
**Perth and Kinross Council
Homeless Strategy 2013 – 2014**

Foreword

Welcome to the Perth and Kinross Homelessness Strategy for the period 2013-14.

The purpose of this Strategy is to describe how the Council, in partnership with a range of stakeholders, will deliver homeless services in the coming year, building on existing improvements and identifying new and innovative ways of preventing homelessness and supporting people to find and sustain affordable housing.

In the period 2009-12, covered by the previous homeless strategy, Perth and Kinross radically transformed its homeless services, making them more responsive to individual needs and providing homeless people with the types and level of support they require in order to prevent homelessness re-occurring.

We have reported progress annually to the Council's Housing and Health Committees and at annual Homeless Conferences where the Council consulted with key partners and stakeholders.

One of our main challenges in the coming year will be the impact of Welfare Reform which will be significant to the way homeless services will be delivered in the future and to people who may need services and support. This interim one-year strategy has been developed to allow longer term strategic plans to be progressed once the effect of welfare reform is more fully understood.

As with recent strategies, we have made every effort to take into account the views of all stakeholders. We will though, welcome any further comments you may have.

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1. Introduction

This strategy sets out how Perth and Kinross Council and its partners will continue work together in 2013 - 2014 to prevent homelessness and respond to the needs of individuals and families facing homelessness.

2. Vision, themes and outcomes

“We are committed to providing a high quality customer focussed service accessible to all who are looking for information and assistance, providing a range of housing options enabling people to make informed choices and decisions about the options available to them.

We work in partnership with all agencies to try and prevent homelessness.

In the event that homelessness occurs, we will provide access to suitable, good quality temporary accommodation with the necessary support to help people access and sustain a home.”

The vision is at the heart of this strategy. The strategy is structured around 3 main themes and related outcomes. Each outcome corresponds to the Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes relevant to homelessness.

Theme 1: Housing Options/ Homeless Prevention

Outcomes:

- People looking for housing receive information to inform their choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.
- Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.
- People at risk of losing their homes receive advice on preventing homelessness, thereby leading to a reduction in homeless presentations.
- Homeless people receive prompt and easy access to help and advice

Theme 2: Providing temporary, resettled and permanent accommodation

Outcomes:

- Homeless people are provided with suitable, good quality temporary or emergency accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered support to help them get and keep a home.

Theme 3: Tenancy Sustainment / Homeless Support

Outcomes:

- Tenants and customers receive the information they need on how to access accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered continuing support to help them find and sustain a home.
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3. The Legal and Strategic Framework

The delivery of homeless services operates within the Council's corporate strategy, local plans and priorities and the national and UK legislative framework. An overview of relevant legislation that impacts on the delivery of homeless services is detailed in Appendix B.

The Council's legal responsibilities to people presenting as homeless as laid down in the legislation differs depending on the outcome of a comprehensive homeless assessment. In summary, the Council has a legal responsibility to:

- Provide advice and assistance and prevent and alleviate homelessness wherever possible
- Assess the circumstances of households seeking homelessness assistance
- Provide suitable temporary accommodation
- Assess the support needs of all homeless households and provide support
- Provide suitable settled accommodation to alleviate the homelessness

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 prohibits the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for households with children or pregnant women.

The changes to the categories of priority need were introduced by the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 which came into effect in 2004 when new priority need groups were introduced. The Act also detailed the longer term provision that priority need would be phased out by 2012 by which time all local authorities in Scotland would have a duty to provide permanent housing to all homeless households. In November 2012 the Scottish Parliament voted to approve the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) Scotland Order 2012.

The Housing (Scotland) 2010 established a new Support Duty which comes into effect in January 2014.

4. Achievements over the past three years

During the time of the previous strategy (2009-2012), the Council and partners achieved significant and improvements in the quality and delivery of homeless services throughout Perth and Kinross in relation to prevention, accommodation and support. These included:

- Implementing the Scottish Government's priority need 2012 target a year ahead of schedule in October 2011.
 - Implementing Housing Options with a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, thereby preventing homelessness and reducing homeless presentations by 24% over the last 2 years.
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- Eliminating the use of unsuitable and expensive Bed and Breakfast for temporary accommodation.
- Developing Rio House and satellite properties for families with children.
- Re-provisioning Tayview House to provide self contained temporary accommodation for young people.
- Developing units of accommodation at St Catherine's Square for single homeless people.
- Implementing a range of initiatives to provide greater access to the private rented sector.
- Establishing strong partnerships and developing a range of joint working protocols and the delivery of regular homeless surgeries.
- Implementing a range of ways to engage with, and received feedback from, homeless people.
- Developing a number of prevention measures, including work within schools, Perth college, @ Scott Street and City Base.
- Making significant improvements in relation to assessment timescales, lost contacts, rough sleeping, repeat homelessness and tenancy sustainability.

The Council's homeless services were re-inspected in 2010 by the Scottish Housing Regulator and received a B grade, making it only one of 5 Scottish Local Authorities to have obtained this grade or above. The Regulator found that the homeless services had many strengths and commented that many areas of service delivery were either excellent or very good.

The Care Inspectorate carried out an unannounced inspection of the Homeless Support Service in November 2011 and awarded the Council Excellent and Very Good for the areas inspected – Quality of Care and Support and Quality of Staffing, with no requirements or recommendations.

The Homeless Service has been recognised for its delivery of excellent and innovative services and received a number of the Council's Securing the Future Awards in recent years. These included Greymfriars House, Homeless Service, Prisoner Protocols, Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme; 'Moving In / Moving On', Private Sector Leasing.

5. Key Challenges

Despite these major improvements, the delivery of homeless services continues to present significant challenges which are expected to become more acute as a result of the economic downturn, Welfare Reform and the lack of settled housing options for individuals and families. A number of influences and key challenges have dictated the priorities and intended outcomes of this strategy, these include:

Key Challenge: The Scottish Social Housing Charter

As required by Section 31 of the Housing Scotland Act 2010, the Scottish Social Housing Charter, which came into effect in April 2012, sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords are required to achieve when performing their

housing activities. The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting how well social landlords achieve the Charter's outcomes. The outcomes within this strategy have been aligned with the Charter to ensure that the Council and its partners collectively work to achieve the outcomes.

Key Challenge: Public Sector Reform

The challenges and priorities outlined in this strategy fit within Public Sector Reform agenda. A focus on homelessness prevention activity over the last 2 years has already yielded very positive outcomes. A robust approach to performance improvement through the Homeless Strategy's monitoring framework and the Homeless Service's performance management and quality assurance frameworks have facilitated improvements across all areas.

The commitment to achieving positive outcomes for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness is reflected in the strategy's focus on prevention and early intervention.

Key Challenge: Welfare Reform

The changes to welfare benefits arising from Welfare Reform pose unprecedented challenges to the Council and its partners in the delivery of homeless services. Significantly reduced incomes arising from the range of benefit changes place a risk of homelessness for many households who will be unable to meet housing costs and may face homelessness or poor quality, overcrowded housing situations. Restricted access to the private sector, for single people aged under 35 years have necessitated new and innovative accommodation options. The 'bedroom tax' may result in an increase in rent arrears and place greater pressure on demand for 1 bed-roomed accommodation, an area where the Council is already unable to meet the level of demand.

Key Challenge: Housing Options

In recent years Local Authorities across Scotland have been developing and implementing Housing Options services as a way of preventing homelessness, improving tenancy sustainment and delivering best practice for people in housing need. The Scottish Government's priority need 2012 target has meant that Local Authorities have been required to take a much more proactive approach to homelessness prevention, and housing options has been recognised as a key tool to meeting the Government's target. Whilst the homeless service has had significant success with its homeless prevention activity over the last 2 years, this is an area of work that is resource intensive. Through the actions identified within the strategy action plan, early intervention and prevention will continue to be prioritised.

