the number of presentations and the number of homeless assessments carried out since 2007/08 when the previous homelessness strategy began. From the figure it can be seen that there has been a significant decrease in

homeless presentations and assessments. From the start of the previous homeless strategy in 2007/08 and the start of the new homelessness strategy in 2012/13 there has been around a 40% reduction in homeless presentations and assessments. Between 2011/12 and 2012/13 there has been an 11% decrease in presentations and a 14% decrease in assessments. One reason for this is our growing homelessness prevention agenda.

Figure 6.1: Assessment and presentations since 2007/08 till 2012/13



6.1 Who is homeless in West Dunbartonshire?

Household type, Age and Gender

The figures below break down the presentations for 2012/13 by household type, age and gender. Over half (61%) of presentations to West Dunbartonshire council were made by single person households and just under a third (30%) were made by single parents, of which almost two thirds were female single parents. The total number of households with children amounted to 34% of all presentations. Of the single person households 64% were male.

Figure 6.2a: Presentations from females by households type and age

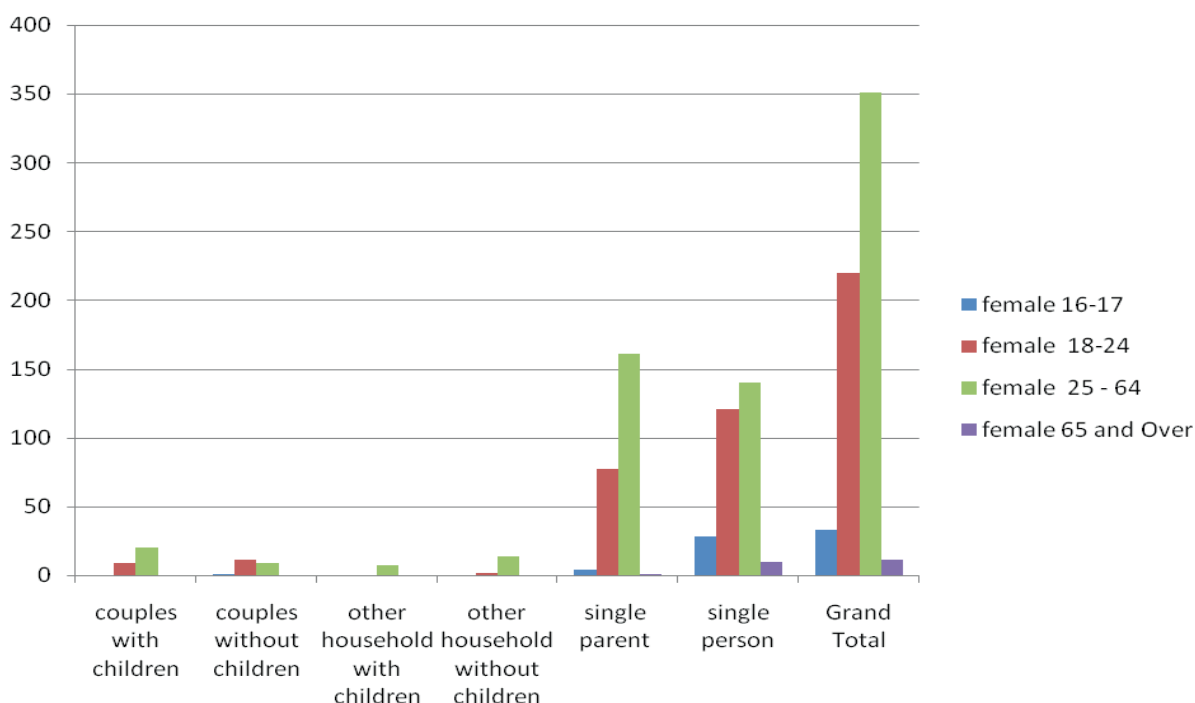
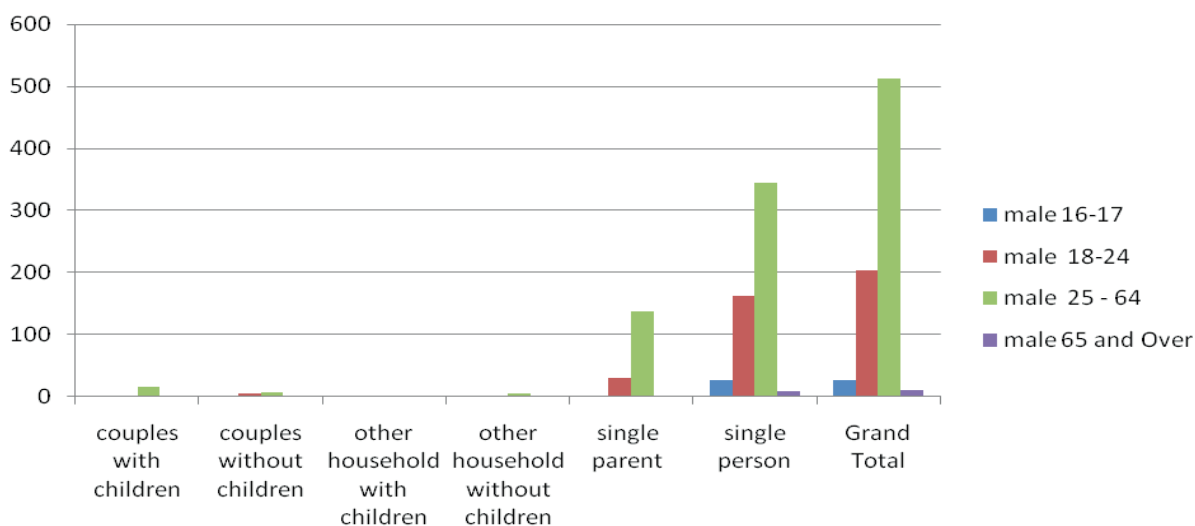


Figure 6.2b: Presentations from males by households type and age



6.2 Homeless Assessment Decisions

In January 2011 West Dunbartonshire successfully met the Scottish Government's 2012 homelessness target. This means that anyone who is assessed as unintentionally homeless will have the right to permanent accommodation. Therefore since January 2011 the council has had a 100% figure for households in priority need – one of

the first local authorities in Scotland to achieve this. Table 6.1 shows that of all the homeless presentations in 2012/13 68% were assessed as being homeless. Almost a quarter (22%) withdrew their application before an assessment decision and 7% were intentionally homeless.

