



THE SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR

Perth & Kinross Council Re-Inspection Report
January 2011

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1. Introduction

About this inspection

- 1.1 This re-inspection was carried out by the Scottish Housing Regulator under section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Our purpose in inspection is to provide an independent external assessment of the effectiveness of housing service delivery and make recommendations to help improvement. Inspections are conducted within a published framework of *Performance Standards*.
- 1.2 Perth and Kinross Council was awarded a 'D' or 'Poor' grade for its homelessness service following our inspection in 2006. We carried out this inspection, in line with our guidance and procedures, to assess the Council's progress against its improvement plan for its homelessness service.

How we assessed performance

- 1.3 Our inspectors asked two key questions:
- How well is Perth and Kinross Council delivering its homelessness service?
 - Is Perth and Kinross Council managed for improvement?
- 1.4 In order to answer these questions inspectors:
- spoke to service users, staff and elected members of the council;
 - asked other partner organisations for their views;
 - visited homes and local areas;
 - saw and tested first hand how well services were being delivered;
 - examined key policies, publications, information and the organisation's self-assessment submitted for this inspection; and
 - analysed published performance and financial information.
- 1.5 We have awarded a grade for the homelessness service. The grade and judgements are based on evidence. The grades summarise performance in the following ways:
- Grade A = Excellent
 - Grade B = Good
 - Grade C = Fair

- Grade D = Poor

1.6 When we provide a summarised assessment and award a grade, we take various factors into account. These factors are:

- outcomes for service users;
- how far the service or organisation meets Performance Standards;
- performance against key indicators in comparison with others;
- compliance with legislation;
- how good the leadership and accountability are;
- how far good practice is followed;
- the organisation's level of self-awareness;
- how well value for money is being achieved;
- local context and legitimate local priorities; and
- commitment to, and track record of, improvement.

The inspection team

1.7 The inspection team was led by Lynn Sweeney (Inspection Manager) and included Mark Gibson and Gordon Scobie (Inspectors), Diane McKiernan (Inspection Officer) and Danny Mullen (Tenant Assessor). Danny Mullen, Tina Beattie and Jess Martin (Tenant Assessors) carried out a desktop review of some of the Council's publications. We were on site between 21 June and 2 July 2010. We would like to thank everyone involved in the inspection, particularly the councillors, staff, service users and tenants for their time and co-operation.

Responding to this inspection

1.8 We expect all inspected bodies to make the inspection grades and overview section of this report available to anyone that wants it, report our findings to tenants and other stakeholders and respond to the issues raised in this report.

2. Inspection grades and overview

In this section we set out our overall assessment of Perth and Kinross Council's performance, including inspection grades and we summarise our inspection findings.

Grades

- 2.1 The re-inspection of Perth and Kinross Council's homelessness service took place between 21 June and 2 July 2010. We awarded the following grade:

Perth and Kinross Council has achieved a **B** grade for services to homeless people. This is a **good** performance.

- 2.2 Our overall assessment is that Perth and Kinross Council's homelessness service has significantly improved since our last inspection. We found that the Council has responded well to address the weaknesses we identified in our last report. It has done this in a relatively short timescale and has effectively improved its approach to providing services for homeless people. It can evidence that it has made significant improvements across the service.

How well is Perth and Kinross Council delivering its homelessness service?

- 2.3 Our assessment is that Perth and Kinross Council's homelessness service has many strengths in the delivery of its services:
- it provides a range of access points for homeless people;
 - it is good at publicising the homelessness service;
 - it has an excellent approach to providing advice and preventing homelessness;
 - it makes good assessment decisions and issues decision letters that include all the relevant information;
 - it has a good approach to working with partners and local RSLs; and
 - it provides good quality temporary and settled accommodation.
- 2.4 The Council does, however, have some weaknesses in the delivery of its homelessness service:
- it does not yet have a clear understanding of how homeless people access its service through its area offices;

- its Section 11 process could be more effective in helping those at risk of losing their home;
- it did not meet its 2009 target for reducing the number of people who receive non priority decisions; and
- its use of bed and breakfast accommodation is still high and it continues to take a long time to house homeless people.

Is Perth and Kinross Council managed for improvement?