Key Challenge: Abolition of priority need test

In November 2012 the Scottish Parliament voted to approve the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012. This means that all councils across Scotland are required to provide settled accommodation to anyone who is unintentionally homeless. Whilst Perth and Kinross Council have made significant progress in accepting all homeless households as priority need, meeting

the duty to provide settled accommodation to all of these households continues to be a significant challenge.

Key Challenge: Securing settled accommodation

During 2011/12 only 50.3 % of homeless households received a tenancy in either a Council or Housing Association property. This is below the Scottish average of 61%. As a result, the number of homeless households (to whom the Council has a statutory duty to secure settled accommodation) has been rising each month. In April 2010, 332 homeless households were awaiting a secure offer, by April 2011 this figure had risen to 577. The figure is currently at its highest ever level, with 659 homeless households waiting for secure accommodation. Between April 2011 and December 2012, 325 properties were let to homeless people.

Concurrently, the average time to discharge the Council's homeless duty has increased from 31 weeks in 2010 /11, to 40.35 weeks in 2011/12 and is currently at 48 weeks. This is significantly longer than the national average in 2011/12 of 28 weeks.

One of our key priorities is to continue to review allocations of social rented accommodation to homeless households and work with partners to explore opportunities to facilitate additional units of accommodation so that homeless people can access suitable settled accommodation within a reasonable timescale.

Key Challenge: Support duty

The provision of housing support to homeless households in Scotland forms part of the Government's commitment to tackling and preventing homelessness. A significant number of homeless applicants have support needs and it is recognised that this support is important in helping people sustain tenancies and provide better outcomes for them and their families. Although the scope and level of such needs may vary, requirements can include assistance with basic housing management, independent living, mental and physical health issues and substance misuse.

In order to improve the way support needs among homeless applicants are identified and addressed, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 established a new Statutory Duty which requires local authorities to carry out an assessment of the housing support needs of all homeless applicants who are entitled to settled accommodation, and where there is reason to believe that the applicant may be in need of prescribed housing support services. The Duty, which comes into effect in June 2013, also requires local authorities to make sure that prescribed housing support services are provided to those assessed as being in need of them.

While Perth and Kinross Council already fully meets the requirements of this legislation, challenging financial times for public services will require services to continue to work together to ensure the cohesive delivery of support, removing inefficiencies and duplication. Housing Management practices within the Council and for Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners will need to have a greater focus on support and tenancy sustainability enabling community care and homeless support

teams to focus on more vulnerable households and the delivery of support to private sector households.

Key Challenge: Early Years

Launched by the Scottish Government in October 2012, the Early Years Collaborative aims to accelerate the practical implementation of 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) and the Early Years Framework across Scotland reducing inequalities and delivering improved outcomes for children.

Providing housing fulfils the basic human need for a roof over our head and many partners find it difficult to address critical issues, such as substance misuse, parenting skills and health issues, until the home situation is stabilised. The impact of poor quality housing, overcrowding and homelessness on health, employment opportunities, educational attainment and children's outcomes in life are very real.

Although the Council has made significant improvements in reducing the impact of homelessness on children through the elimination of the use of Bed and Breakfast, the provision of high standards of temporary accommodation and the delivery of excellent homeless support services this is an area that will remain a priority. The strategy will ensure that the delivery of homeless services across Perth and Kinross supports the Council's commitment to improving outcomes through the Early Years' Collaborative.

6. Profile of Homelessness in Perth and Kinross

Financial Expenditure

The majority of expenditure in delivering homeless services relates to the provision of temporary accommodation. Income received through rents and service charges ensures that net expenditure is actually substantially less. Expenditure through Housing Support Grant enables the delivery of a wide range of floating support and accommodation based support provided by partners in the voluntary sector. Other grants help deliver services such as advice, information, day, outreach and street work services which complement the work undertaken in these areas by the Council itself.

Welfare Reform will impact on the delivery of homeless services as many elements of service delivery are funded through income currently received through housing benefit. In forthcoming months as the changes arising from welfare reform are fully realised this will be an area for future review and development, ensuring we have a service that is affordable and sustainable. Priority will need to be to develop more mainstream accommodation, assisting the throughput of people from temporary to settled accommodation.

Perth and Kinross Council Expenditure on Services to Homeless and Potentially Households 2012/13 (£m Gross)

Service	£m 2012/13
(1) Temporary Accommodation (Dispersed and bed and breakfast)	3.219
(2) Temporary Accommodation (Hostels)	1.025
(3) Administration	0.703
(4) Housing Support Grant (Floating support)	1.144
(5) Housing Support Grant (Accommodation with support)	1.087
(6) Other Grant Funding (day services/outreach/street work)	0.417
Total	7.595

Source: Perth and Kinross Council

Profile of homelessness

This section gives an overview of homelessness within Perth and Kinross and sets the extent of homelessness and outcomes within the national context. (More detailed information is detailed within Appendix 2). It indicates:

- A reduction in homeless applications, including from younger people
- An increase in homelessness due to termination of tenancy due to default payments
- A decrease in single people presenting and an increase in single parents presenting as homeless
- A lower proportion of homeless people were placed in Council or Housing Association tenancies compared to the national figures

Table 1: Numbers of homelessness presentations, assessments and closed cases 2010/11- 2011/12

Year	2010/11	2011/12	% change
Number presenting	1,128	977	-13%
Number cases assessed in year	1,153	977	-15%
Number cases closed in year	933	948	+2%

Source –Scottish Government - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross - Year ending March 2012

Between 2010/11 and 2011/12 Perth and Kinross experienced a reduction of 13% in homeless applications. This decline was replicated across Scotland with an overall reduction of 19%.

The **main reasons for households becoming homeless** have largely remained unchanged, with relationship breakdown being the main reason for homelessness (household dispute, 29.2%) (asked to leave, 26.7%).

A significant difference in reasons for homelessness between 10/11 and 11/12 was the increase due to “termination due to default in payments”. At 8% it is now the 4th most common reason for homelessness in Perth and Kinross, compared to 7th most common reason last year and this is higher than the Scottish average of 5%. The difference is likely due to the fact that Perth and Kinross has a higher proportion of owner-occupied properties than other Local Authorities.

Table 2: Who presented as homeless in 2010/11 - 2011/12?

Household Type	2010/11	% applications	2011/12	% applications
Single person	636	56	513	53
Single parent	317	28	303	31
Couple	72	6	72	7
Couple with children	56	5	73	7
Other	21	2	9	1
Other with children	26	2	7	1
All	1,128		977	

Source - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross 2011/12- Year ending March 2012

The table above shows that In 2011/12, 53% of applicants were single people and 31% were single parents. Nationally and locally, the profile of households has remained similar over the last 10 years. During 2012/13 an average of 72 people presented as homeless, which if this continues, will equate to 864 presentations in the year, a 23% reduction since 2010/11.

Table 3: Age of homeless applications

Household age of main applicant	2010/11	% all applications	2011/12	% all applications	change
16/17 yrs	92	8.1	58	5.9	-2.2
18-25 yrs	399	35.3	318	32.5	-2.8
26-59 yrs	588	52.1	556	56.9	+4.8
60+ yrs	49	4.3	45	4.6	+0.3
	1,128	100%	977	100%	

Source - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross 2011/12 Year ending March 2012

Homeless presentations reduced by 13% in 2011/12 and the table above shows that this decline has mainly been in the younger age groups. The decline in youth homelessness is a welcome development and can be attributed to preventative work in schools, partnership working with Education and Children’s Services and greater levels of support being given to young people in their accommodation.