Assessment decision	Number	%
Homeless/ potentially homeless unintentional	916	68%
Homeless/ potentially homeless intentional	99	7%
not homeless	30	2%
applicant resolved prior to assessment	3	0%
Lost	10	1%
withdrew application	294	22%
Total	1352	100%

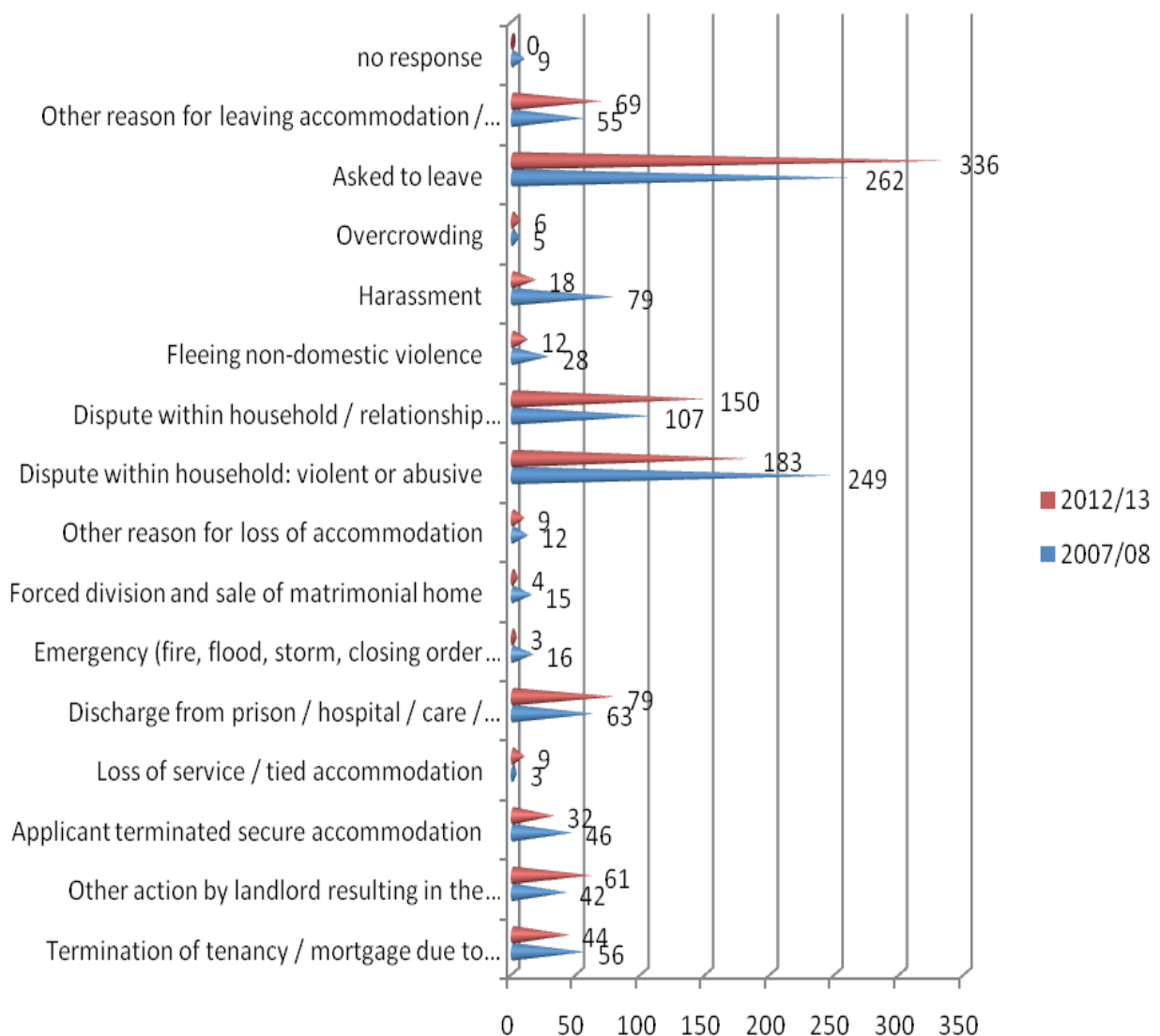
Table 6.1: Homeless assessment decision

6.3 Reasons for homelessness

Over a third of households who are assessed as homeless state their reason for being homeless as being asked to leave their current accommodation. Over half (54%) were from people aged 24 and under having been asked to leave by their parent/s. In 2012/13 a third of households said that their reason for homelessness was due to a relationship breakdown or a dispute within the household. Over half of these households also said that the dispute was violent, and of these 84% were female. Figure

6.3 shows reasons for homelessness in 2007/08 and 2012/13. From the figure it can be seen that the more common reasons such as asked to leave and disputes within household have stayed the same over the years. Of the households made homeless because of a dispute within the household where there was violence 79% were female. As noted above in 2012/13 this figure was 84% and therefore there has been an increase.

Figure 6.3: Reasons for homelessness of households assessed as homeless in 2007/08 and 2012/13



6.4 Housing Outcomes

Almost two thirds of households assessed as homeless (either unintentionally or intentional) received a tenancy with either West Dunbartonshire (52%) or with an RSL

(20%). Over half of these households (56%) were single persons, a third were under 25 years old. 11% of households assessed as homeless had an unknown housing outcome.

6.5 Support Needs

There were 283 households who were homeless who had a support need in 2012/13. A household can also have multiple support needs. Of the 283, 64% were assessed as having 1 support need, 23% as having 2 support needs and the rest of having 3 or more support needs. The following table shows the number of support needs that were identified during a homeless assessment. The majority of households who had a support need had an

addiction issue (29%) and/or required support for basic housing management skills (25%). The majority (72%) of households who were assessed as requiring support were single persons, two thirds of which were female. A fifth were single parents and just under a quarter (23%) were young people under 25 years. Half of the young people had a support need for basic housing management skills.