2.5 The Council has demonstrated an effective approach in dealing with the issues we raised in our last inspection, it has done this within a relatively short timescale. It has a clear strategic planning framework and works well with its partners. It provides effective reports for elected members on its delivery of strategic objectives. The Council has made significant progress in adopting its performance management framework. Its staff are aware of performance across the homelessness service and are encouraged to identify areas for improvement action and implement changes where they are required. We found a strong culture of support for service users and a good customer focused approach to service delivery. The Council works hard to find solutions to its problems around the supply of, and demand for, accommodation within its area.

Key recommendations

2.6 Our inspection report covers a wide range of issues. Perth and Kinross Council must respond effectively to them. These are our most important recommendations.

In delivering services for homeless people the Council should:

- ensure that homeless people receive the same quality of service regardless of where they approach the Council; and
- continue to make progress to meet the Scottish Government 2012 homelessness target.

Shared risk assessment and future scrutiny

- 2.7 Our inspection will form part of the joint national scrutiny framework for local authorities developed to assess risk and deliver a proportionate scrutiny response. We will assess the Council's progress in achieving improvements, in partnership with other scrutiny bodies, through this national framework.

3. Context

In this section we look at Perth and Kinross Council as an organisation and the context in which it operates.

About the organisation

- 3.1 Perth and Kinross Council covers a large geographical area of 5,286 kilometres and is bordered by 8 neighbouring local authorities. It has a population of approximately 140,000. The area is a mix of urban and rural communities, from the main population centre of Perth and towns such as Blairgowrie, Crieff, Auchterarder and Pitlochry, to remote communities such as Kinloch Rannoch.
- 3.2 The Council has 41 elected members, covering 11 wards and consisting of:
- eighteen Scottish National Party;
 - eleven Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party;
 - seven Scottish Liberal Democrats;
 - three Scottish Labour Party; and
 - two Independent.
- 3.3 The Council is led by a Scottish National Party/Liberal Democrat coalition. It has 10 committees: Community Safety; Development Control; Enterprise and Infrastructure; Environment; Housing and Health; Licensing; Lifelong Learning; Scrutiny; and Strategic Policy and Resources. The Council's homelessness service falls within the remit of the Housing and Health Committee.
- 3.4 The Council is organised into four services: Chief Executive's Service; Education and Children's Services; The Environment Service; and Housing and Community Care. The homelessness service is delivered by Housing and Community Care through its Housing Advice Centre in central Perth, its six area housing offices and three sub-offices.

About its current and future tenants / service users

- 3.5 General Register for Scotland figures indicate that the population of Perth and Kinross will continue to rise, with a population of approximately 160,000 projected by 2018. The Council attributes the key driver of this growth to inward migration. The largest increases are expected in the Greater Perth, Kinross and Strathearn areas.
- 3.6 Based on Scottish Government labour market statistics, 60% of the population is of working age, this is below the national average of 63%. The proportion of people of retirement age, at 23%, is higher than the national average of 20%. The proportion of the population who are retired is expected to increase.
- 3.7 Scottish Government labour market statistics show that unemployment in Perth and Kinross is 2.5%, considerably lower than the national figure of 4.8%. Average earnings in the area are lower than the national average.
- 3.8 The 2001 Census showed that the black and minority ethnic (BME) population made up 0.97% of the total population in Perth and Kinross and the largest ethnic group was White Scottish accounting for 85.41% of the total population. However, these figures do not reflect the impact that the accession of new member states to the European Union has had on the area with significant inward migration from these countries in recent years.

About its housing stock

- 3.9 The Council undertook a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment in 2009 which showed a net shortage of approximately 500 units of affordable housing each year for the next ten years, along with a corresponding shortage of approximately 200 units of temporary accommodation. There is also an increasing mismatch between the stock that becomes available for letting and the requirements of those in housing need, particularly relating to the size and the type of housing and its location.

3.10 The tenure profile in Perth and Kinross is different to the national picture. Owner occupation at 66% is slightly higher than the national average of 63% and the proportion of the population renting their home from a social housing provider is significantly lower than the national figure, at 19% and 27% respectively. Perth and Kinross has a large private rented sector with over 10% of the total housing stock and the Council has established ways of working to facilitate access to this sector for homeless households.

