Stirling's
Local Housing Strategy
2012

Section 4

Homelessness

Consultation Report

October 2011

Consultation on Stirling's Local Housing Strategy 2012

This Consultation Report is one of five that are being produced as a contribution to the development of Stirling's Local Housing Strategy 2012. It is somewhat different from the four other reports; this is because it has been based on a draft strategy. The four other reports also have to fulfil a role as a strategy document.

The full list of Consultation Reports is as follows:-

1.   The Need & Demand for Housing

2.   House Condition, Energy Efficiency & Fuel Poverty

3.   Viable & Sustainable Communities

4.   Homelessness

5.   Particular Housing Needs

The Consultation Reports are available on the Council's LHS webpage

Homelessness : Update

This Consultation Report on Homelessness was originally drafted in October 2011. It is based on the Council's draft Homelessness Strategy 2011.

The draft Strategy was consulted on through Stirling's Homelessness Partnership. The Partnership involves the Council's partners in providing services to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The draft Strategy has been available for comment on Stirling Council's website since Spring 2011.

The Strategy and this Consultation Report were discussed at the 2011 Strategic Housing Partnership meetings on 16 June and 24 October.

The most important update since 2011 has been the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel on Homelessness.

Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

Since the Strategy was drafted, the Council's Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel on Homelessness has met and in February 2012 produced a report[1]. The recommendations of that report will influence the outcomes and actions that will be contained in the finalised version of Stirling's Local Housing Strategy 2012.

The recommendations were that the Council should:

1. Develop a wider range of interim support and accommodation including additional specialist hostel provision and improved support to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, for example, those with mental health, alcohol and drugs problems and chaotic clients (including those with alcohol and drug addictions and mental health issues) and reduce levels of repeat homelessness;

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[1] http://minutes.stirling.gov.uk/PDFs/ServiceDP/Agendas/ServiceDPAgenda.pdf

2. Develop plans to replace "The Bridge" with a purpose built hostel and an range of appropriate interim and move on accommodation more suited to the needs of young homeless people;

3. Develop a specific service development strategy and delivery framework to address rural homelessness including reviewing the appropriateness of the 2:1 allocations ratio in rural areas;

4. Develop an approach to wider service user engagement that builds on the "hear my voice" approach in respect of looked after young people and put in place arrangements to gather service user views on a regular basis. The principles of this exercise could be extrapolated for all groups;

5. Review the current joint working arrangements between Housing and Social Care with a view to developing a more customer focused approach across both services;

6. Review the joint working arrangements with partners and other agencies;

7. Review the configuration of the Housing Service as a whole with a view to providing a more accessible and better quality "front door" than that currently available at Springkerse House; and

8. Work with the Social Care service to review and improve joint working with the Health Service particularly in respect of those with mental health issues.

9. Develop a specific action plan to agree and take forward a range of issues which have emerged throughout the Ad-Hoc Scrutiny which Officers advise fall out with the scope of the Scrutiny Panel and merit further investigation.

The Panel is also of the view that in developing specialist services the Council should investigate working jointly with Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Councils where this would assist in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable clients.

For Further Information

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Homelessness

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The Council's approach to tackling the challenges presented by acute housing need and homelessness aims to be both inventive and sustainable. It recognises that homelessness is rarely just a housing problem and is frequently associated with a range of financial, social and medical issues.

During 2010/11, the Council developed a draft homelessness strategy which was published in February 2011[2]. This chapter of the LHS summarises that strategy. Because it is a summary, the chapter is shorter and more focused on outcomes than other chapters of the LHS where the text is not based on a strategy and a more descriptive approach has been required. During the development of the strategy, the Council consulted with partners through the Homelessness Partnership and is consulting with service users.

Outcomes

The strategy focuses on a number of high-level outcomes.