Table 6.5: Support needs

Support Need	all assessed	Assessed as homeless	%	Young person 16-24 (assessed as homeless)	%
Mental health	84	75	18%	17	16%
Learning Disability	14	12	3%	4	4%
Physical disability	39	39	9%	3	3%
Medical condition	73	69	16%	5	5%
Addiction	136	123	29%	24	23%
Basic Housing management skills	124	104	25%	53	50%
Total	470	422	100%	106	100%
%	100%	90%		23%	

6.6 Temporary Accommodation

Temporary Accommodation: The local authority has around 250 temporary flats. The flats are managed by the temporary accommodation officers who work closely with the caseworkers and the support team. The temporary accommodation workers visit the flats on a regular basis and speak to the homeless households to ensure that flats are up to standard.

Blue Triangle Housing Association has 3 supported accommodation projects across the Council area for people of all ages and gender. Action for Children has a young persons supported accommodation project providing beds for 12 young people.

Usage of Temporary Accommodation

- 877 homeless households were temporarily accommodated in WDC temporary accommodation, with an average stay of 84 days.
- In 2012/13 there were 117 homeless households who were accommodated in one of the above supported accommodation units, almost exclusively single person households.
- In 2012/13 72 homeless households were accommodated within them with an RSL temporary flat with an average stay of 89 days.
- Over the course of 2012/13 there were 156 homeless households placed in a B&B, none of which breached the unsuitable accommodation order. This is less than the previous year of 191.

Youth Homelessness

Young people presenting

Just over a third (483, 35%) of presentation were from households under the age of 25. Of these households 52% were female. Of the 59% single person households who presented 40% were from young people and almost a fifth of single parents were under the age of 25. There were 28 young couples, of which 11 had children.

Young people and Homeless assessment Decisions

As noted above about a third of homeless presentations are from young people. Young people also amounted 36% of all assessments carried out. From the table below it can be seen that 66% of homeless assessments of young people were assessed as being unintentionally homeless, over half of which were female. 2% of young people were assessed as being intentionally homeless. The majority of which were males. Worryingly a quarter of young people withdrew before assessment decisions and just over half were male.

Assessment Decision	Female 16-24	%	Males 16-24	%	Grand Total	%	% of overall assessments
Homeless/ potentially homeless unintentional	182	38%	136	28%	318	66%	24%
Homeless/ potentially homeless intentional	10	2%	14	3%	24	5%	2%
not homeless	7	1%	3	1%	10	2%	1%
applicant resolved prior to assessment	2	0%	1	0%	3	1%	0%
lost	0	0%	2	0%	2	0%	0%
withdrew application	55	11%	71	15%	126	26%	9%
Total	256	53%	227	47%	483	100%	36%

Youth Homelessness

Why do young people become homeless?

- 53% of young people were made homeless when they were asked to leave
- Almost a quarter left due a dispute within the household
- Over 50% of these were violent

What are the housing outcomes of young homeless people?

- Two thirds received tenancy from WDC (49%) or an RSL (20%)
- 12% had an unknown housing outcome

Young people and support needs

- 50% were assessed as having a support requirement for basic housing management skills. This is higher than the 25% of everyone assessed.
- 23% had a support requirement for an addiction, slightly lower than the overall 25% who had a support requirement for addiction.

7.0 Key Challenges

There are number of key challenges that face West Dunbartonshire over the next few years. One of these is the Welfare Reform.

7.1 Welfare Reform

What are the 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 2013 housing benefit of claimants at working age will be restricted if the property size is larger than the family size.
- From July 2013, 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.
- 2014 will also see the introduction of universal credits. Universal credit is a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring.

The new housing benefit and LHA changes will also affect supported accommodation. The UK 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.

7.2 What do these changes mean for West Dunbartonshire council?

The Council shares the widely held concerns over many of these measures and their potential impact on current and future tenants in both the social and private sectors. In particular, the new arrangements may present barriers to the delivery of the housing options approach agenda. The changes to the housing benefit will have a huge impact on housing need and homelessness in West Dunbartonshire. It is likely that there will be an increase in the number of homeless presentations and the number of housing applications. West Dunbartonshire does not have many one bedroom properties and a huge number of our tenants are single people. The result will be that many of our tenants may be unable to pay the "bedroom tax" (social sector size criteria) the non-dependent charge and could end up in arrears. Direct payments may also mean that tenants end up in arrears as they are unable to pay and have to use the money for food, heating etc. There may be increase hardship for many of our tenants, especially those on low incomes.

The council is committed to ensuring that there is as little impact as possible on our tenants and residents. There are currently a number of working groups set up, that include members for all partner organisations, that are looking at all aspects of welfare reform and the potential impact. The groups developed a training programme for all relevant staff and a plan for how we will communicate the changes to our tenants and residents.

There is an objective, *We will work in partnership to provide advice and assistance to reduce any negative impact incurred by tenants and residents as a result of welfare reform*, in the action plan that details how we intend to work with the our tenants and residents to ensure as little suffering comes from the changes.

7.3 Youth Homelessness

Youth homelessness is another major challenge facing West Dunbartonshire Council. As noted in Section 6, over a third of our homeless households are under the age of 25. The figures above show that over half of young people are made homeless as they have been asked to leave their accommodation, usually their parental home. The council has set up a mediation project to work with young people and their families to help prevent homelessness and it is hoped

that this will have a positive impact on youth homelessness. Another alarming statistic is that two thirds of homeless young people are assessed as having a support need for basic housing management skills, more proactive interventions at a pre-tenancy and early tenancy would contribute to improved successful tenancy sustainment and this is a key priority area within the Homelessness Strategy.

7.4 Housing Support Regulations

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 places a duty on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of homeless or threatened with homeless households where they believe that household is in need of

a prescribed housing support service. The act also states that local authorities must ensure that this support is provided. These regulations came into force on the 1st June 2013.