Key Facts

3.11 The table below presents a summary of key information for Perth and Kinross Council showing trends over the last three financial years.

Key facts	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Houses owned	7,573	7,485	7,400
No. of applicants on housing list as at 31 March	5,154	5,120	4,904
Houses re-let	427	456	542
No. of homeless applications	1,222	1,095	1,024

Sources: Perth and Kinross Council's inspection submission and Scottish Government statistical bulletins

4. How well is Perth and Kinross Council delivering services for homeless people?

In this section we set out our assessment of the Council's performance in delivering services for homeless people.

Grade

Perth and Kinross Council has achieved a **B** grade for services to homeless people. This is a **good** performance.

- 4.1 Our overall assessment is that Perth and Kinross Council's homelessness service has many strengths and some weaknesses. Perth and Kinross Council has a challenging operating context for delivering its homelessness service. The Council has responded well to the findings in our previous report and was responsive to our feedback during our re-inspection.

Access to service

- 4.2 Perth and Kinross Council received 1,024 applications for assistance from homeless people in 2009/10. The area accounts for 2.7% of Scotland's households, but only 1.8% of Scottish homeless applications.
- 4.3 The Council delivers its homelessness service from a convenient, accessible Housing Advice Centre in the centre of Perth. This centre is more accessible for disabled people than the centre the Council used at the time of our previous inspection. Applicants can also present at any of the Council's six area offices or three sub-offices. Trained housing officers interview these applicants, and send their application forms to Homeless Advice Officers for assessment. The Council also interviews some applicants in their temporary accommodation, as part of its regular weekly surgeries. The Council now monitors the number of applicants who present at each office, which it did not do at the time of our previous inspection. Around two thirds of applicants present directly to the Housing Advice Centre in Perth. The range of access points that the Council provides for homeless people is positive.
- 4.4 The Council has a freephone number for homelessness enquiries. Applicants can use this or visit any of the Council offices in person to discuss their housing

situation. The Council completes an initial approach form and arranges an appointment for the applicant to be seen by a Homeless Advice Officer. We saw that in the Housing Advice Centre the date and time of the appointment was always agreed with the applicant. In area offices, however, we saw that the Council sometimes sends the applicant a letter giving details of an appointment. This means that people approaching the Council for assistance at its area offices may receive a less customer focused approach.

- 4.5 The Council aims to interview all roofless applicants on the day that they present and all other homeless applicants within five working days. The Council told us that it interviews all roofless applicants on the same day that they first approach the service and that it took an average of three working days to interview other homeless applicants. However, these performance figures only apply to those applicants who present at the Housing Advice Centre. The Council does not know how quickly it interviews other applicants. This is a weakness. From our case reviews and shadowing of interviews we found that some applicants who present at an area office are waiting longer for their interview.
- 4.6 Housing Advice Centre staff contact applicants to remind them about their interview and to check that they are able to attend. This is a positive way to minimise the risk of losing contact with people at this stage of the process. However, the Council does not contact applicants who are scheduled to attend appointments at its area offices.
- 4.7 The Council monitors initial approaches to the Housing Advice Centre and the number of applicants it loses contact with at this stage of the process is low. However, it does not record these initial approaches from homeless people as formal applications until it interviews the applicant. This means that it is under-reporting the number of approaches from homeless people and the number of applicants it loses contact with. The Council does not know how many homeless people it loses contact with prior to interview at its area offices. This is a weakness.

- 4.8 Since our last inspection the Council has developed a good range of publicity and a good approach to its distribution. We saw publicity about homelessness in the places where we would expect to see it and we found the Council's website easy to use in relation to homelessness. Our Tenant Assessors were also positive about the Council's printed publicity material and the accessibility of its website.
- 4.9 We reviewed a number of cases where applicants had approached the Council outside normal office hours. In each of these cases the applicant was provided with temporary accommodation and the Council arranged an appointment for the following day at the Housing Advice Centre. However, we found a few cases where the Council records incorrectly showed that the applicant had attended their interview. This means that the Council did not record that it had lost contact with these applicants, in either its own performance management framework or in its reported figures.
- 4.10 In summary, the Council is good in promoting access to its service. It interviews applicants in a range of locations, has an accessible Housing Advice Centre, and has an improved understanding of how homeless people access its service. However, this understanding does not extend to the significant number of applicants who approach the Council through its area offices. This means that the Council does not know how many people it loses contact with or how long it takes to interview applicants. This also contributes to the Council's underreporting in both these areas. Since our re-inspection the Council has introduced monitoring at all its area offices.