- Outcome 1 – Preventing homelessness occurring in the first place.
- Outcome 2 - Services are accessible to all and allow customers to seek information, advice and support easily and to get appropriate help in a crisis.
- Outcome 3 – The provision of comprehensive, person-centred housing options advice that allows customers to make planned and informed decisions about where they live.
- Outcome 4 - Appropriate temporary accommodation is available when required, and allows customers to prepare for settled and sustainable housing.
- Outcome 5 - The provision of sustainable solutions to housing need that make homelessness an isolated occurrence, not a way of life.

Links to the Single Outcome Agreement

The vision for homelessness described in Stirling's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) is reproduced below. This highlights the fact that housing need and homelessness have a wide impact on communities and that dealing effectively with the issues surrounding acute housing needs and homelessness is beneficial to Stirling as a whole.

The vision is that Stirling will be:
- A place with jobs and opportunities for all;
- A place where improved well being adds life to years, not just years to life;
- A place with safe, strong and resilient communities;
- A place with a high quality natural and built environment;
- A place where services that citizens receive are efficient, effective and customer focused;
- A place where people participate and take responsibility for their lives and communities;
- A place where equality of opportunity is promoted and diversity welcomed.

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[2]. The strategy is available on the Council website at
http://www.stirling.gov.uk/__documents/housing/local-housing-strategy/consultation_draft_homelessness_strategy_2011.pdf

Homelessness in Stirling : A Context Statement

Stirling launched its first homelessness strategy in 2003, with the vision of eliminating the problems of homelessness by 2012. The Appendices describe the achievements of that strategy since 2003.

In 2009/10, there were 955 approaches to Stirling Council for assistance, also known as homeless presentations. This represents just over 1% of the population of Stirling (although a small percentage of customers may make more than one presentation during the year). The number of presentations has increased gradually since 2007, which is against the national trend. Of the 955 households who presented as homeless in 2009/10, 611 (64%) were assessed as being statutorily homeless under the relevant legislation.

The number of homeless households assessed as being in priority need has increased gradually since 2007. This is largely in response to the Scottish Government's target of ending the priority need test by December 2012. As part of its response to the 2012 target, Stirling Council abolished the priority need test in February 2011. Therefore, any household assessed as being unintentionally homeless under the legislation is entitled to a permanent housing solution.

The types of households that present as homeless are generally single people. In 2009/10, 69% of applicants were single and of those, around two thirds were single men. The next largest group of applicants were lone parent households, the majority of whom were headed by a female. Before presenting as homeless, the majority of applicants had lived with their family, their friends or a partner (58%). The main reason for presentation was 'being asked to leave by family or friends' (44%). The second most common reason for homelessness was domestic violence (13%). This can include violence from a parent, sibling or other family member as well as a partner.

The profile of homeless households in Stirling is reasonably typical of the national picture. The majority of applicants are single, were previously living with family or friends and were asked to leave this accommodation. The development of the homelessness strategy needs to take account of this profile.

Drivers and Challenges – What does the Strategy need to take into account?

Homelessness is a live issue for housing policy both locally and nationally. Policies and other dynamics not directly related to housing can also affect homelessness. As outlined above, legislation provides a framework for ascertaining the type of assistance that local authorities must provide to households who approach them for help. The development of Stirling's homelessness strategy also needs to take account of a number of other policy areas, initiatives and challenges. These are outlined below.

Abolition of the priority need test: meeting the 2012 target – The Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003 includes the requirement that all homeless households assessed as being unintentionally homeless will be entitled to permanent accommodation from 31 December 2012. The priority need test assessed households according to vulnerability. As the context shows, this has led to an increase in the number of households for whom the Council has a duty to provide a permanent home. There are implications for fulfilling this duty when set against the supply of affordable housing in Stirling.

Preventing homelessness – The Scottish Government is promoting the role of homelessness prevention as a means of not only allowing local authorities to meet the 2012 target but also achieving better outcomes for customers by preventing housing crises and looking at the best solution to a range of issues that may result a household losing their home. The housing options approach, where a customer is presented with advice on a range of tenures, as well as linking into services that may affect someone's housing situation, such as employment, is a key component of this.