8.0 Strategic Aims

The strategic aims for this homeless strategy are based around four main themes and build on the success of the previous Homelessness Strategy.

The strategic aims are

1. To Prevent Homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire
 2. Improved access to support services and increased tenancy sustainment
 3. To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution
 4. To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach
-

Each aim will be looked at in turn over the next few pages:-

Strategic Aim 1: Prevention

1. To Prevent Homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire

An outcome of the Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016 is that Homelessness is minimised through prevention and early intervention. Preventing homelessness is a key priority for the Scottish Government and local authorities. West Dunbartonshire takes part in a number of prevention activities. The Council have staff that are fully trained to offer an extensive advice and information service. The Council has a number of discharge protocols in place for people leaving care, hospital and prison including a joint protocol for people leaving the new Low Moss prison. As part of this protocol prisoners will receive help in sustaining a tenancy. The Council has undertaken a Homeless Prevention self assessment and is implementing an action plan which we hope lead to further service improvements. The outcome of the self assessment has influenced this strategy.

The council recently introduces a new recording mechanism to record homeless prevention. This is a service improvement we would hope to build upon over the lifetime of this strategy.

Throughout this strategy we plan to continue to monitor the prevention methods that we have in place to ensure anyone at risk of homelessness receives the advice they require to prevent homelessness. We will ensure that advice and information is readily available to anyone who requires it free of charge.

West Dunbartonshire recognises that many of our homeless households are clients of other services, such as addictions and criminal justice. Therefore a joined up approach to preventing homelessness is essential to ensure success.

Objectives

- By March 2014 we will ensure the provisions of a comprehensive range of information, advice and assistance to prevent homelessness in West Dunbartonshire
- Continue to work with partners to raise awareness of homelessness issues in west Dunbartonshire to assist in the prevention of homelessness

Strategic Aim 2: Support

2. Improved access to support services and tenancy sustainment

It is well documented that by providing support and tenancy sustainment homelessness can be prevented. The new housing support regulations brought in by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 that places a duty on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of homeless households and to provide that support has been brought in as a homeless prevention method.

As noted above, this in itself is a challenge. The council is currently developing a support assessment tool and is looking at how it can record and monitor the support being provided, and the outcomes of the support.

This council is currently developing a new tenancy sustainment strategy with local RSLs in the area to ensure a common approach is adopted across the council.

Throughout the strategy the council will be working to ensure that there are support

services in place for a number of at risk from homelessness groups. These include

- Young people
- People experiencing domestic abuse
- People who have an addiction
- People in financial difficulty

Once again a joined up approach to homelessness is key to ensuring that homeless or potentially homeless households have access to support services. This includes the council continuing to work with:-

- CHCP to achieve Homelessness and Health action plan. This ensures that all homeless or potentially homeless households have access to health services.
- Addiction services and the joint addictions protocol
- Criminal justice and the prison protocol

Objectives

- Appropriate support is provided to prevent homelessness and to households who are homeless
- We will develop capacity so that people who have experienced homelessness can access appropriate employment, training and volunteering opportunities

Strategic Aim 3: Options

3. To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution

Housing Options: The Scottish Government and the Convention of Local Authorities (CoSLA) 2012 Steering Group held a joint seminar where they discussed homeless prevention actions, particularly focusing on housing options approaches. West Dunbartonshire is part of the West of Scotland working group looking at a joint approach to housing options.

The Scottish Housing Options 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 and West Dunbartonshire. Glasgow Housing Association is also included in the West Hub. The West Hub was awarded funding for 2011/12 and 2012/13. With part of this funding a joint protocol was developed and signed by all 8 members in October 2012. The signing of the protocol shows that there is a commitment across the west of Scotland to reducing and preventing homelessness and increasing tenancy sustainment

Locally, the introduction and development of a housing options approach to improve access to housing in West Dunbartonshire is one of our key aims over the next few years. A working group has also been set up in house to look at housing options in our area.

Strategic Aim 3: Options

In addition to developing a holistic housing options approach we are keen to expand choices for all households within West Dunbartonshire and this will include looking at access to the private rented sector, and also working with Shelter we will develop an Empty Homes Strategy, which will establish

the scale and extent of empty homes in West Dunbartonshire and will aim to prevent homes becoming empty long term in the first place and work with owners of empty homes to bring these properties back into use to meet demand and alleviate housing crisis.

Objectives

- Improved Access to housing for anyone who is in housing need
- More housing options for people who are in housing need will increase tenancy sustainment
- We will ensure mechanisms are in place to plan, manage and develop the supply of temporary accommodation

Strategic Aim 4: Partnership

4. To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

The final strategic aim is to ensure that we meet our obligations to homelessness as a local authority. In January 2011 West Dunbartonshire achieved the abolition of priority need. It was phased out gradually over a number of months.

It has already been mentioned in the above sections that joined up approach to homelessness is key to preventing homelessness and to increasing tenancy

sustainment. The previous strategy saw the development of a homeless and housing access forum. This greatly increased communications between different agencies and partners. This new strategy will see the introduction of a number of new methods of communication and information sharing. This includes the introduction of a web based forum for all members of the homelessness and housing access forum.

Objectives

- We are committed to meeting our legal duties as a local authority, to the Scottish Governments priorities and the priorities of West Dunbartonshire Council
- We will have improved communication with partner agencies to enhance services to prevent and alleviate homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.
- By April 2014, we will ensure all strategic and operational developments are consistent with equality and diversity agendas
- We will work in partnership to provide advice and assistance to reduce any negative impact incurred by tenants and residents as a result of welfare reform

9.0 Strategic Consultation

Aims of Consultation

The aim of the consultation was to consider the main issues surrounding the draft Homelessness Strategy and involve the residents of West Dunbartonshire, service

users, internal and external partners and other stakeholders, in shaping the final strategy.

Consultation Methods

There were a number of methods used to consult over the draft Homelessness Strategy.

