

# Housing Strategy and Development Briefing Note

## Homelessness in Scotland

Quarterly Update (1 April – 30 June 2015)

October 2015



# Introduction

Welcome to a series of regular briefings prepared by the Housing Strategy and Development 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 and Development section is responsible for:-

- Providing the statutory strategic housing authority role within the local authority area;
- Strategic Housing Asset Management delivery;
- The delivery of the Council House New Build Programme and the delivery of the affordable Housing supply programme;
- 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;
- Service development within Housing and Community Safety services; and Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

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## Homelessness in Scotland: Quarterly Update (1 April – 30 June 2015)

### Main points

- There were 8,495 applications for homelessness in Scotland, West Dunbartonshire accounted for 3.2% of these. The downward trend in homeless applications appears to be slowing. However whilst some authorities are reporting an increase, others including West Dunbartonshire (with a 17% decrease) are seeing a reduction.
- Around 82% of cases are assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness; this is fairly consistent with the previous year. In West Dunbartonshire the figure for this quarter is around 74%. Percentages of those assessed as not homeless remain low (4% across Scotland and 2% in West Dunbartonshire). West Dunbartonshire's figures are higher (16%) than across Scotland (9%) for applications where contact has been lost/applications were withdrawn prior to assessment/ineligible for assistance.
- Whilst it appears that intentionality decisions are increasing across Scotland, these decisions remain low (5.4%) in West Dunbartonshire.
- Across Scotland and in West Dunbartonshire 83% of those assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness secure settled accommodation. Over half of this accommodation is provided by local authorities, in West Dunbartonshire its slightly higher (57%), however West Dunbartonshire sees a smaller contribution from RSLs (23% compared to 25% across Scotland) and from the private rented sector (2% compared to 7% across Scotland).
- Of those cases which were assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness, across Scotland 71% were recorded as being assessed under housing support regulations and 31% as having support provided. Whilst there may be differences across authorities in terms of interpretation and recording West Dunbartonshire is recording support assessments for around 54% of cases and only 6% as actually having support provided.
- Whilst the total number of households in temporary accommodation has been falling, in the most recent quarter there has been a slight increase of 5% across Scotland. However, in 19 local authorities the number of households in temporary accommodation in the last quarter did fall, including West Dunbartonshire where there was a 3% drop.
- There has been an increase in the number of households with children or with a member of the household pregnant and an increase in their number being accommodated in bed and breakfast. For this quarter West Dunbartonshire had 31 of these households in temporary accommodation but none of these were in bed and breakfast accommodation. This has been commended in a letter from the Minister of Housing and Welfare.

## Applications

There were 8,495 applications for homelessness assistance in Scotland during 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015. This is 7% lower than in the same period in 2014. *West Dunbartonshire accounted for 3.2% of these with 273 homelessness applications for this period.*

Whilst the downward trend in the number of homeless presentations across Scotland is slowing, for this quarter, there are large variations between local authorities. The largest reductions are in Glasgow City 17% lower and Edinburgh 9% lower. The largest increases are in Aberdeen City 15% higher, Stirling 20% and Fife 3% higher. *In West Dunbartonshire the number of presentations is 17% lower than those made in the same period in 2014.*

Whilst the impact of Housing Options/ homelessness prevention strategies adopted by most Local Authorities is attributed to the overall downward trend in the number of homeless presentations, West Dunbartonshire has yet to fully implement its Housing Options approach.

## Reasons for homelessness

There is little change in the underlying reasons for homelessness across Scotland:

- 27% cite 'asked to leave'
- 17% cite 'a dispute within their household/relationship breakdown which is non-violent'

*In West Dunbartonshire 30% cited 'asked to leave', 18% cited 'a dispute within their household/relationship breakdown non-violent' and 17% cited 'a dispute within their household violent/abusive'.*

Of the 52% who gave a reason for failing to maintain their accommodation;

- 43% said that it was not to do with the applicants' household
- 17% cited a lack of support from friends/family
- 16% reported financial difficulties/debt/unemployment
- 17% cited mental health reasons
- 8% physical health reasons

*In West Dunbartonshire the top three reasons given for failing to maintain accommodation were a) not to do with the applicants household, b) lack of support from friends/family and c) criminal/anti-social behaviour.*

## Assessments

The proportion of cases assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness remains unchanged.