Welfare reform – The UK government has announced its intention to reform significantly the welfare benefits system and proposals are currently passing through the Westminster parliament. Entitlement to many benefits will change significantly, including housing benefit, local housing allowance and incapacity benefits. The Scottish Government and a number of third sector organisations have analysed the impact of the changes in Scotland, both locally and nationally. It is clear from their analysis that the changes will have a detrimental impact on the housing circumstances of a number of existing claimants in Stirling. They may also potentially limit the options of those who are seeking accommodation and are in receipt of benefits.

UK economy and public spending – The downturn in the global economy, combined with ongoing restrictions on public spending, will continue to have an impact on the ability of some households to maintain a home. Referrals to the Council made under Section 11 of the Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003, which are made when a household in non-council accommodation is facing eviction or repossession, have increased markedly since January 2011. Current economic forecasts are not indicating recovery in the short term so there will continue to an increase in households with a potential housing need.

Provision of support – As previously stated, homelessness is not always just a matter of not having a place to live. A desktop analysis of households assessed as homeless and in bed and breakfast accommodation conducted in July 2010 indicated that only around 10% of those customers had a housing need only. The majority had at least one support need that if not met, may impact on the sustainability of a future tenancy. A minority of customers have complex needs and it may be necessary to address their needs through a route other than a permanent tenancy.

Provision of temporary accommodation – The Council has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to homeless households where is required. In addition, time spent in temporary accommodation can provide an opportunity to provide support and ensure that customers receive a home that meets their needs. Temporary accommodation is currently provided through properties taken from mainstream Council and RSL stock, private sector leasing, hostels (primarily in urban Stirling) and bed and breakfast (B&B). An adequate supply of the right type of accommodation in the right areas, and minimal use of B&B, is required to ensure customers are ready to move on to a more permanent solution.

Rural homelessness – Stirling has a significant rural area and homelessness is as likely to occur here as it is in the urban part of the Council area. Research conducted in 2007 found that whilst the reasons for homelessness were broadly similar between rural and urban areas, those in the rural area were less likely to approach the Council for assistance. Reasons for this included stigma of homelessness in smaller communities; the Council is a less visible service provider in rural areas; lack of knowledge as to the help available and addressing homelessness in different ways in order to remain in the same community rather than being housed in the urban area.

Evidence suggests that these issues are still current. A strategy tackling homelessness therefore needs to address the specific needs of those living in rural communities.

Youth homelessness – A significant minority of those presenting as homeless are under 25. Analysis of local data shows that the majority of this group present following a non-violent dispute in the family home that precipitates a housing crisis. For many of these young people, a long stay in temporary accommodation followed by a tenancy for which they might be ill-prepared is not necessarily the best outcome. The Council and its partners, therefore, need to give consideration to other solutions and outcomes for this group.

Health – For a long time there has been recognition of the link between health and homelessness and that deterioration in health, both physical and mental, is a cause and symptom of housing need. Health services do not always meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness and in particular, access could be a problem as the design of services tends to be for those in stable accommodation. An essential component of successful resettlement is working to meet an applicant's health needs in full, and continuing to meet them once the applicant has secured permanent accommodation.

Advice and information - Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, local authorities have a duty to provide free and accessible advice and assistance to customers approaching them for assistance. A key component of achieving the homelessness outcomes is accessible, high quality advice and information that customers can access through a range of delivery methods and locations. Housing advice is important but other forms of advice may also have an impact on an individual's housing situation. These include welfare benefits, money advice, employment/training and health.

Role of the private rented sector – The private rented sector provides 14% of all homes in Stirling. Since 2001, the sector has expanded from 6% and has become, therefore, a vital source of accommodation in Stirling. The sector has suffered from an image problem due to the activities of a small number of unscrupulous landlords. Regulation of private sector landlords, however, has begun to restore confidence. In addition, some private landlords may be reluctant to consider prospective tenants who may have been homeless. Due to the shortage of housing in the social sector, it is important to consider the private sector as a housing option. It may provide some customers with additional choice in terms of area and property type.