Consultation work started in January 2013 with a survey was developed and shared with Housing Strategy, Homeless and Allocations, Estate Management and all members of the West Dunbartonshire Homelessness and Housing Access forum, which includes all internal (addictions, mental health, welfare rights etc) and external partners (such as the Blue Triangle, Alternatives, NHS, Women's Aid, etc). The survey was about what they felt were successes and shortcomings of the previous strategy and what they would like to see in the new one.

In March a series of consultation drop in events were held at various locations across the council. These were held in Clydebank, Alexandria and Dumbarton. The overall aims

of the strategy were discussed and views sought on what those attended felt were important to the strategy.

The supported accommodation projects were contacted to ensure that service users have their say in what they think is important and should be included within the strategy. In addition homelessness and housing was discussed with young people at the Youth Alliance consultation.

The action plan was discussed in detail at the Homelessness and Housing Access Forum to ensure that everything was covered. Amendments were made and another survey was developed and placed on the council website for anyone who wished to complete. It was also sent out to the Homelessness and Housing Access Forum alongside a draft strategy. This survey was live during the period 18th April until the 31st May.

9.0 Strategic Consultation

Consultation Results Summary

The first survey – January to March 2013

There were 93 respondents to the first survey. 30 respondents were from the homeless and allocations teams, and just under a third (28) were from a West Dunbartonshire council officer within another department, 27 respondents were from an external partner agency and finally 7 were housing officers. 1 person did not answer that question.

When discussing the aims of the previous strategy and whether they had been met, most respondents felt that the aims had been met. However others felt that the homelessness services had approached meeting the previous strategic aims, but some additional progress was needed to full achieve these.

Some respondents felt homelessness could not be prevented because of deprivation, welfare reform, lack of suitable housing and limited housing options in the area. Others felt that there is not enough supported accommodation in the area.

The use of the private rented sector had mixed responses. Some respondents said it was a housing option and that they had clients who had been housed in the sector successfully. Others felt there were affordability and security of tenure issues for clients and therefore not always suitable.

Some felt that there was a high repeat homeless problem and loss of tenancy in first 12 months because of a lack of housing options and housing support. Tenancies did not meet individuals housing need, therefore resulting in a loss of tenancy.

It was accepted by some respondents that there was some kind of partnership approach to homelessness and homelessness prevention but that a lot more work was also required. Some respondents felt that there was an inconsistent approach within the homelessness service. In addition to this it was felt that homelessness should be seen within a greater corporate responsibility.

The survey asked if the aims of the homeless strategy 2008-2013 should be the aims of the new strategy. Overwhelmingly respondents felt that the aims were still relevant. However welfare reform should play a part in the strategy and that more emphasis should be placed on homeless prevention of young people. There should be a more holistic approach to housing support and tenancy sustainment to both current and new tenants. In addition to this some respondents wanted to see a better standard to homeless accommodation, while some wanted to see more supported accommodation.

9.0 Strategic Consultation

When asked what they thought were the barriers to improving access to housing many felt the lack of suitable housing, lack of funding, not enough new builds and a lack of resources. In addition some respondents felt that there was a need for a restructure within homelessness services to match the agenda towards homelessness prevention.

Respondents would like to see new tenants with furnished packages, flooring, and help with decorating and housing support to enable them to maintain their tenancy. Some respondents would also like to see increased pre tenancy education.

Consultation Drop-in Sessions Summary

A series of consultation drop-in sessions took place in March. There were three sessions – one in Clydebank, one in Dumbarton and one in Alexandria. There was a concern at the sessions that there is not enough housing and that more should be getting done to increase the affordable housing supply. The mortgage to rent scheme, buy backs and the plan to build more social housing west Dunbartonshire was welcomed by those that attended. There was also a concern about the quality of the housing that was provided. Those that attended felt that more help should be available to people moving, such as incentives and furniture packages. It was felt these would help increase tenancy sustainment.

The drop in sessions were supportive of further education within schools about housing and homeless issues.

A concern that was echoed across the groups was the locations on temporary accommodation and the lack of support from housing that the households who live in them receive. This can sometimes result in problems with the tenancy.

There was also a concern around welfare reform - in particular around the "bedroom tax" and paying rent. It was felt that there were not enough pay points and that more pay points with a person would encourage people to pay their rent.

9.0 Strategic Consultation

Supported Accommodation Projects and the Youth Alliance Summary

The new Homelessness Strategy was discussed with residents in each of the four supported accommodation projects in West Dunbartonshire and with members of the West Dunbartonshire Youth Alliance. Although there was a mixture of ages the majority were young. There was a similar reaction at each project and with the youth alliance to the strategy.

- Mixed reaction to mediation. Some felt that it was a good idea and should be extended to age 25 at least. Others said they would not participate or that it would not have worked for them when they were younger. They would still have wanted their own home.
- Most service users liked the idea of peer support. Some said they would be interested in taking part when they had their own home.
- Most of the service users said they were aware where to come when they were homeless but not before to help prevent it. They just saw the housing as helping you get a house, not stopping you from losing it. They felt that some kind of advertising, for example through social media, or on buses, trains or in bus stops or stations.
- Service users who had been homeless before and had a house felt that they did not receive much or any follow on support. Those who were homeless for the first time were worried about this.
- Service users were also worried about employment and training opportunities to them as they felt there was a stigma against someone who was homeless.
- There was also a concern about furniture and decorating their new house. It was felt that furniture packages and being taught how and helped to decorate would be useful and help maintain their tenancy.
- There was great concern around welfare reform – particularly around “bedroom tax” and the lack of one bedroom properties available.
- Many of the service users who were in the supported accommodation were not keen to use the private rented sector to find a home but would be if the council were to manage the property and that they had some more security.
- The service users were asked if they had ever had any education in school about housing and managing a tenancy. The majority said they had not but felt it would have been useful to them, while others said it would not have prevented them from becoming homeless.
- The young people who were in prep for life and who were originally from the Clydebank area of the council said they felt isolated as they were away from their social networks. They said they spent a lot of their income on public transport going to Clydebank.
- All the service users felt that it would be good if the same housing caseworker came to them on a regular basis and held drop in sessions.