Advice and Prevention

- 4.11 The Council has identified the prevention of homelessness, including the availability of information, as a key theme for the Homelessness Strategy 2009-2012. It has established a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group which monitors the outcomes of the strategy on a regular basis. The Council will produce an Annual Review Report that will outline progress in the implementation of the strategy.

- 4.12 In April 2010 the Council introduced a Housing Options service. The purpose of this service is to prevent homelessness by providing housing advice to support people who require alternative housing options to social rented housing. In the first two months of the service, the Council provided housing options interviews to almost 1,000 households. At the time of our re-inspection, it had done some analysis of the impact of the service and was beginning to decide how best to monitor outcomes. However, it is too early to assess how well the approach is working. Since the introduction of the housing options service, the number of homelessness applications has increased slightly.
- 4.13 The level of repeat homeless presentations to the Council increased slightly to 3.4% in 2009/10. The Council has a good understanding of why this has happened. The Council's rate of repeat presentations has not changed significantly since 2007 and has remained marginally better than the Scottish figure.
- 4.14 The Council offers everyone who it has found to be either intentionally homeless or not in priority need an advice and assistance interview to help resolve their homelessness. It gives each applicant a personal housing plan which includes details of the interview, their housing needs and aspirations, housing costs and affordability. It also includes a checklist of actions for them to take to help improve their housing situation. The Council refers everyone who has a housing options interview to welfare rights to maximise their income to help prevent homelessness. This is a good approach. At the time of our re-inspection, the Council's Housing Options approach had only been in place for two months and so it did not have outcome information for these applicants.
- 4.15 The Council provides good support for applicants. Some of the particular initiatives that the team have put in place are working well to help sustain tenancies. Its IT system prompts the team to contact all previously homeless households by telephone after they have been in their permanent tenancy for 6 months and again at 12 months. The purpose of this is to identify any difficulties that they may be experiencing in their tenancy and to liaise with the relevant Neighbourhood Services Team to address these before they become

unmanageable. The Council is also piloting a Move-on Team. This involves close working between the Homeless Support Team and the Temporary Accommodation Teams to assist homeless households move on from temporary accommodation into secure tenancies. We saw an example of this team working well, with the new tenant being very positive about the service they received from the team.

4.16 The Council's performance in helping previously homeless households to sustain their tenancies has improved in recent years. Between 2006/07 and 2009/10, the proportion of previously homeless households still in their permanent tenancy after 12 months increased from 90% to 92%. This is marginally higher than for other tenants. The Council's plans to analyse tenancy sustainment for those applicants who have received housing support should provide useful information about the impact of this service. The Council's level of evictions is low and its eviction prevention panel, which includes a representative from the homelessness team, demonstrates a good approach to preventing homelessness.

4.17 The Council has a range of other initiatives that help it to prevent homelessness:

- it has helped to develop a prison discharge and homelessness prevention protocol;
- weekly surgeries at all supported accommodation establishments and Education and Children's Services City Base;
- it has completed a good range of work around homelessness prevention with local schools;
- by March 2010, it had managed to secure 22 tenancies for pre-existing homeless applicants through the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme;
- Homeless Support Officers help homeless households to settle into their new homes by providing a good range of practical assistance, including handover profiles. This has been extended to include those applicants who move on to Perthshire Housing Association properties;
- the Homelessness Team have set up a Youth Protocol to work with other Council departments and agencies and is appointing two Youth Homelessness Prevention Workers; and
- the eviction prevention panel.

- 4.18 Since April 2009 landlords and creditors must notify the Council at the point they take court action to evict a tenant. The Council conducted a review of how well the process was working after six months. It immediately addressed the areas for improvement that were identified. This work also showed that 69 of the first 73 clients failed to respond to their Section 11 letter. The Council's reliance on written contact may be contributing to its poor outcomes for this process. The Council told us that due to the late issue of the Section 11 notice, its first response very often comes after a household has been evicted from their home.
- 4.19 In summary, 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 prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies. Its Section 11 process could be more effective in helping those at risk of losing their home.