Homeless Outcomes – Looking Forward

In order to achieve the homeless outcomes, a range of actions and initiatives will need to be progressed during the life of the strategy. Outlined below are a number of suggested actions. It is likely these will change as the strategy develops and the Partnership reviews its success over the next five years. Although the strategy lists proposed actions under individual outcomes, there are many overlaps and some actions will contribute to the achievement of more than one outcome.

Outcome 1

The Council and its partners prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place.

The Council's services, and those of its partners, prioritise early intervention and where possible, ensure that a housing crisis does not arise.

Information and advice – Many people do not approach homelessness services until they have reached a housing crisis. Whilst the Council has been successful in preventing homelessness for many customers, the perception is that the services offered are for homeless people. It is important, therefore, in publicity about services to give a higher profile to the role of housing advice and other assistance, such as money advice. See Action 1.1: Promotion of housing information and advice.

Location of the Homelessness Service – Local customer research has found some dissatisfaction with Springkerse House as the primary location for the delivery of homelessness services. These concerns primarily related to the remote location and the stigma attached to Springkerse House locally. Delivery of services from a more accessible location, and one less associated with homelessness, may encourage people to seek help earlier. See Action 1.2: Review location of the homelessness service.

Customer Research – The views and experiences of customers are a vital component of developing effective services and previous research provides valuable insights into ways in which it is possible to prevent homelessness. It will be important, therefore, to carry out further research amongst groups of customers and to use this work to develop approaches to prevention. See Action 1.3: Development of customer research to further determine homelessness triggers.

Working with Offenders – Analysis of homeless cases shows that many customers have a history of offending and custodial sentences that often leads to homelessness. The Council's prison outreach worker has developed effective links with prisons in the Forth Valley. It would be valuable to extend this to other establishments where offenders from Stirling serve their sentences. See Action 1.4: Further development of work with offenders.

Mediation for Young People – Young people in dispute with their family comprise a significant proportion of those presenting as homeless. Across Scotland and the UK, mediation has proved to be a useful tool in alleviating the immediate crisis and possibly leading to a planned move. It will be important, therefore, to explore the development of a young persons' mediation service. See Action 1.5: Development of a mediation service for young people.

Corporate Approach to Homelessness – Homelessness is not just a housing problem and it is increasing recognition that local authorities and their partners need to address the issues corporately. The council should review its corporate approach, therefore, to ensure that there is a shared understanding of homelessness and its triggers, that there is an identification of training needs and that information sharing protocols are developed. See Action 1.6: Review of the corporate approach to homelessness.

Practice Network - Many agencies in the Stirling area assist customers faced with a housing crisis. Each has developed its own knowledge base and expertises. Practice networks are an effective method of sharing information and good practice between practitioners and have proved valuable in other parts of Scotland. The Partnership should explore the development of such a network in Stirling. See Action 1.7: Development of a practice network.

Eviction Policy and Practice – The Council introduced a policy of managing rent arrears without evictions in 2009. As a result, the Council has developed procedures to allow people to remain in their tenancies. It would be valuable, therefore, to examine the experiences of the operation of this policy to establish if they could prevent homelessness more widely. See Action 1.8 : Learning from eviction policy and practice.

Outcome 2

Services are accessible to all and allow customers to seek information, advice and support easily and to get appropriate help in a crisis.

There is recognition of the fact that high quality, accessible services allow our customers to get the help they need easily and before they reach a crisis point. However, where an individual is in crisis, it is possible to make an effective response to that immediate need. There is also recognition of the fact that people access services in different ways and mechanisms are in place to ensure they can do this.

Customer Research – This outcome recognises that people have different preferences as to how they access services and previous research has explored this. Further research into access that also takes account of diverse and particular needs is therefore required to inform how the Council and its partners can improve access and meet customer preferences. See Action 2.1: Customer research on accessing advice services.

Housing Options Website –Some local authorities have developed an on-online housing options guide that they can update easily. These are a valuable resource for both customers and practitioners. The Council does not have such a guide but should. See Action 2.2: Development of a housing options website.