Table 4: Outcomes for applicants assessed (%)

Outcome	2010/11	2011/12
Scottish Secure Tenancy	40.8%	50.3%
Returned to previous/ friends/ vol. org.	17.6	16.2%
Private Rented Tenancy	6.9	7.4%
Contact lost before duty discharge	5.7	3.2%
Known Other – including Hostel; Women’s	5.1	3.5%

Refuge; Bed and Breakfast; Residential care/nursing home/shared supported		
Other or Not Known	1.8%	0.6%
No duty owed to applicant	22.0%	18.9%
Total		100

Source - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross 2011/12 Year ending March 2012

The table above details the final outcomes for homeless people and highlights that 50.3% received a tenancy in either a Council, or Housing Association property, which is lower than the Scottish average of 61%. The Private Sector within the Perth and Kinross provided settled accommodation for 7.4% of homeless households, similar to the Scottish average (7.7%).

7. The Strategy's Three Themes

7.1 This next section covers each of the three themes of the strategy, summarising achievements, challenges, performance and future actions.

Theme 1: Housing Options/ Homeless Prevention

Outcomes:

- People looking for housing receive information to inform their choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.
- Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.
- People at risk of losing their homes receive advice on preventing homelessness, thereby leading to a reduction in homeless presentations.
- Homeless people receive prompt and easy access to help and advice

[Feedback from user consultation]

'Everyone's circumstances are different – mediation won't work for everyone as people want to leave as it is not safe to stay in the home i.e. family have alcohol/drug problems'

Over the past three years significant improvements have been made in preventing homelessness. The Scottish Housing Regulator stated that *"The Council's approach to providing advice and preventing homelessness is excellent. It provides a good range of support to its tenants and has an excellent range of initiatives to help it to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies."*

Local Authorities across Scotland have been developing and implementing Housing Options services as a key way of preventing homelessness, improving tenancy sustainment and delivering best practice for people in housing need. The Scottish Government's priority need 2012 target has meant that Local Authorities have been required to take a much more proactive approach to homelessness prevention and housing options has been recognised as a key tool to meeting the Government's target. Lead responsibility for housing options is within the Homeless Service within

Perth and Kinross which has facilitated a greater focus on homeless prevention and better alignment with the 2012 objectives.

The Council has introduced a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness, including:

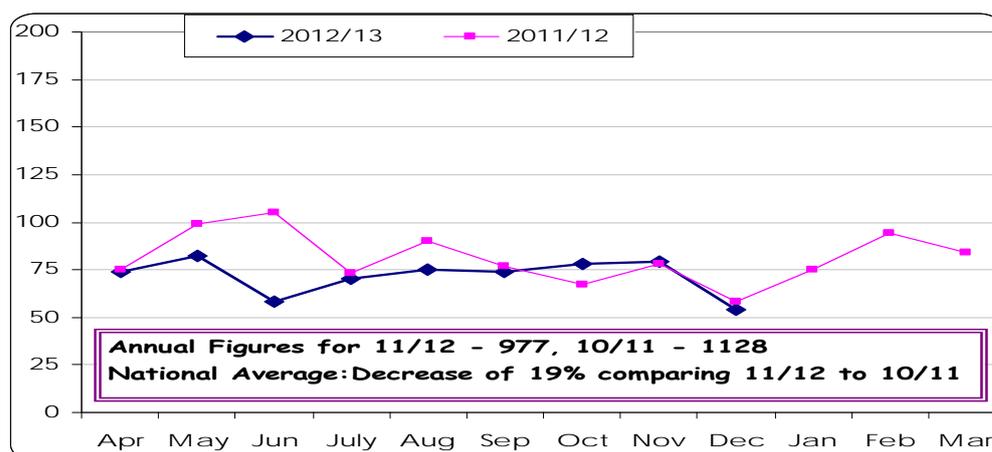
- A range of joint protocols with partners including:
 - The Youth Housing Support Protocol
 - The Domestic Abuse and Homeless Prevention Protocol
- Weekly surgeries at all supported accommodation establishments
- Surgeries at City Base providing comprehensive housing options and homeless services for young people
- Homeless prevention activities within secondary schools
- Young persons' tenancy support workers
- The Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme
- The Prison Discharge and Homeless Prevention Protocol
- Establishing the Evictions' Prevention Panel
- Revising the allocations policy

Theme 1: Performance Summary

Between 2010/11 and 2011/12, the Council experienced a 13.4% decrease in homeless presentations. Based on figures for the year to date, it is projected that homeless presentations will decrease by a further 12% in the current year (2012/13). This would represent an estimated 24% decrease from 2010/11.

The charts below highlight the Council's success in homelessness prevention.

Number people presenting as homeless

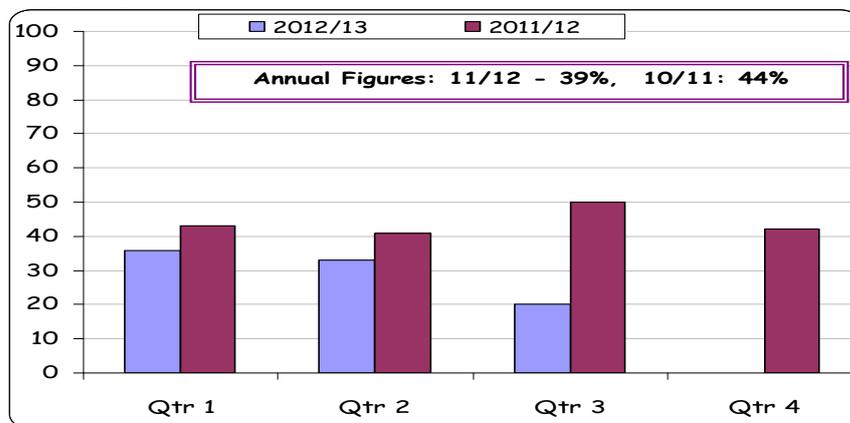


A continued strong focus on prevention through the appointment of two new Prevention Officers and the Housing Options approach has enabled continued improvement. Mediation training for the Prevention Officers has led to a reduction in youth homelessness and the team has also successfully prevented homelessness for 26 households through Section 11 notifications and prevented 20 evictions from Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) accommodation.

There has been a reduction in the % of people re-assessed as homeless or potentially homeless within 12 months of the previous case being completed. In 11/12, the rate was 2.5%, compared to 3.1% in 2010/11 and a national rate of 5.8% (2011/12). Between April and December 2012, however, there was a slight increase, with 3.7% of cases re-assessed as homeless (2 out of 54 reassessments).

This downward trend of repeat homelessness can be attributed to the continued high quality of support delivered by all partners which have led to high levels of tenancy sustainability. Low levels of lost contact at every stage of the homeless journey due to services maintaining good contact with homeless people, has also been a contributory factor.

Table 3: Presentations from 16-25 year olds as a percentage of all applications as at March 2012



During 2011/12 216 homeless applications were received from young people (aged 16- 25 years). This represented a 7% decrease from the previous year. For the year to date

135 applications were received from young persons representing a further 16% decrease in homeless presentations.

An overall reduction in youth homelessness has been achieved through a greater focus on mediation and the continued provision of tailored information and advice for young people alongside the delivery of homeless surgeries @ Scott Street and a targeted approach within secondary schools to ensure those at risk of homelessness are provided with the necessary support and assistance.

Theme 1: Key Challenges

The Council and its partners continue face a number of challenges in relation to homeless prevention. The recent achievements in this area could be potentially undermined as the impact of Welfare Reform is realised.