9.0 Strategic Consultation

Homelessness and Housing Access Forum Summary

A session was held with the Homelessness and Housing Access Forum. The forum consists of all internal and external partners including representatives from addiction, mental health, NHS, Blue triangle, prep for life and local housing associations. The points that were raised at the forum were;

- Start another youth homelessness working group to tackle youth homelessness
- Further work needs to be carried out into tenancy sustainment and housing support. It was felt that not enough was done in this area.
- Better use of social media - such as an app for mobile phones, advertising useful sites on facebook etc.
- Supportive of Peer support and mentoring
- Another homelessness conference would be a good idea following the success of the previous one.
- Supportive of youth mediation service that was recently introduced
- Open day sessions where members of the homeless forum and other organisations could attend to provide information to anyone who is looking for housing advice. These could be held in non-housing buildings, such as the Clydebank town hall.
- Better education in schools. This could involve peers going into schools who have been homeless themselves.
- A homelessness newsletter written by people who are, or have been homeless.
- To research whether we have the correct facilities for someone who is disabled and homeless

9.0 Strategic Consultation

Supported Accommodation Projects and the Youth Alliance Summary

From 18th April until the 31st May a survey was designed on survey monkey. This survey was sent to the homeless and housing access forum and was put on the website. There were a total of 23 responses.

Of the responses 14 were West Dunbartonshire Council employees, 8 were from an external agency and 1 was a member of the public.

The results were consistent to previous consultation responses.

Homeless prevention

- More affordable one bedroom properties available.
- More support to help maintain tenancy. Perhaps introduce resettlement tenancy support teams
- More training for homeless staff
- React to housing problems earlier
- Provide a dedicated advice service that all residents, whether renting in the social or private rented sector or an owner occupier, know where to get help at an early stage
- Fully implement the housing options agenda
- Housing is not just a homeless issue and more joint working with robust service level agreements and protocols in place to ensure more joint working
- Further develop the mediation service

Welfare Reform

- In terms of welfare reform it was felt that better management of housing stock
- advice available to anyone who is affected by it
- Some felt it was unfair to charge people for under occupation who are prepared to move but there is no property available to them.

Young Homeless Persons

- Supported accommodation units linked with appropriate services with further support /outreach once the person has moved into their own tenancy.
- Tighter pathways/ communication between service provision and the young person.
- Early intervention, such as mediation and education
- Promote the mediation service

Of the 23 people who completed the survey 21 agreed with the overall aims of the strategy.

Outcomes of the consultation

All of the above has been considered and the action plan has adapted to take the views of our service users, residents of west Dunbartonshire and our internal and external parties. A working group has been established to ensure the action plan is taken forward.

Action Plan

Aim 1: To Prevent Homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire

Objective 1.1	By March 2014 we will ensure the provisions of a comprehensive range of information, advice and assistance to prevent homelessness in West Dunbartonshire			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
1.1.1	We will develop a West Dunbartonshire Housing Options Guide in line with the Housing Options HUB	WDC, HEED	We will develop a web based portal where residents can seek person centred advice and assistance on their housing options	Mar 2014
1.1.2	Carry put a review of information provision to ensure accurate information and advice is readily available to anyone who requires it	WDC, HEED, All Homelessness Forum partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that information and advice is available on WDC website along with all our partner agency websites. • Ensure that all information and advice is accurate and up to date • Ensure leaflets are available in all offices • Ensure leaflets are available in different formats 	Oct 2013
1.1.3	Continue to review the approach to early intervention and prevention to ensure we identify those at risk of homelessness at an early stage, and provide support to minimise their risk of becoming homeless	WDC, HEED	Continue to implement the homeless prevention self assessment action plan	March 2014
1.1.4	We will review provision to ensure that there is ongoing access to independent advice and information	WDC – HEED, SHELTER and voluntary sector partners	Independent Housing advice and Information accessible to everyone in West Dunbartonshire.	December 2013
1.1.5	We will enhance and further develop protocols to reduce the risk of homelessness for those leaving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Armed forces ▪ Hospital ▪ Care ▪ Prison 	WDC, HEED	Protocols in place for each of the groups identified.	December 2013
1.1.6	We will attain the National Standards for Information and Advice	WDC, HEED	Role out the training Programme for Housing Information & Advice (National Standards)	March 2015

Action Plan

Aim 1: To Prevent Homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire

Objective 1.2	Continue to work with partners to raise awareness of homelessness issues in West Dunbartonshire to assist in the prevention of homelessness			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
1.2.1	We will develop and distribute briefing papers and fact sheets aimed at raising awareness of homelessness among our partner agencies.	WDC, HEED	This will allow partner agencies to identify trigger points to prevent homelessness	ongoing
1.2.2	We will hold an annual homelessness conference in West Dunbartonshire	WDC, HEED	Homelessness Conference to be held in November 2013	November 2013
1.2.3	We will use the Homelessness and Housing access forum to share good practise	WDC, HEED	Different partners to hold sessions on what their agency does and how it works	March 2014
1.2.4	We will deliver a housing education programme within all West Dunbartonshire secondary schools which incorporates budgeting and skills and money/debt advice	WDC, HEED	Housing education programme to be established in West Dunbartonshire	March 2014
1.2.5	We will carry out an annual rough sleeping count in West Dunbartonshire	WDC, HEED	Evidence that our approach has eradicated rough sleeping in West Dunbartonshire	March 2014