Location of Housing Advice Service – The Council currently delivers housing advice from the homelessness hostel at Springkerse House. Many local authorities are moving towards delivering housing advice services from a shop front location to improve accessibility and to encourage people to seek advice at an early stage. See Action 2.3: Review the location of the housing advice service.

Use of the One Stop Shop – The Council has recently opened a one stop shop in Stirling city centre. This facility provides access to a range of Council services and a member of housing staff is available for housing advice and signposting. The Council should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this service after one year of operation. See Action 2.4: Monitor the use of the one stop shop by housing customers.

Access in Rural Areas – Research conducted over the last four years has shown that access to housing services and advice in rural communities is limited. The Council should consider, therefore, alternative methods of improving access, through using existing facilities such as libraries. See Action 2.5: Review access to services in rural areas.

Cross Local Authority Boundary Access – Many customers access services in different local authority areas across the Forth Valley due to social connections or the delivery of some services, such as those offered by the NHS. The Council and its partners should therefore consider the establishment with neighbouring authorities of service delivery partnerships. See Action 2.6: Explore joint service delivery across local authority boundaries.

Assistance to Access Services – Some customers, particularly those with complex needs, can have difficulties in accessing and engaging with services. The Council needs to explore ways of improving the way in which it helps customers, therefore, and to develop methods of tracking outcomes. See Action 2.7: Helping customers with complex needs to access services.

Research into Provision of Advice - The Community Planning Partnership commissioned research to map advice and information services across the Council. The consultants produced their report in November 2010. They found that there was limited access in the rural area; a

need for the provision of housing advice at Homepoint Type III and a need for additional debt advice capacity. In particular, they identified advice for those at risk of homelessness to be a significant gap. The Council and its partners should use these findings in considering planning the future delivery of housing advice. See Action 2.8: Acting on findings from the Community Planning Partnership report on advice services in Stirling.

Mapping Services – Many agencies deliver advice and services to customers who are also in contact with homelessness services. In order to gain a clear picture of how these services operate and what they provide, the Council and its partners should undertake a mapping exercise and the results used to identify gaps, duplication and opportunities for collaborative working. See Action 2.9: Map services providing advice and assistance to those in housing need.

Homelessness Partnership Funding - The Homelessness Partnership currently funds a small number of projects. The Partnership may wish to review this funding in light of the new strategy. See Action 2.10: Review Homelessness Partnership funding.

Outcome 3

The Council and its partners provide comprehensive and person centred housing options allowing customers to make planned, informed decisions about where they live.

Housing options advice tailored to the needs of the individual plays an important role in achieving positive and sustainable outcomes for customers. Advisors are well-informed on the current housing situation across all tenures and are fully-trained in relevant legislation. They are also aware of the life circumstances that can affect an individual's housing situation and can help the customer plan appropriately.

Service Delivery – There is a division in the homelessness service between:-

• Homeless Assessment - assessing immediate need under legislation and providing advice

• Housing Options -providing advice to customers referred by assessment officers.

An integrated service would provide a holistic advice led service, as well as a single case officer who would deal with the customer at all stages. See Action 3.1: Review of the delivery of the Council Housing and Homelessness Services.

Housing Options Training – All housing staff should have the capacity and skills to deliver housing options advice, which may require the carrying out of a training needs analysis of all staff to assess levels of knowledge. The provision of comprehensive, up to date resources is also required to provide an effective housing options service. See Action 3.2: Provision of housing options training.

Learning from Good Practice –It is important to consider examples of good practice when developing the service and seeking service improvements,. Both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator promote the dissemination of good practice and highlighting what works elsewhere. There are also other sources of good practice, such as online communities and networks operated by SHBVN and Scottish Council for Single Homeless. All provide information for use in service development. See Action 3.3: Using good practice to inform service delivery.

Working with the Private Rented Sector - The Council should develop an approach to working effectively with the private rented sector in order to realise fully the capacity of the sector in addressing housing need. A positive relationship with the sector will also be required to ameliorate the effects of welfare benefit reform. See Action 3.4: Working with the Private Rented Sector.