Assessment of homeless people

- 4.20 The Council has a duty to make all necessary inquiries to satisfy itself whether homeless applicants are homeless or threatened with homelessness, have a priority need, and became homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally. The table below provides an overview of the Council's assessment decisions for people who apply to it for assistance.

	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10
	Council	Scotland	Council	Scotland	Council
priority unintentional	19.7%	47.2%	30.5%	50.4%	39.8%
priority intentional	0.9%	2.3%	1.2%	2.3%	0.9%
non-priority	12.8%	12.9%	14%	10.5%	9.9%
potentially homeless - priority unintentional	26.6%	8.3%	16.2%	6.8%	21.1%
potentially homeless - priority intentional	0.7%	0.3%	0.7%	0.3%	0.3%
potentially homeless - non-priority	6.9%	2%	3.8%	1.5%	3%
neither homeless or potentially homeless	15%	7%	14%	6.6%	9.2%
applicant resolved homelessness prior to assessment	5.1%	4.3%	10.4%	4.5%	7.9%
lost contact before assessment decision	7.9%	10.8%	5.5%	11.4%	4.1%
withdrew application before assessment decision	2.7%	4.3%	2.9%	5.2%	3.7%
ineligible for assistance	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%	0.2%

Source: Perth and Kinross Council's inspection submission and Scottish Government statistical bulletins

4.21 The Council's pattern of assessment decisions has differed from national figures in three noticeable ways in recent years:

- the percentage of applicants who receive potentially homeless decisions was around three times the national average last year but this was due to an error in how the Council recorded decisions. It addressed this prior to our inspection;
- the percentage of not homeless applicants is still above the national figure, despite having fallen in 2009/10; and
- the percentage of applicants whom the Council loses contact with is lower than the national figure, but it does not include those applicants who lose contact prior to their assessment interview.

4.22 Scottish Ministers set a target to reduce the number of applicants who receive non priority decisions by 50% by 2009, and to abolish priority need by 2012. The Council did not achieve its target to halve non-priority decisions by 2009. The Council acknowledged its initially slow progress towards the 2012 target and took a number of significant steps prior to our re-inspection to address this. These include an expansion of its priority need categories, private sector activity, and new units of temporary accommodation. At a meeting in May 2010, the Council's

Housing and Health Committee took the decision to implement the 2012 target ahead of schedule, in October 2011.

- 4.23 The Code of Guidance recommends that councils should notify people of the outcome of their application as quickly as possible, and suggests a target of 28 days. In 2008/09, the Council completed 36.3% of its decisions within 28 days. This is significantly lower than the Scottish figure of 67.7%. However, the Council's performance improved significantly in 2009/10, with it completing 64.4% of its decisions within 28 days. The Council told us that its performance has continued to improve, since our re-inspection, and that from April to October 2010 it completed 82.4% of its decisions within 28 days.
- 4.24 The Code of Guidance also advises that local authorities should send applicants their decision letter within a day of the completion of their inquiries. In around one third of the applications we reviewed, the Council took more than one day to send applicants their decision letter. Prior to our inspection, the Council improved its approach to ensure that it sends out decision letters more promptly.
- 4.25 In our previous inspection, we were critical of the quality of the Council's decision letters. The Council's decision letters now contain all the relevant information recommended in the Code of Guidance. We found that some of the information around offers of accommodation might be confusing for applicants. The Council made immediate changes to simplify its letters and will monitor feedback as part of its regular surveys.
- 4.26 The Code of Guidance recommends that councils should keep applicants informed of progress with their application. The level of contact Homeless Advice Officers have with applicants is limited. From our case reviews, we found that most contact with applicants was by letter from the allocations team requesting information. Whilst the Council does regularly visit applicants in temporary accommodation, the Council does not routinely contact other applicants.
- 4.27 We shadowed a number of assessment and housing advice interviews across a range of locations. We found that staff are sensitive to an applicant's needs

during the interview and allow them to explain their situation in their own words. Interview rooms are comfortable and private and applicants that we spoke to were positive about their homelessness interview. However, we saw that staff did not always specifically tailor each interview to the individual's circumstances. This meant that some applicants were given more information to consider than was necessary and that their interview lasted too long. The Council accepted this during our inspection and is taking steps to address it.