Ensuring a focus on prevention activity and rolling out the Housing Options approach to involve all partners will be critical to ensure the delivery of comprehensive and consistent services that are available to all persons in housing need.

[Feedback from user consultation]

'Could there be some kind of outreach advice in hospitals to help people before they get discharged? They know they were going to discharge me so couldn't something have been arranged before hand?'

"There are a lot of empty houses that aren't being let'

'Encourage the work culture, self discipline starts at home. Parenting is the key'

Theme 1: Future Actions 2013-2014

The Council will continue to work with partners and service users to:

- Develop mediation services to support households to remain at home
- Develop comprehensive monitoring mechanisms to evidence the success and outcomes of homeless prevention activity
- Target youth-specific prevention and housing options services at potentially homeless young people
- Maintain a Housing Options approach to homelessness with a focus on homeless prevention and tenancy sustainability
- Maintain partnerships and joint working with other service providers in order to prevent homelessness and avoid crisis homelessness arising
- Establish improved communication systems with partners, stakeholders and service users
- Provide good quality advice and support to minimise impacts of Welfare Reform

Theme 2: Providing temporary, resettled and permanent accommodation

Outcomes:

Homeless people are provided with suitable, good quality temporary or emergency accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered support to help them get and keep a home.

[Feedback from user consultation]

If you got a temporary house and liked, it why couldn't just become your permanent home? Why do you have move out?'

'Rent bond guarantee scheme is unfair. I can get it because I am in and out of jail. The reason I am in and out of jail is because I am homeless'

'Private rented properties – before a landlord is allowed to rent a tenancy they should bring the tenancy up to a habitable standard'

"Temporary and secure accommodation requires some level of white goods, carpeting etc to give people an opportunity to feel it is a home – not just a roof over their heads '

The Homeless service manages a diverse range and type of accommodation, including properties leased from private sector landlords, Registered Social Landlords and mainstream Council properties. Accommodation ranges from one-bed room single person properties, to larger family size properties, predominantly located within the Perth area, but also in rural areas.

In addition to the Council's range of homeless accommodation, there is a range of supported hostel and individual and group living establishments managed by external providers. The Council work closely with these providers to ensure that homeless people are placed in the most appropriate accommodation.

Theme 2: Progress 2009 – 2012

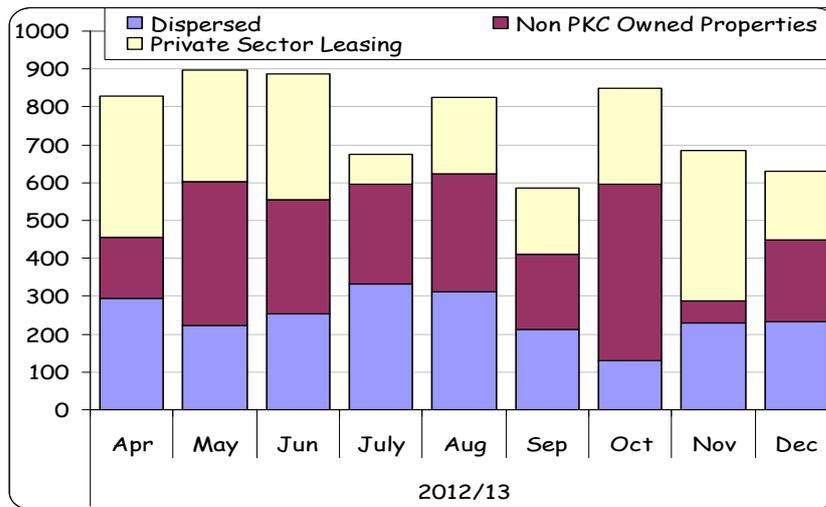
Over the past three years we have made significant improvements to the provision and management of temporary accommodation, including:

- Implementing a successful Bed and Breakfast reduction plan which enabled the Council to cease this form of temporary accommodation (not used since September 2011).
- Increasing by 105% the supply of temporary accommodation since 2008/09. This has been achieved through a range of developments, including Rio House and satellite properties for families with children, re-provisioning Tayview House to provide accommodation for young people, developing units of accommodation at St Catherine's Square for single homeless people, and acquiring additional accommodation for use as both temporary and mainstream accommodation.
- Implementing a range of initiatives to provide greater access to the private rented sector, including the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme, PKC Lets, Private Sector Leasing, the Empty Homes Initiative and more recently the Homes for Multiple Occupancy (HMO) and Flat Share Schemes.
- Achieving the Councils target of 180 units of affordable housing per year.
- Introducing a management and compliance framework and minimum standards for all forms of temporary accommodation.
- Introducing joint working agreements with supported accommodation providers.

Theme 2: Performance Summary

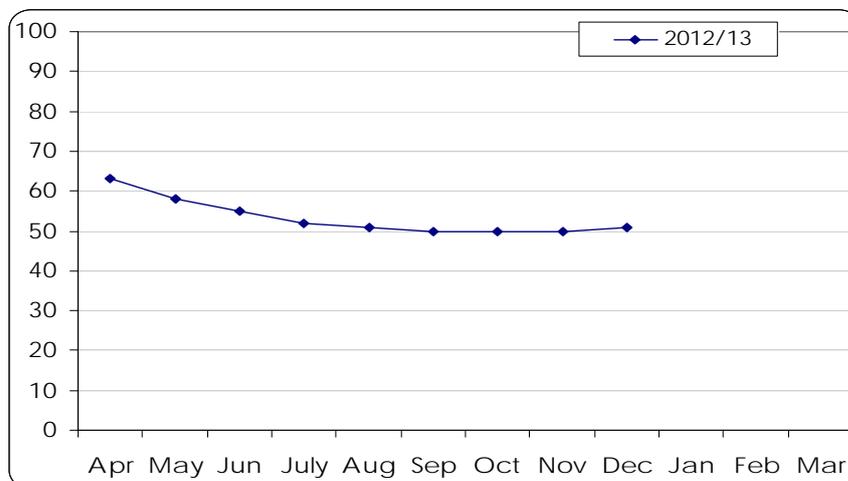
The average length of stay spent in any type of self contained temporary accommodation was 255 days in 2012/13, compared to 285 in 2011/12. This figure has remained relatively static and is directly linked to continued difficulties in securing settled accommodation outcomes for homeless people, enabling the Council to discharge its duty.

Table 4: Average Time Spent in Temporary Accommodation



The number of people supported through the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme (RBGS) scheme during 2011/12 was 169. From April to December 2012, 102 rent bonds were issued, the target number for the year is 150. Significant improvements during recent months mean the service is on track to meet this target.

Table 6: % of Available Vacancies Let to Homeless People



51 % (343) of available vacancies were let to homeless people in 2010/11 compared to 54% (452) 2011/12. Performance figures, however, indicate a downward trend since April 2012, with the number of vacancies let to homeless applicants having decreased by 12%, with 336 properties having been let to homeless people.

Theme 2: Key Challenges

The continued poor turnover of vacancies and affordable accommodation remains a challenge and continues to impact on the Council's ability to discharge its homelessness duty, resulting in lengthy periods of time spent in temporary accommodation. The ongoing mismatch between available vacancies in terms of

size and type compared to current demand, may mean that in the future the Council may on occasion have to use less suitable and more expensive Bed and Breakfast accommodation. However, ongoing work with private sector landlords to maximise access to the private sector, as well as continued review of allocations of social rented accommodation, and maximising every opportunity to facilitate additional units of accommodation will be required to improve the provision of settled accommodation.