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme - The current Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (operated for the Council by the Cowane's Trust), which provides access to private sector housing for those who do not have the funds for a deposit, has been operating for some time in a changing policy environment. The Partnership should carry out a full review of the scheme to ensure that it meets current priorities and good practice. See Action 3.5: Review of the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

Role of RSLs – Local RSLs have a role to play in delivering housing options advice. The nature of this role would need to be decided through discussions between the Council, RSLs and other partners but they will be able to prevent homelessness amongst their own tenants through the provision of housing options advice. See Action 3.6: Role of the RSLs in delivering housing options advice.

Landlord Forum : Linking into the existing Private Rented Sector Forum in Stirling, the Partnership should consider the establishment of a landlord forum which could promote relationships with the sector. This could operate in conjunction with a landlord accreditation scheme. Successful accreditation schemes assist in identifying poor landlords and can create a positive partnership between the Council and the private sector. See Action 3.7 Development of a forum for private sector landlords.

Links with Employability - The Partnership should consider the making stronger links between housing and employability services. The Scottish Homelessness Employability Network promotes employability as a sustainable route out of homelessness and the welfare reforms are likely to put greater emphasis on moving from welfare into work. The enhanced housing options approach, for example, provides assistance with employment, training and financial advice as well as housing. The Partnership should consider improving links to locally based services, such as the Council's Employability Service and Job Centre Plus. See Action 3.8: Establish links between homelessness services and employability services.

Outcome 4

Appropriate temporary accommodation is available when required, and allows customers to prepare for settled and sustainable housing.

Customers may need to stay in temporary accommodation while they wait for a more permanent solution to their housing need. Temporary accommodation is of high quality, is suitable for the support needs of the customer and prepares them for more settled accommodation. The Council uses B&B accommodation in emergencies only.

Use of Bed & Breakfast Accommodation - One of the aims of the temporary accommodation strategy is to end the routine use of B&B. This should also be a key component of achieving this outcome. The use of B&B and temporary accommodation generally also links strongly to other outcomes in this strategy, particularly prevention. See Action 4.1: Reduction in the use of B&Bs.

Providing Support in B&B – Analysis of customers placed in B&B shows that the vast majority require some form of support. Delivering support constructively whilst a customer is in B&B can be problematic for a number of reasons and therefore the Council will need to develop a procedure needs to ensure the delivery of support to this group. Gaining the views of customers who have experience of B&B and have support needs would be useful as part of the development process. See Action 4.2: Providing support in B&B accommodation.

Temporary Accommodation Stock - The supply and variety of temporary accommodation should meet, as far as possible, the profile of those who need to access it, including such factors as household size and support needs. The Council will need to consider the provision of further units of accommodation or a reconfiguration of existing supply to ensure that accommodation meets need. Collaboration with partners may assist in the process of providing the most effective form of support and specialist agencies may be able to provide advice on the design. See Action 4.3: Review of the stock of temporary accommodation.

Intensive Support - A group of customers requires intensive support before they are ready for taking on a tenancy in permanent housing. Social landlords need to consider the provision of interim, supported accommodation under the terms of the Interim Accommodation Regulations 2002 and therefore discharging duty until the support plan shows achievement of the outcomes sought. See Action 4.4: Providing intensive support to customers not ready for a tenancy.

Short Term Temporary Accommodation for Young People - The majority of young people who approach the Council for assistance present following a dispute with family or friends. The Council initially places many young people in B&B. This is often unsuitable and creates administrative problems if the young person spends occasional nights in the family home. The Council should give consideration therefore to providing a flexible, short term accommodation facility for young people linked to a mediation scheme. See Action 4.5: Providing short term crisis accommodation for young people.

Making the Best Use of Temporary Accommodation – Efforts to achieve the planned outcomes for prevention and housing options should have an impact on the number of people requiring temporary accommodation. The Partnership should closely monitor the impact and where necessary seek adjustment to the types of provision that exist and for which there are plans. In the first instance, the Council should give priority to ceasing the routine use of B&B. See Action 4.6: Making the best use of temporary accommodation according to changing need.