- 82% were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness (*WDC 74%*)
- 4% were assessed as not homeless (*WDC 2%*)
- 4% had their homelessness resolved before the assessment was made (*WDC also 4%*)
- Applications where contact was lost before assessment, the application was withdrawn or the applicant was ineligible for assistance accounted for 9% (*WDC 16%*).

## Intentionality

Across Scotland there were 435 (6.6%) cases assessed as intentionally homeless (an increase of 41 decisions against the previous year). Intentionality has generally increased at a national level over the last decade. Between 1 April and 30 June 2015, there are a high proportion of intentionally homeless assessments in a number of Local Authorities - the highest figures were in Falkirk (23.2%), Aberdeen City (22.3%), Moray (16.8%), and Angus (14.7%). *West Dunbartonshire has a low percentage of cases assessed as intentionally homeless at 5.4% (10 cases); it has also been low over the previous three quarters.*

## Outcomes

Settled accommodation (private and social rented tenancies, including any non-permanent accommodation) was secured by 83% of applications where contact was maintained through to completion of the application. This proportion has remained stable for past eight years. *In West Dunbartonshire 104 cases or 83% of these cases secured settled accommodation.*

Across Scotland Local Authority accommodation comprises half (50%) of all outcomes for unintentionally homeless households, where contact was maintained. *In West Dunbartonshire it is just over half for this period with 57% local authority accommodation.*

A quarter (25%) of unintentionally homeless households secured Registered Social Landlord (RSL) accommodation and 2% secured non-permanent accommodation provided for the purpose of housing support. Private rented accommodation was taken up in 7% of cases. *Registered social landlords account for 23% and the private rented sector for 2% in West Dunbartonshire. There is no one securing non-permanent accommodation for this quarter in West Dunbartonshire.*

## **Housing Support**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 there were 5,827 cases assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness (*176 from West Dunbartonshire*). 71% were recorded as being assessed under the housing support regulations and 31% recorded as having support provided (*in West Dunbartonshire this was 54% and 6% respectively*).

There are large fluctuations across Local Authorities in the numbers who are making assessments under the regulations and the number to whom support is provided. Some authorities are making assessments for nearly all their closed cases, particularly Edinburgh, East Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway. In contrast to others recording very few assessments under the regulations, for example in Highland and East Dunbartonshire. *West Dunbartonshire is making assessments for around half of its closed cases.*

Even more variable is the extent to which support is then being provided: there are examples where nearly all those assessed are having support provided (for example in East Ayrshire, Midlothian and Aberdeenshire. In contrast, Edinburgh, Angus, West Lothian and Fife are not providing support for a large proportion of those assessed under the regulations (*West Dunbartonshire sits more in line with this group*).

## **Temporary Accommodation**

The Scottish total number of households in temporary accommodation has generally been reducing to around 10,000 per quarter, however at the end of the June 2015 quarter 10,666 households were in temporary accommodation – an increase of 5% from the same period last year.

At the Local Authority level the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation fell in 19 Local Authority areas, and increased in 13 Local Authority areas. The largest decreases were in West Lothian (-47 households) and Perth & Kinross (-45 households). *West Dunbartonshire decreased by 3% or 6 households.* The largest increases were in Glasgow City (+298 households) and Highland (+150 households).

## **Households with children in temporary accommodation**

On 30<sup>th</sup> June there were 2,805 households with children or with a household member pregnant in temporary accommodation (an increase of 11% from the same quarter last year). *There were 31 households from this group in temporary accommodation in West Dunbartonshire at the end of this period.*

There were 25 households with children or a pregnant member of the household in bed and breakfast accommodation, an increase of 11 households compared to the same date last year. *No households from this group were placed in B&B accommodation in West Dunbartonshire.*

## **Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014**

For this quarter 30 households were in unsuitable accommodation and there were five breaches of the order reported (*none of either in West Dunbartonshire*).

### **What it means for West Dunbartonshire**

As mentioned in previous briefings the Council accelerate its approach to the introduction of a comprehensive housing options service setting out and adding clarity to how this service will be delivered.

The Council should ensure that decisions around support assessments, provision of support and recording of this information is robust and in-line with good practice.

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