Theme 2: Future Actions 2013-2014

To achieve the outcomes in relation to accommodation the Council will continue to work with partners, and with service users, to:

- Maximise access to the private sector for homeless or potentially homelessness people by working with private landlords
- Increase the supply of affordable housing through new-build and acquisition programmes. (100 new publicly subsidised affordable housing units including 25 new build local authority units.)
- Ensure that suitable safe accommodation and support are available locally for people experiencing domestic abuse
- Maintain standards of temporary accommodation in line with good practice guidelines
- Continue to review allocations of social rented accommodation to homeless households with the aim of reducing the backlog and the length of stay in temporary accommodation

Theme 3: Tenancy Sustainment / Homeless Support

Outcomes:

- **Tenants and customers receive the information they need on how to access accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered continuing support to help them find and sustain a home.**

[Feedback from user consultation]

'We need Support workers who have real experiences about working with people who have substance misuse. It's a difficult job to do, it's not necessarily about qualifications'

'People really need to learn how to budget and cook real food.'

'You need to add improve the way we work with Health Service. For example they have reduced the availability of health services in the Central Health Team. There is no dedicated CPN, no GP and fewer nurses and no consultation with the people about what difference this would make to them.'

Households facing homelessness are often at the lowest point in their lives where a range of factors and difficult circumstances have led to an acute need for both housing and support.

The Council and its partners provide a range of support services and work closely with individuals and households facing homelessness to rebuild their lives and move on to settled and sustainable accommodation.

Theme 3: Progress 2009 – 2012

During 2009 – 2012 significant improvements were achieved in the delivery of homeless support and outcomes as a result of the quality of support arranged and provided.

Most notably, the results of an unannounced inspection of the Homeless Support Service in November 2011 by the Care Inspectorate provided the Council with external verification of the high quality services being delivered. The Council was graded as Excellent and Very Good for the areas inspected – Quality of Care and Support and Quality of Staffing, with no requirements or recommendations. A range of initiatives and actions introduced in recent years contributed to this positive inspection outcome. These included:

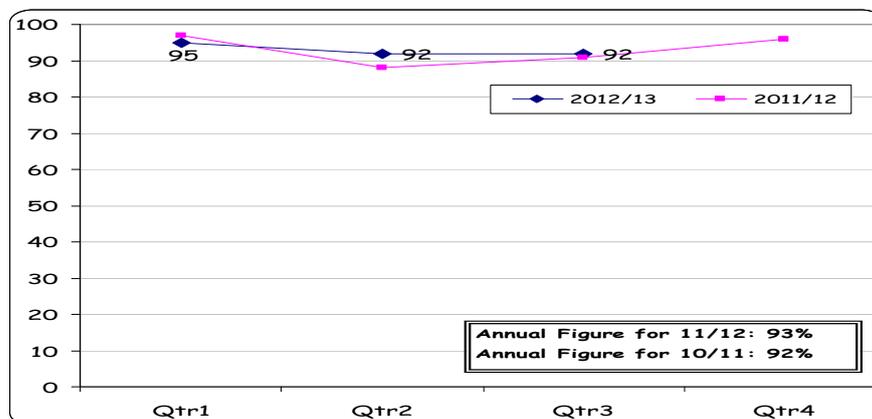
- Establishing strong partnerships with all partners and developing a range of joint working protocols and the delivery of regular homeless surgeries
- Establishing a weekly Complex Case Integration Group attended by a range of partners to meet the needs of the most vulnerable homeless people
- Implementing a range of ways of engaging with homeless people and receiving feedback from them
- Delivering weekly cookery sessions with Rio House
- Delivering weekly information sessions to hostel provisions, including weight management, smoking cessation, sexual health, drug awareness, benefits
- Joint working with CATH to deliver a greater level of support to residents at St Catherine's Square
- Introducing the 'Moving In / Moving On' service to support people to successfully prepare and move on to settled accommodation

Performance Summary

Perth and Kinross Council continues to perform very well compared to other local authorities in relation to lost contacts. National average figures for 2010/11: Before assessment - 6%, PKC 11/12 - 1.5%. After assessment national average - 11%, PKC 11/12 - 3.3%. This indicator relates directly to the low levels of repeat homelessness.

Table 7: The level of lost contacts before and after assessment.

Table 8: The percentage of homeless households provided with permanent accommodation in Council stock who maintain a tenancy for at least 12 months



High levels of tenancy sustainability continue to be maintained for homeless people accommodated into local authority stock. The annual figure for 2011/12 was 93% and 91% for 2010/11 and 91% for April 2012 - Jan 2013. This is linked directly to the excellent support provided by the Homeless support team and the 'Moving In/Moving On' service ensuring that new tenants are equipped with the necessary skills and support to set up and maintain their new home.

Theme 3: Key Challenges

The impact of Welfare Reform may result in more households facing financial difficulties and greater levels of vulnerability, with the potential of an increase in demand homeless services and support. Housing management practices within the Council and for Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners will require a greater focus on support and tenancy sustainability, enabling community care and homeless support teams to focus on more vulnerable households and the delivery of support to private sector households.

[Feedback from service user consultation]

'People who have experienced situations like alcoholism, drugs, homelessness could become key workers or a form of support for people who are going through these situations'

'Some support/care is being given by people who don't know anything about what we are experiencing. They are just in it for a job'

'I work in a charity shop and like this as it gives me something to do. It gives me a sense of purpose'

'Maintaining CATH outreach/street work and day centre services is very important'

Theme 3: Future Actions 2013-2014

To achieve the desired outcomes, we will continue to work with partners in Health and the Voluntary Sector, including the Early Years' collaborative, and with service users, to:

- Promote affordable, healthy lifestyles for homeless people through diet and exercise, in partnership with health care services and Live Active Leisure
- Maintain a range of floating support services in order to promote tenancy sustainability within all tenure types
- Ensure that homeless people can access good quality support services appropriate to their individual needs
- Undertake regular and effective consultation with homeless people to enable them to participate in and influence service delivery
- Promote employment and education opportunities for homeless people

8. Monitoring and Review of the Homeless Strategy

We will establish formal monitoring and review mechanisms to evaluate the implementation of this strategy. Progress against each of the themes and related outcomes will be reported internally to the Housing & Community Care Senior Management Team, annually to the Council's Housing and Health Committee and to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of the monitoring of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Information will also be made available to the public through the Council's Communication Team, using a range of media.

The Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group is already well established and monitors the outcomes of the Strategy on a regular basis. Chaired by Perth and Kinross Council's Homeless Service Manager, it comprises of representatives from a range of key Council services as well as partnering organisations, Registered Social Landlords, Perth and Kinross Community Health Partnership and the Scottish Government.

9. Conclusion

Over the past three years the Council and its partners have made significant and lasting improvements in the delivery of services to people facing homelessness. However, the economic downturn, the impact of Welfare Reform, the lack of affordable housing solutions, along with the legal requirements of priority need and new duties to assess and provide support, continue to present significant challenges.

Through the actions outlined in this strategy the Council and its partners will continue to work together to prevent homelessness wherever possible and where it does occur, ensure that its impact is minimised and people are assisted to secure suitable and sustainable housing solutions.