Outcome 5

The Council and its partners provide sustainable solutions to housing need that make homelessness an isolated occurrence rather than a way of life.

The Council and its partners find permanent solutions to housing need and meet customers' preferences as far as possible. All relevant support is in place to provide the customer with the best chance of succeeding in their tenancy.

Resettlement - Resettlement support provides a crucial level of support for new tenants. The current level of support provided to homeless customers is time limited and may have expired whilst the customer is still in temporary accommodation. The Council and its partners will need to review arrangements for supporting new tenancies. See Action 5.1: Provision of resettlement support for new tenancies.

Furniture Recycling - Continue to develop the furniture recycling project as an initiative to promote sustainable tenancies and a route into volunteering for homeless customers. See Action 5.2: Further development of the furniture recycling project.

Mapping Voluntary Sector Provision - The voluntary sector will have a key role to play in achieving this outcome, particularly with regard to supporting tenancies and providing services that increase personal well being. It is a recommendation of this strategy that that the Council and its partners map the services that are provided by the voluntary sector in Stirling and the wider Forth Valley area in order to identify any duplication or gaps in provision. The partnership can then use the mapping exercise as a basis for building stronger links within the sector. See Action 5.3: Mapping voluntary sector support provision for new tenants.

Using the provisions of Section 32A – Under Section 32A of the Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003 allows local authorities to discharge homeless duty through housing a customer in the private sector under certain circumstances. The Council and its partners should develop a procedure to make best use of this legislation and to liaise with private sector landlords to ensure that the procedure operates in accordance with Scottish Government guidance. See Action 5.4: Using the provisions of section 32A to discharge duty to the private sector.

Informing and Reviewing Customer Choices - The Council and its partners should counsel customers to ensure that their housing choices are sustainable and take into account support needs and social networks. This can also apply to negative as well as positive social influences. For customers who are awaiting offers of permanent accommodation, the customer and their caseworker should regularly review the customer's choices in order to meet any changes in circumstances. See Action 5.5: Reviewing customer housing choices to achieve positive outcomes.

Outcomes & Actions

Homelessness Outcome 1 : Homelessness is prevented from occurring in the first place

1.1   Promotion of housing information and advice

1.2   Review location of Homelessness Service

1.3   Development of customer research to determine further homelessness triggers

1.4   Further development of work with offenders

1.5   Mediation service for young people

1.6   Review of corporate approach to homelessness

1.7   Development of practice network

1.8   Learning from eviction policy and practice.

Homelessness Outcome 2 : Services are accessible to all and allow customers to seek information, advice and support easily and to get appropriate help in a crisis

2.1   Customer research on accessing advice services

2.2   Development of a housing options website

2.3   Location of housing advice services

2.4   Use of the One Stop Shop by housing customers

2.5   Accessing advice in rural areas

2.6   Joint service delivery across local authority boundaries

2.7   Helping customers with complex needs to access services

2.8   Acting on findings from Community Planning Partnership report on advice services

2.9   Mapping services providing advice and assistance to those in housing need

2.10 Review of homelessness partnership funding.

Homelessness Outcome 3 : Comprehensive and person centred housing options advice is provided and allows customers to make planned and informed decisions about where they live.

3.1   Review of delivery of the Council's housing and homelessness services

3.2   Provision of housing options advice training

3.3   Using good practice to inform service delivery

3.4   Working with the private rented sector

3.5   Review of the rent deposit guarantee scheme

3.6   Role of RSLs in delivering housing options advice

3.7   Development of a forum for private sector landlords

3.8   Establishment of links between homelessness and employability services.

Homelessness Outcome 4 : Appropriate temporary accommodation is available when required, and allows customers to prepare for settled and sustainable housing.