Action Plan

Aim 2: Improved access to support services and tenancy sustainment

Objective 2.1	Appropriate support is provided to prevent homelessness and to households who are homeless			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
2.1.1	Review housing support and develop a plan to ensure we meet the new housing support legislative requirements	WDC, HEED	We will meet the new legislative requirement by providing a housing support assessment and housing support to anyone who is unintentionally homeless and requires support We will carry out a support assessment on anyone who presents under the age of 25	August 2013
2.1.2	We will develop a support assessment and monitor the outcomes of housing support	WDC, HEED	We will monitor the outcomes of housing support through a recording tool We will carry out regular reviews of anyone who is receiving housing support	August 2013
2.1.3	We will work in partnership to prevent and reduce the incidence of homelessness in young people through improved access to support services and tenancy sustainment	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that young people have access to support services, including tenancy sustainment and housing support We will continue to offer mediation to young people where appropriate We will build and develop the mediation service We will re-institute the youth homelessness working group 	Dec 2013
2.1.4	We will work in partnership to prevent the homelessness of households who are experiencing domestic abuse through improved access to support services and tenancy sustainment	WDC, HEED, Women's Aid, Strathclyde Police	We will ensure that households experiencing domestic abuse have access to support services	Dec 2013
2.1.5	We will ensure early intervention to prevent the threat of homelessness as a result of financial difficulty, such as rent arrears and mortgage arrears through improved access to support services and tenancy sustainment	WDC, HEED, Welfare rights and money advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that adequate support and access to advice and information is in place to anyone at risk of becoming homeless due to financial difficulty Continue to role out the mortgage to rent scheme We will develop a financial assessment that can be used by caseworkers during their homeless assessment 	Dec 2013

Action Plan

Aim 2: Improved access to support services and tenancy sustainment

2.1.6	We will work in partnership to prevent homelessness and provide support to anyone who has an addiction	WDC, HEED, Addictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will review the current mechanisms to ensure that clear, referral, assessment, support planning and information sharing procedures are in place to assist individuals with addiction issues Ensure all staff, both in the homeless service and addictions, are fully trained in the Addictions protocol 	February 2014
2.1.7	Working group set up to look at best practice and develop a common approach to tenancy sustainment aimed at improving tenancy sustainment levels in West Dunbartonshire.	WDC, HEED, Local Housing Associations	The working group will develop a common approach and put it into action across West Dunbartonshire Council area	September 2013
2.1.8	Continue to work in partnership to achieve the actions set up in the West Dunbartonshire CHCP Health and Homelessness Action Plan	WDC, HEED, CHCP	Ensure that anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness has access to health services	Ongoing
2.1.9	We will ensure that anyone who is in prison has access to information and advice and support whilst in prison and upon liberation	WDC, HEED,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with the Low Moss Prison Protocol Continue to hold surgeries and offer advice and assistance to prisoners in Greenock Prison and Cortonvale Prison 	Dec 2013
2.1.10	We will promote physical and social wellbeing	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our support services will encourage positive social networks Our support services will promote healthy eating and physical activity 	Dec 2013
2.1.11	We will ensure that anyone who wants peer support	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to roll out the peer support program We will look to expand the peer support program 	March 2014
2.1.12	We will ensure that no one feels isolated in their new tenancy and that they have the resources available to them to make their house a home	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that support is in place for all new tenants where required We will investigate the idea of a training course for new young tenants We will investigate the idea of furnished packages We will investigate the idea of providing help to new tenants in decorating their tenancy 	

Action Plan

Aim 2: Improved access to support services and tenancy sustainment

Objective 2.2 We will develop capacity so that people who have experienced homelessness can access appropriate employment, training and volunteering opportunities				
Action	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
2.2.1	We will establish a partnership with Job Centre Plus and local Careers/Employment agencies to examine the scope for developing training and employment opportunities for homeless people.	WDC, HEED, DWP (Job Centre Plus), Careers Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Training and Employment opportunities for individuals who have experienced homelessness Develop partnership opportunities 	March 2014
2.2.2	We will improve links with the Job Centre Plus and develop appropriate protocols	WDC, HEED,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve links with job centre Develop appropriate protocols 	March 2014

Action Plan

Aim 3: To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution

Objective 3.1	Improved Access to housing for anyone who is in housing need			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
3.1.1	We will develop and deliver housing options approach in line with the work of the West of Scotland Housing Options HUB adopted locally	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will develop a web based portal where residents can seek person centred advice and assistance on their housing options We will provide housing options interviews Ensure individuals have access about potential housing solutions 	March 2014
3.1.2	To carry out the West of Scotland Housing Options HUB action plan	WDC, HEED, All HUB partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote knowledge sharing and learning across local authority boundary areas Ensure that staff delivering Housing Options are trained to a standard equitable across the West Hub Agree and Implement an effective measure to record Housing Options progress and the impact on Homelessness and housing services across the West HUB Mitigate the impact of Welfare Reforms through the sharing of practice Ensure that partnership working is a core element of the development of both West HUB initiatives and localised Housing Options services Undertake thematic studies in identified areas Explore opportunities for West HUB shared IT platforms / development opportunities 	To be agreed
3.1.3	We will continue to ensure allocations made to homeless households are suitable for their needs	WDC, HEED	Continue to monitor and review the allocations of housing to tenants to see if it meets their needs	March 2014
3.1.4	We will continue to monitor and review the % of WDC lets made to homeless households and set targets on an annual basis	WDC, HEED	Target of 40% of all council allocations to homeless households in 2012/13	March 2014

Action Plan

Aim 3: To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution

3.1.5	In partnership with our local RSL partners we will maximise the use of Section 5 referrals for homeless households to be housed. We will continue to monitor and review the % of WDC lets made to homeless households and set targets on an annual basis.	WDC, HEED	Target of 40% of all RSL allocations being made to homeless households in 2012/2013	March 2014
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Action Plan

Aim 3: To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution

Objective 3.2 More housing options for people who are in housing need will increase tenancy sustainment				
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
3.2.1	We will review routes into the private rented sector and develop a better understanding of the outcomes it can deliver for households who in housing need	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will increase the capacity of the rent deposit guarantee scheme Continue to build good relations with private landlords We will develop a private sector leasing scheme alongside the empty homes initiative to provide more settled accommodation Increase tenancy sustainment in the private sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase our knowledge about our private rented stock 	March 2015
3.2.2	Continue to promote Homeswapper – the mutual exchange mechanism – as a housing options for people in social housing wishing to move	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the choice for people who currently have a WDC tenancy and who wish to move to a house that better suits their needs Reduce hard to let void properties by advertising them on the Homeswapper website 	Dec 2013
3.2.3	Increase our housing stock		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to bid for funding to build more new properties We will roll out the buy back scheme We will continue to offer mortgage to rent to those in financial difficulty 	March 2016
3.2.4	Investigate the use of shared tenancies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research shared tenancies in temporary accommodation, council stock and in the private sector by looking at how other local authorities have implemented such schemes. 	June 2014