ACTION PLAN

THEME 1: Housing Options / Homeless Prevention Charter Outcomes:

- *People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them. (7)*
- *Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.(8)*
- *People at risk of losing their homes receive advice on preventing homelessness leading to a reduction in homeless presentations. (9)*
- *Homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice. (12)*

Area Of Activity	Actions	Target / Output	Timescale	Resources / Agency
Mediation				
1.1 Provide a mediation service to help potentially homeless households to remain at home.	Introduce a Family Mediation Service to reduce the number of young people becoming homeless through relationship breakdown.	10 prevention cases per year.	June 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Continue to develop and deliver low level mediation for all people threatened with homelessness where appropriate.	10 prevention cases.	Ongoing	PKC Homeless Service.
	Provide staff training to enable them to deliver effective mediation.	6 staff trained.	December 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
Prevention Monitoring				
1.2 Establish a performance framework to evidence the success and outcomes of homeless prevention activity.	Develop a homeless prevention monitoring framework in line with guidance from the Scottish Government.	Introduction and Implementation of Performance management framework.	April 2013	PKC Homeless Service / Finance Team.
	Establish and evidence the financial savings resulting from homeless prevention activity.	Annual Report showing detailed savings information for each household type.	June 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Develop and maintain quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that "gate keeping" is avoided.	Annual Report based on monthly audits.	September 2013	

Area Of Activity	Actions	Target / Output	Timescale	Resources / Agency
Youth Homelessness				
1.3 Deliver a homeless prevention and housing options services tailored to meet the specific needs of young people facing homelessness.	In partnership with other services and agencies develop a cross service schools homeless prevention programme.	Key Milestone: Multiagency programme put in place.	September 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Develop and deliver bespoke housing options for young people taking into account their specific accommodation needs and financial barriers.	Raised awareness among young people of housing options. Evidenced by evaluation of prevention work in schools.	December 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Develop and deliver a youth tenancy course to enable young people to sustain settled accommodation.	Levels of tenancy sustainability for 16-25 year olds.	September 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Undertake continuous consultation to identify causes of youth homelessness and develop preventative actions.	Produce report and recommendations.	December 2013	
Housing Options				
1.4 Maintain a Housing Options approach to homelessness with a focus on homeless prevention and tenancy sustainability.	Develop a self-serve Housing Options system that enables homeless and potentially homeless people to access online information about the housing options available to them.	5% reduction in the number of face to face contacts.	June 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Increase public access to Housing Options by rolling out to RSLs.	No. RSLs using Housing Options approach.	December 2013	PKC Homeless Service / All HSIG partners.
	Participate in the Tayside, Fife and Central Housing Options Hub and progress benchmarking activities and requirements from the Scottish Government as required.	Improvements in service delivery as evidenced by performance indicators and service user consultation.	Ongoing	PKC Homeless Service.

Area Of Activity	Actions	Target / Output	Timescale	Resources / Agency
	Provide staff training in application of Housing Options approach to ensure consistency and quality of service.	No. staff trained. No. service users consulted re satisfaction.	December 2013	PKC Homeless Service / Neighbourhood services.
	Continue to develop ways of working towards early intervention and prevention activity.	A 5% year on year reduction in homeless presentations.	March 2014	All HSIg partners.

Area Of Activity	Actions	Target / Output	Timescale	Resources / Agency
Partnerships				
1.5 Maintain partnerships and joint working with other service providers in order to prevent homelessness and avoid crisis homelessness arising.	Develop a protocol in partnership with NHS Tayside to ensure that homelessness is prevented upon discharge from hospital.	A reduction in unplanned hospital discharge homeless presentations.	March 2014	PKC / NHS Tayside.
	Develop a protocol in partnership with criminal justice services to ensure the delivery of a seamless service to meet the varying needs of homeless people.	Protocol in place.	February 2014	PKC Homeless Service / CJS.
Communications				
1.6 Establish improved communication systems with partners, stakeholders and service users	Review the existing communications strategy.	Issue revised communications strategy.	March 2014	HSIG partners.
	Widely promote, using a range of media, the range of housing options and homeless services available in Perth and Kinross.	Monitor and report on range and no. of public notices/events.		
	Undertake regular consultation and evaluation with partners, stakeholders and service users.	Monitor and report on outcomes of consultation.		
Welfare Reform				
1.7 Provide accessible high quality benefits advice and support to minimise any detrimental effects of Welfare Reform.	Participate in the Welfare Reform steering group and ensure that private landlords and RSLs are able to provide - or signpost to - appropriate advice services.	Monitor levels of homelessness.	Ongoing	HSIG partners.

THEME 2: The provision of temporary, resettled and permanent accommodation Charter Outcomes:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Homeless people 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. (12)</i> 				
Area of Activity	Actions	Target / Output	Timescale	Resources/ Agency
Private Sector Activities				
2.1 Maximise access to the private sector for homeless or potentially homelessness people.	Develop and set up a Flat Mate Scheme to provide additional affordable housing solutions.	Accommodate 16 people in flat share accommodation.	August 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	In partnership with private landlords develop and implement HMO's to provide additional units of affordable accommodation.	Provide 8 bedspaces in HMOs.	May 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Ensure the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme and the Housing Options services dovetail with each other, ensuring greater access to the PRS for potentially homeless households.	Increase the number of households at risk of statutory homelessness securing RBGS properties.	June 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Develop and implement the Empty Homes Initiative to provide additional units of affordable accommodation in the private sector.	Increase the number of units and levels of sustainability.	Ongoing	PKC Homeless Service.
	Continue to promote the creation and take up of tenancies in the private sector as a settled accommodation option through both the Housing Options route and through better use of Section 32 A of the HAS.	Increase the number of SATs created through Housing Options.	March 2014	PKC Homeless Service.
RSL Activities				
2.2 Reduce the backlog of homeless applicants waiting for settled accommodation.	Review allocations of social rented accommodation to homeless households so that homeless customers access suitable settled accommodation within a reasonable timescale.	Increase the % allocations to homeless.	March 2014	PKC Housing Access Team.
2.3 Increase supply of affordable housing through new build and acquisition programmes.	Continue to develop and progress the Buy Back scheme to provide additional units of accommodation for single homeless people.	(i) Increase the number of units purchased and (ii) Increase the number of homeless households accommodated.	Ongoing	PKC Housing Access Team.

Area of Activity	Actions	Target / Output	Timescale	Resources/ Agency
RSL Activities				
	Enable the development of at least 100 new publicly subsidised affordable housing units.	Details from Norma / SC.	Ongoing	HCC Strategy Team.
	Ensure the build of 25 new units of accommodation per year.	Details from Norma / SC.	On-going	HCC Strategy Team.
2.4 Provide accessible, suitable accommodation and support to anyone experiencing domestic abuse including in rural areas where required.	In partnership with the PKC Violence Against Women Partnership ensure the provision of safe accommodation for people experiencing domestic abuse.	Undertake analysis to determine gaps in existing provision.	December 2013	
	In partnership with Neighbourhood Services and the VAWP facilitate the provision of surgeries in rural localities for people experiencing domestic abuse.	The number accessing surgeries.	December 2013	
Temporary Accommodation				
2.5 Provide good quality temporary accommodation in line with good practice guidelines	In partnership with supported accommodation providers and private landlords ensure that consistent high standards of accommodation are met and maintained.	Inspection regime/reporting mechanisms in place. User consultation.	Feb 2014	PKC Homeless Service.
2.6 Reduce the length of stay in temporary accommodation.	Through a range of measures related to foregoing PRS and RSL activities which will increase access to settled accommodation for homeless people.	Reduction in time taken to discharge duty.	Ongoing	PKC Homeless Service / Housing Access Team.

