

Introduction

Welcome to a series of regular briefings prepared by the Housing Strategy team on the big issues concerning housing. These briefings will be shared with staff, tenants and elected members and keep everyone up to date with regards the ever changing policy context that we are operating within.

The Housing Strategy section is responsible for:-

- Supporting the development of a culture of continuous improvement in Housing services and to facilitate opportunities to excel;
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for Housing and Community Safety Services within West Dunbartonshire;
- Developing the Council's housing strategy to ensure that it supports the delivery of our strategic priorities;
- Performance management within Housing and Community Safety services; and
- Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

For further information on Housing Strategy please telephone 01389 737889 or e-mail:

housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Background

Preventing homelessness is a key priority for the Scottish Government and local authorities. In 2010 the Scottish Government and the Convention of Local Authorities (CoSLA) 2012 Steering Group held a joint seminar where they discussed homeless prevention actions, particularly focusing on housing options approaches. At the seminar the Scottish Housing Options (SHO) funding program was launched.

The Scottish Housing Options Funding Program

In September 2010 the SHO Funding program had £500,000 of funding available over a 14 month period to enable housing options initiatives to get off the ground. The funding was to encourage local authorities to move towards a holistic housing options funding approach to prevent homelessness.

This funding led to the development of five *hubs* being set up across Scotland 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.

West of Scotland Housing Options Hub

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. Each year the hubs submit plans on how they plan on taking housing options forward in that coming year and receive funding to do so.

The ultimate aim of the West Hub is to implement a common housing options approach across the region.

Key Points

The West Hub developed and launched a joint protocol in 2012. This protocol defined housing options. The west Hub have all signed up to this.

Housing Options is.....

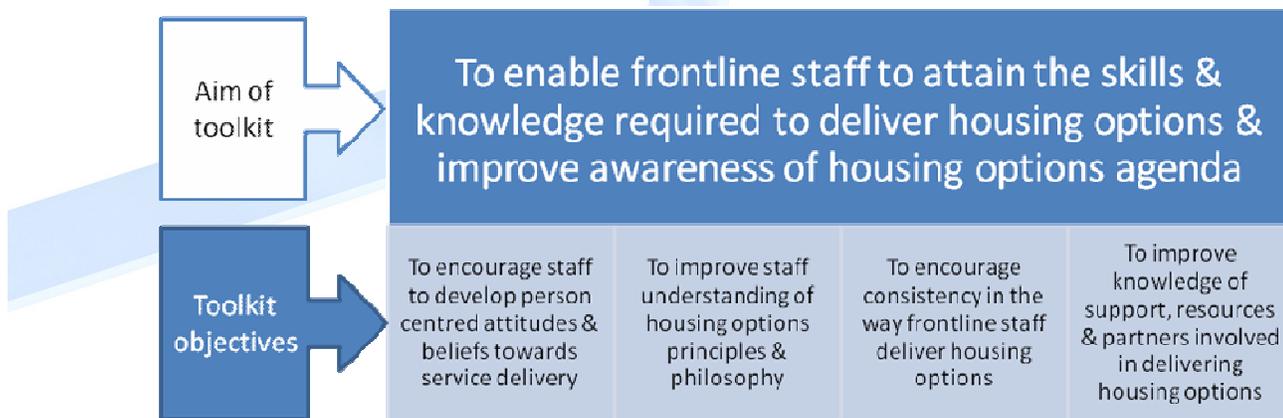
- *A service for anyone who makes a housing enquiry & is focussed on:*
 - Maintaining your current housing & preventing a housing crisis
 - allow you to make informed choices
 - identifying all options across all tenures
 - assisting you to realise your housing desires

Housing Options is not.....