4.1   Reduction in the use of bed & breakfast accommodation

4.2   Providing support in bed & breakfast accommodation

4.3   Review stock of temporary accommodation

4.4   Providing intensive support to customers not ready for a tenancy

4.5   Providing short term accommodation for young people

4.6   Making best use of temporary accommodation according to changing need.

Homelessness Outcome 5 : Sustainable solutions to housing need are provided that make homelessness an isolated occurrence and not a way of life

5.1   Provision of resettlement support for new tenancies

5.2   Further development of the furniture recycling project

5.3   Mapping voluntary sector support provision for new tenants

5.4   Using the provisions of section 32A to discharge duty to the private sector

5.5   Reviewing customer housing choices to achieve positive outcomes.

Appendix 4.1

Outcomes relevant to Homelessness

Stirling Single Outcome Agreement[3]

In relation to homelessness, Stirling's Single Outcome Agreement identifies the following outcomes:-

• A good range and choice of housing, including affordable

• Improved care and support for those in need

• Improved life chances for Stirling's children, young people and families at risk.

Scottish Social Housing Charter[4]

In relation to homelessness, the Scottish Social Housing Charter identifies the following outcomes

11: Tenancy sustainment : Social landlords ensure that tenants get the information they need on how to access support options to help them remain in their home and can get suitable support including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

12: Homeless people : Local authorities perform their duties on homelessness so that homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice, are provided with suitable, good quality temporary or emergency accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep a home.

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[3] Council's Single Outcome Agreement 2008 - 11
[4] http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/media/34241/the%20scottish%20social%20housing%20charter.pdf

Homelessness Partnership 2003-2011 – What the Partnership has achieved

Stirling launched its first homelessness strategy in 2003, with the vision of eliminating the problems of homelessness by 2012. Since 2003, there have been a number of significant achievements. These are outlined below.

- **Housing Information and Advice Strategy** – The Council developed this strategy in 2004 to support the delivery of high quality and accessible housing information and advice. This was complemented by the delivery of Homepoint types I & II training, ensuring all housing and homelessness staff were trained in accordance with accredited national standards.

- **Mediation Service** – A service aiming to help homeless people establish family relationships that are more positive and possibly alleviate some causes of homelessness.

- **School Education Programme** – A DVD and group exercises detailing the experience of homelessness and delivered to S4/S5 pupils.

- **Housing Options Officers** – Recruited in 2008 as part of the Council's approach to homelessness prevention. The service and homelessness assessment are now integrated.

- **Homelessness Prevention Seminar** – an event held in 2007 to raise awareness, to share best practice and to discuss priorities. It attracted 70 delegates from local and national organisations.

- **Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme** – A scheme aimed to provide access to the private rented sector for those whose key barrier is the lack of a deposit.

- **Spend to Save Initiative** – A flexible, dedicated budget designed to provide practical, low cost solutions, such as payment of private sector rent arrears, to those threatened with homelessness.

- **Preventing Homelessness for Prisoners** – In 2010, The Council's Housing and Criminal Justice Social Work Services funded a prison outreach worker to provide advice to prisoners prior to liberation. In addition, the Council has introduced a procedure to sublet the tenancies of those serving a custodial sentence to prevent homelessness on release.

- **Additional Units of Temporary Accommodation** – The Council has achieved a significant increase in the provision of temporary accommodation through leasing from RSLs and the private sector and provision of new high quality hostel accommodation.

- **The Bridge Project** – An accommodation and support service for young people aged 16 to 25. The project provides supported self contained accommodation and outreach support to young people and provides comprehensive advice and assistance.

- **Change in the Allocations Policy** – The Council changed its allocations policy for homeless households in 2008. The Council now makes two in every three offers of housing to those assessed as statutorily homeless.

- **The Valley Furniture Recycling Project** – The Salvation Army, with support from the Council, established a furniture recycling project in 2010. The project provides high quality

second hand furniture at low cost, which is particularly beneficial for former homeless households.

- **Start-Up Stirling** : Start-Up Stirling, which provides starter packs for homeless households, has undertaken a pilot project to provide a befriending service.