THEME 3: Tenancy Sustainment / Homeless Support Charter Outcome:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Tenants and customers receive the information they need on how to access support options to help them access settled accommodation and remain in their home and get suitable support including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.</i> 				
Area of Activity	Actions	Target/ Baseline	Timescale	Resources / Agency
Health and Homelessness				
3.1 Promote affordable healthy lifestyles for homeless people.	In Partnership with NHS Tayside and Live Active develop programmes to encourage homeless people to follow healthy lifestyles.	** (No.) homeless people participating in range of programmes.	August 2013	PKC Homeless Service / NHS Tayside Dietetics Service.
	Provide food related assistance through the newly developed Welfare Fund.	** (No.) accessing the fund for diet/nutrition purposes.	August 2013	PKC Homeless Service / Welfare Rights Team.
Early Intervention				
3.2 Prevent tenancy breakdown across all property tenures and applicant age groups.	Monitor Section 11 notifications and work with landlords, mortgage lenders and RSL colleagues to reduce homelessness arising from financial difficulties.	Increase in the number of evictions prevented following S11 notice.	August 2013	HSIG partners.
	Review housing management policies and practice to ensure compliant with homeless prevention good practice guidelines and new Housing Support Regulations.	Review complete.	September 2013	Neighbourhood Services / RSL partners.
Support				
3.3 Provide accessible high quality support services to homeless people that are appropriate to their individual needs, in order to help them sustain their accommodation.	Undertake research and benchmarking to identify gaps in support and accommodation provisions for specific client groups.	Report to SMT	December 2013	Planning and Commissioning Team.
	Develop a joint working protocol with Central Health Care.	Joint Protocol in place.	November 2013	Homeless Service / Central Healthcare Team.
	Ensure all homeless customers have access to peer support where required.	** (No). y.p. taking up peer support option.	December 2013	PKC Homeless Service.
	Ensure all support providers have robust quality assurance processes in place to meet the requirements of the National Care standards and Care Inspectorate.	Quality assurance processes agreed and in place.	December 2013	PKC Strategic Commissioning Team / Homeless Service.

Area of Activity	Actions	Target/ Baseline	Timescale	Resources / Agency
Customer Engagement				
3.4 Undertake regular and effective consultation with homeless service users to enable them to participate in and influence service delivery.	Continue to review and develop opportunities for people to participate in and influence the delivery of housing options and homelessness services through forums, such as the Homeless Voice Group, the Quality panel.	Details of Nos. and type of engagement.	December 2013	HSIG partners.
Early Years				
3.5 Ensure the delivery of Homeless Services supports the Councils approach to improving outcomes through the Early Years collaborative.	Through the Early Years Collaborative develop integrated work, skills and knowledge to respond to the needs of vulnerable children.	Early Years Action Plan in place.	September 2013	HSIG partners.
Employability				
3.6 Promote employment and education opportunities for homeless people.	Review working practices, partnership arrangements and customer engagement and involvement activities to ensure a greater focus on employability opportunities.	Homeless Representation on the Employability Network Group.	May 2013	HSIG partners.

Stakeholder consultation

Working in partnership with a range of stakeholders is central to the way we plan and deliver homeless services and support. This Strategy has been developed in consultation with a range of service providers, service users and other stakeholders and has been overseen by the Homeless Strategy Implementation Group which itself comprises representation from a wide range of bodies. See Appendix 3 for the full list.

Equalities

We are committed to equal opportunities, providing services and support in a non-discriminatory and judgemental way. Across Housing and Community Care Services we aim to encourage equal opportunities and diversity by responding to the different needs and service requirements of people regardless of sex, race, colour, disability, age, nationality, marital status, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender re-assignment. Our Service's Equalities Action Plan has detailed actions for each of six equality strands. The Homeless Strategy supports this Action Plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a legal requirement on local authorities to assess public policies, plans and strategies showing their potential impact on the environment. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) ensures that environmental issues are considered by decision makers alongside social and economic issues. The Homelessness Strategy 2013-14 is a supporting element of the Local Housing Strategy and, as such, after consideration of the analysis provided to the SEA Gateway by the Council, the Council has received confirmation from the SEA that the Homelessness Strategy is not likely to have significant environmental effects. Therefore the Council has made a "screening determination" and submitted this to the Scottish Government. This will be publicised, including a notice being placed on the Council website.

Other formats

A shorter summary version of the Strategy is available, upon request, in Braille, large print and in some minority languages. Please use the contact details below for further information or copies.

Feedback

Please send any comments you have on this strategy to:

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Legislative and Strategic Overview

Delivery of the homeless services is in accordance with the Code of Guidance on Homelessness 2005, Code of Guidance on the Prevention of Homelessness 2009 and compliance with the following legislation:

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 and 2006
- Homeless Persons Advice and Assistance (Scotland) regulations 2002.
- Homeless Persons Interim Accommodation (Scotland) Regulations 2002
- The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004.
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Helping Homeless People – Ministerial Statement on Abolition of Priority Need by 2012
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Regulatory and Inspection Framework

The Homeless Service is required to meet a wide range of standards relating to the quality of service delivery, customer outcomes, quality of staffing, standards and range of accommodation, quality of support delivery, customer engagement and key indicators.

HL1 and HI2 Returns

Operation of homeless legislation is published twice a year and comprises of an annual and six monthly summary publications. Data is obtained electronically from the Council's homelessness data systems and collected via the HL1 and HI2 returns.

The Council is also required to provide detailed performance information relating to a number of homeless SPI's.

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

The Scottish Government has developed the Scottish Social Housing Charter which has several outcomes that relate to homelessness. The SHR's role will be to monitor and assess Perth & Kinross Council's progress against these outcomes and where necessary to take action if the Council is at risk of failing to meet the Charter outcomes. The Charter will become a significant element of the SHR's future regulatory approach and will be a trigger for the SHR future regulatory intervention.

Care Inspectorate

The Council's Homeless Support Service is registered with the Care Inspectorate and is required to meet a wide range of standards under quality themes that are subject to external inspection and scrutiny through unannounced inspections

Profile of Homelessness in Perth and Kinross

Applications as Percentage of all households; Perth and Kinross and Scotland 2011/12

Year	2010/11	2011/12
Perth and Kinross	1.7	1.4
Scotland	2.3	1.8

Source - Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: national and local authority analyses

The table shows that the number of people presenting as homeless in Perth and Kinross, as a proportion of the Perth and Kinross population as a whole has remained stable and is slightly below with the national average.

Repeat Applications, Perth and Kinross 2010/11– 2011/12

Year	2010/11	2011/12	% change
No Presenting	1128	977	-13%
No and % cases reassessed as homeless or potentially homeless within 12 months of previous case being completed	30 (2.6%)	20 (2.1%)	0.5%

Source – Scottish Government - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross – Year ending March 2012

Table 3 shows that repeat homeless applications have declined in the period 2011/12. i.e. fewer people are re-presenting.

Reasons Given for Homelessness, Perth and Kinross, 2010/11 – 2011/12

Year/Reason	2010/11		2011/12	
	No	% of applications	No.	% of applications
Asked to leave	300	26.6	261	26.7
Dispute within household/ relationship breakdown non-violent	174	15.4	160	16.4
Other reason for leaving accommodation / household	71	6.3	55	5.6
Other action by landlord resulting in termination of tenancy	89	7.9	68	7.0
Dispute within household / violent or abusive	112	9.9	125	12.8
Other reason for loss of accommodation	123	10.9	74	7.7
Termination of tenancy/ mortgage due to rent arrears/default on payments	67	5.9	78	8.0
Overcrowding	32	2.8	14	1.4
Discharge from prison/hospital/care/other institution	46	4.1	55	5.6
Loss of service / tied accommodation	24	2.1	17	1.7
Applicant terminated secure accommodation	25	2.2	19	1.9
Fleeing non-domestic violence	23	2.0	19	1.9

Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	15	1.3	5	0.5
Harassment	20	1.8	16	1.6
Emergency	7	0.6	11	1.2
Total	1128	100	977	100

Source - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross – Year ending March 2011

Applications by Single Young People by Age and Gender, Perth and Kinross, (Nos. and %) 2011/12

Household Gender/Age	16/17		18-25		Total	
	No.	% of total applications	No.	% of total applications	No.	% of total applications
Single males	26		111		137	14
Single females	22		71		93	9
Total	48	5%	182	19%	230	24%

Source - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross 2011/12 Year ending March 2012

Table 7 shows that almost a quarter of applications are from young single people in the 16-25 age range. Overall, the majority of these are young men but at the younger end of this group the number of young women almost equals that of young men. Young people who are displaced from settled accommodation and social and family networks experience a high risk of becoming exposed to financial and sexual abuse, and are also extremely disadvantaged with regard to employment and training.