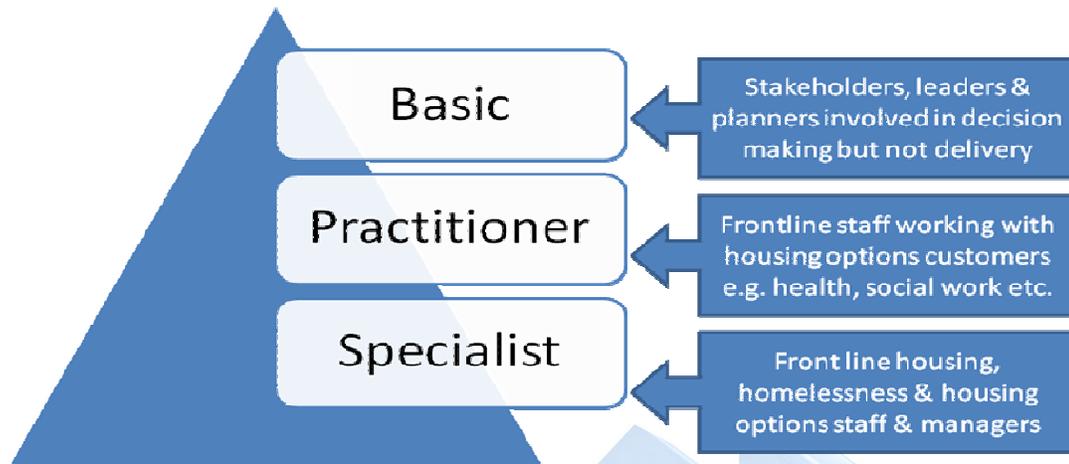
- *A service for homeless people only or focused on:*
 - preventing you from making a homeless application
 - the responsibility of a single agency
 - making an application for council or social housing only
- Training

The west HUB is working with Tayside, Fife and Central Hub to develop a training toolkit. Arneil Johnston has been commissioned to develop this toolkit. The modules have been agreed and they are currently hosting half day sessions on each module to determine what we are looking for from each one. Arneil Johnston are also collecting any training that each local authority has undertaken that was useful to see what training is out there and also to see what can be delivered from within the Hubs.

What do the west Hub want the training toolkit to achieve?



Who is the training for?



There are different levels of the training depending on who is getting it. The training toolkit will consist of 6 modules and can be seen below. However these are subject to change depending on the work by the consultants.

- Module 1: Introduction to housing options
- Module 2: Accessing accommodation
- Module 3: Maintaining existing accommodation
- Module 4: Health & wellbeing
- Module 5: Income & affordability
- Module 6: Employment & training

- IT

The west HUB developed a spec for an IT system to deliver housing options. This IT system was to have two aspects to it. A system that staff could use and a system that would allow members of the public to enquire about their housing issue. This spec will be ready to use when required.

- Performance Monitoring Framework

The West Hub is currently developing a performance monitoring framework between all its members. The Hub is currently undergoing a task to look at what frameworks are out there already, such as the Scottish Social Housing Charter so that there is not a duplication of work.

- SHR thematic studies

The Scottish Housing Regulator have undertaken thematic studies in 6 local authorities. They have investigated the use of housing options in each local authority.

The local authorities that have been chosen were all at different stages of implementing housing options. We are awaiting the results.

What it means for West Dunbartonshire Council?

Establishing a housing options approach is one of the actions in the homelessness strategy. It is also one of the drivers for change noted by HEED Committee when it agreed to conduct a structured review of the Homelessness service.

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. It is hoped that anyone with a housing enquiry will receive a housing options interview. This interview will look at the individual's situation. It may be that a homeless interview will be the best possible solution. Other housing options include:

- Staying in current accommodation
- Mutual exchange (Homeswapper)
- Owner occupation/ shared equity
- Mortgage to rent
- Council housing
- Housing Association housing
- Adaptations/ Telecare Solutions
- Private renting (including Rent Deposit)
- Supported accommodation
- Making a homelessness application

When the training toolkit is complete we will begin the roll out of the training.

For further information please contact

Jennifer MacMahon

Housing Strategy

01389 737721

jennifer.macmahon@west-dunbarton.gov.uk