Action Plan

Aim 3: To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution

Objective 3.3	We will ensure mechanisms are in place to plan, manage and develop the supply of temporary accommodation			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
3.3.1	We will fully implement the Temporary Accommodation Strategy as adopted by Committee in November 2012	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure there is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households. Temporary accommodation is accessible, affordable and well managed. Support is provided where necessary, that meets the needs of homeless households in temporary accommodation. 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. The views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation are considered, especially for service development. We will ensure a consistent spread of temporary accommodation across West Dunbartonshire to avoid concentration and stabilise communities 	March 2016

Action Plan

Aim 4: To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

Objective 4.1	We are committed to meeting our legal duties as a local authority, to the Scottish Governments priorities and the priorities of West Dunbartonshire Council			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
4.1.1	We are committed to meeting our legal duties as a local authority	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to assess homelessness within West Dunbartonshire We will continue to provide advice and information free of charge We will continue to meet the rights of homeless households including the right to temporary accommodation We will meet the housing support legislation 	Ongoing
4.1.2	We are committed to working towards the Scottish Governments priorities	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will prevent homelessness where possible We will continue to record the relevant information about homeless assessments, prevention and temporary accommodation and submit these to the Scottish Government We will continue to introduce a housing options approach 	March 2016
4.1.3	We are committed to working towards the local priorities of West Dunbartonshire Council	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to reduce the number of young homeless households and meet the target of 25% by 2015/16 We will continue to monitor and review the homeless and allocations service We will continue to monitor and review our temporary accommodation stock to ensure it meets the needs of its service users 	March 2016
4.1.4	We will continue to implement the changes to housing benefit as a result of welfare reform with as little impact as possible on our tenants	WDC, HEED, Welfare Rights and Money Advice, Benefits and Revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will increase our housing options to meet the needs of anyone the affected by the changes We will prevent homelessness as a result of welfare reform We will provide mitigation and advice and assistance 	Ongoing

Action Plan

Aim 4: To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

Objective 4.2	We will have improved communication with partner agencies to enhance services to prevent and alleviate homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
4.2.1	We will continue to work in partnership through the multi-agency Homelessness and Housing Access Forum to implement the strategy	WDC, HEED, All forum members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of Homelessness Forum meetings and activities established • Share information about new policy and practise developments within different agencies • We will offer job shadowing between agencies • We will develop a web based forum for all members of the Homelessness and Housing Access Forum to sign up to share best practise 	March 2016
4.2.2	We will work with service users to enable us to work to improve our service	WDC, HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to collect and record customer satisfaction surveys • We will develop a Homeless Forum for service users to ensure that their voice is heard • We will develop a newsletter written and designed by homeless households for homeless households • Have regular visits to the supported accommodation projects 	May 2014
4.2.3	We will continue to work in partnership with all agencies involved to provide a joined up and person centred approach to anyone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless	WDC, HEED, All partner agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop an online directory that is monitored to ensure that the information is all accurate and up to date 	May 2014
4.2.4	We will ensure that all partners are aware of any new policy developments and that they are aware of any action plans that the WDC housing are working towards	WDC, HEED,	<p>We will ensure that all partners are aware of the following action plans and the monitoring of these plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local Housing Strategy and actions plan • The Temporary Accommodation Strategy and action plan • Homeless Prevention Action Plan • Housing Support Service Action Plan 	Ongoing

Action Plan

Aim 4: To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

Objective 4.3	By April 2014, we will ensure all strategic and operational developments are consistent with equality and diversity agendas			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
4.3.1	We will examine the outcomes of the research into housing needs of gypsies / travellers	WDC, HEED	Ensure our approach to preventing and alleviating homelessness is responsive to the needs of gypsies / travellers	May 2015
4.3.2	We will research housing and homelessness needs of LGBT people	WDC, HEED	Ensure our approach to preventing and alleviating homelessness is responsive to the needs of LGBT community	May 2015
4.3.3	We will research housing and homelessness needs of Minority Ethnic Groups	WDC, HEED	Ensure our approach to preventing and alleviating homelessness is responsive to the needs of minority ethnic community	May 2015
4.3.4	We will research housing and homelessness needs of disabled people	WDC, HEED	Ensure our approach to preventing and alleviating homelessness is responsive to the needs of disabled people	May 2015

Action Plan

Aim 4: To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

Objective 4.4	We will work in partnership to provide advice and assistance to reduce any negative impact incurred by tenants and residents as a result of welfare reform			
	Action	Who?	What we will achieve	When
4.4.1	We will work in partnership to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is affected by welfare reform	WDC, HEED	We have a series of working groups established that will continue to meet that look at various aspects of welfare reform Continue to share best practice with the members of the housing Options HUB Implement Housing Options agenda.	October 2014
4.4.2	We will ensure that all relevant staff are trained on the benefits changes	WDC, HEED	Continue to roll out our training program to all relevant WDC staff and external organisations	October 2014
4.4.3	We will protect one bedroom accommodation in West Dunbartonshire by seeking to grant pressured area status	WDC, HEED	Protect sales through the RTB to ensure supply of one bedroom accommodation to meet identified need	November 2013
4.4.4	We will Scenario plan in terms of the potential increases in homelessness presentations as a result of WR changes	WDC, HEED	Evidence base for future planning and service provision	September 2013
4.4.5	We will consider the capacity of social housing stock to minimise the incidence of this	WDC, HEED	Prioritise the building of suitably sized accommodation to meet need through the impact of welfare reform	March 2015
4.4.6	We will consider potential reduction in rental levels received from temporary accommodation as a result of benefit changes	WDC, HEED	New service structure New temporary accommodation models	December 2013