Table 8: Ethnicity of homeless applicants (Nos.) 2010/11 – 2011/12

Year/ Category	2010/11	%	2011/12	%
White Scottish	916	81	795	81
White Other British including White Irish and White Other	178	16	159	16
Black African including Black Caribbean and Black other	6	0.5	6	0.6
Asian including Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Chinese/Other	10	0.9	8	0.8
Mixed /Other /Not known/Refused	18	1.6	9	0.8

Source - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross 2011/12 Year ending 2012

The proportion of homeless applications by ethnic group has remained unchanged since 2009/10 . However, we know there to be a significant Gypsy/Traveller community within Perth and Kinross yet no applicant has described themselves as coming from that community.

Table 9: Applicants sleeping rough in Perth and Kinross 2009/10 – 2011/12

Year/ Category	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Slept rough in 3 months preceding application	11.9%	9.9%	7.9%
Slept rough on night preceding application	5.9%	5.5%	3.7%

Source - Quarterly Report for Perth and Kinross 2011/12 Year ending 2012

Between 2009 and 2012, there was a decline in the number of people sleeping rough in Perth and Kinross. The proportion of homeless applicants from people who had been rough sleeping is similar nationally. (Scottish average 4%)

The continuing decrease in rough sleeping can be attributed to the good partnership working which has been established in Perth and Kinross between the Council and partners in the independent sector and the phasing out of the priority need test which has meant that more people are now eligible for housing.

Service User Consultation Findings

Consultation with 33 services users took place during 8 focus group sessions in Rio House, Greyfriars, CATH day centre, the Salvation Army at Skinnergate and at the Homeless Voice Friday Drop In sessions in the Gannochy Training Suite. The focus group sessions took various forms. There was “chips and a chat” at Greyfriars and staff attended breakfasts at the Salvation Army and CATH Day Centre. Posters were also left at CATH day centre for people to write down any comments/ideas. Of those who took part 21 were men and 12 were women and there was a wide range of ages. All the information that was recorded at the sessions is anonymous.

Each session consisted of

- Brief presentation about the Homeless Strategy, the 3 main priority themes and what the main things the strategy is trying to achieve.
- Discussion to establish if there is broad agreement on the 3 Strategy priority themes and what is trying to achieve.
- Focus Groups to discuss the activities identified and an opportunity to offer other comments

Feedback

There was general strong agreement by all those who took part that the priority themes identified in the strategy were right and people considered the main things the strategy was trying to achieve were sound, however some people commented on how difficult this was going to be for all people involved, especially in the current recession and the forthcoming changes to the benefit system. As noted by one man *‘The big boys aren’t doing anything to help, they are going to make more people homeless’* and others *‘If you are young you will have no chance, it’s not fair’*, *‘Housing Benefit single room rate for young people isn’t enough to cover rent forcing them to leave their flats and they become homeless’*.

Priority Theme One Comments

People told us on the whole mediation was good idea, but suggested it doesn’t work for everybody. *‘Everyone’s circumstances are different – mediation won’t work for everyone as people want to leave as it is not safe to stay in the home i.e. family have alcohol/drug problems’*

Several people wanted to tell us that they had no control over their situation, it can be the result of the actions of others including agencies, so providing information to prevent homeless needs to be targeted at everybody not just the person who might become homeless.

There was strong support for providing information to young people in schools and several people suggested actual people who experienced homelessness were the best people to do this and they should be recruited to go and speak to in schools and places

where young people went. They also suggested there should classes about the reality of living on benefits available in schools.

Other comments and ideas on Priority Theme One were:

'Could there be some kind of outreach advice in hospitals to help people before they get discharged? I was just pointed in the direction of York Place the day I got discharged from Murray Royal They know they were going to discharge me so couldn't something have been arranged before hand?'

'You have to have connections within the town that you are homeless in. If you don't you aren't entertained however people from other countries aren't told to go back to where they have connections'

'There are a lot of empty houses that aren't being let'

'Encourage the work culture, self discipline starts at home. Parenting is the key'

Priority Theme Two Comments

Some people thought that providing temporary accommodation for long term drinkers was not a good idea, especially if surrounded by people who were also long term drinkers.

Most people agreed the flat scheme idea was good but you would need to be get on with the person you shared with and they thought it was a good idea to increase the use of private rented accommodation. Some people spoke about the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme and their difficulties in accessing because they didn't meet the criteria and the lack of regulation for private landlords and poor standards of accommodation. They also said it was difficult to get a private landlord to accept people who were on benefits. Developing more houses for multiple occupation was good but it would needed to managed carefully, *'Good idea, but it could become party central !'*

Increasing the numbers of temporary accommodation was considered a good idea, but some people suggested *'If you got a temporary house and liked it why couldn't just become your permanent home? Why do you have move out?'* Some people commented that not enough single accommodation was being built and everything was for families.

Other comments and ideas on Priority Theme Two were:

'Rent bond guarantee scheme is unfair. I can get it because I am in and out of jail. The reason I am in and out of jail is because I am homeless'

'Private rented properties – before a landlord is allowed to rent a tenancy they should bring the tenancy up to a habitable standard'

'Static caravans could be used as form of temporary accommodation'

'Could we have voluntary testing to increase chances of getting a house i.e. drugs test'

‘Temporary and secure accommodation requires some level of white goods, carpeting etc to give people an opportunity to feel it is a home – not just a roof over their heads ‘

Priority Theme Three Comments

People felt very strongly about support services and there was strong agreement about the need for them. Many of those who took part commented on the need to get people involved in peer to support those who have drugs and alcohol issues especially in hostels. People felt more information was required about activities they could take part in as them to *‘keep sane’* and *‘ideas for effective use of time to stop boredom’*. A youth tenancy course was also considered a good idea and it should be taught in schools. People also agree about the need to increase access to cookery skills/nutrition information in temporary accommodation, *‘People really need to learn how to budget and cook real food.’*

All people believed that it should be a top priority to keep funding support services for organisations like Women’s Aid/CATH/Anchor House/Rowan Alba. People spoke very passionately about the services they has received from these organisations especially from CATH and that had been invaluable.

Feedback about staff training suggested that this was important but many people felt that those employed in support services had little experience of what the issues were and often didn’t know how to handle situations *‘when stuff kicked off’*. *‘We need Support workers who have real experiences about working with people who have substance misuse. It’s a difficult job to do, it’s not necessarily about qualifications’* *‘Some support/care is being given by people who don’t know anything about what we are experiencing. They are just in it for a job’*

Other comments and ideas on Priority Theme Three were:

‘You need to add improve the way we work with Health Service. For example they have reduced the availability of health services in the Central Health Team. There is no dedicated CPN, no GP and fewer nurses and no consultation with the people about what difference this would make to them.’

‘Woman’s Aid yes but don’t forget men’

I work in a charity shop and like this as it gives me something to do. It gives me a sense of purpose

‘People who have experienced situations like alcoholism, drugs, homelessness could become key workers or a form of support for people who are going through these situations’

‘Maintaining CATH outreach/street work and day centre services is very important’