- 4.28 In our previous inspection, we were critical of the Council's quality assurance process and the quality of its decision making. The Council now has a robust quality assurance system to ensure that its assessment decisions are accurate. All decisions are made centrally and we found that the Council makes good decisions. However, the Council does not monitor its assessment decisions by area office, in order to satisfy itself that outcomes for applicants are consistent across its different locations.
- 4.29 The Council has a duty to advise homeless applicants of their statutory right to request a review of its homelessness decisions. It notifies people of their right to request a review within 21 days in its decision letters. We looked at several recent appeals against decisions or offers of housing. We found that the Council dealt with these quickly and appropriately.
- 4.30 In summary, the Council is good at assessing homeless applications. It makes good assessment decisions and issues decision letters that include all the relevant information. The Council's contact with people during their application is limited and it has not conducted any analysis to demonstrate that its decision making is consistent regardless of where applicants approach the service.

Securing accommodation

- 4.31 Perth and Kinross Council uses a range of temporary accommodation consisting of:
- 146 furnished Council flats;
 - 15 properties leased from local RSLs;
 - 96 properties leased from the private sector; and

- 2 Council hostels.

4.32 The Council's temporary accommodation is located mainly in and around Perth and is close to local amenities and facilities. The Council has little temporary accommodation in other areas and when this is required it normally provides this through bed and breakfast type accommodation.

4.33 Since our last inspection in 2007, the Council has worked hard to increase the availability, range and quality of temporary accommodation that it provides to homeless households. It has increased the number of dispersed furnished flats by 105%. It achieved this by leasing properties from the private sector and RSL partners and by purchasing 19 properties on the open market.

4.34 The Council has also opened an additional hostel, Rio House, to provide supported accommodation for homeless people with children. The additional units of dispersed furnished flats and the new hostel have significantly improved the availability and quality of temporary accommodation available to homeless households. Homeless people that we spoke to were pleased with the standard of accommodation and the support that they receive from staff. Rio hostel provides excellent accommodation and support to homeless households and seeks to meet their needs.

4.35 The Council has comprehensively addressed the weaknesses we saw at Greyfriars Hostel during our previous inspection. It has refurbished the hostel, improved its physical standards and addressed health, safety and risk issues. The Council has also improved the service, management, ethos and culture of the hostel. Homeless people that we spoke to were pleased with the quality of accommodation and commented favourably on the supportive and customer-focused environment that the hostel provides.

4.36 The table below sets out key figures on the Council's use of temporary accommodation.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Number of homeless households provided with temporary hostel accommodation	267	366	281	202	152
Percentage accommodated in temporary hostel accommodation	35%	38.6%	28.5%	23.3%	14%
Average length of stay for households in temporary hostel accommodation (days)	33	28	35	45	54
Number accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation	332	453	546	425	553
% accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation	44%	47.8%	55.3%	49%	50.2%
Average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (days)	44	60	42	34	26
No. of families with dependent children accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation		130	157	107	117
Number of breaches of the Homeless Persons Unsuitable Accommodation Order		20	31	7	5
Number accommodated in furnished accommodation	160	185	160	240	396
% accommodated in furnished accommodation	21%	13.6%	16.2%	27.7%	36%
Average length of stay in furnished accommodation (days)	103	185	227	211	167

Source: Perth and Kinross Council's inspection submission

4.37 The number of people the Council provides with temporary accommodation has increased since our last inspection. The number of households the Council provided with bed and breakfast accommodation has increased to 553 during the year 2009/10. In the same year the Council also provided 152 households with hostel accommodation. During this period the Council provided furnished self contained accommodation to 396 households, this is an improvement in performance and reflects the increase in the availability of this type of good quality accommodation as a result of the actions taken by the Council.

- 4.38 The Council seeks to minimise the length of time that households spend in temporary accommodation and it has been successful in reducing the average length of stay in B&Bs to 26 days during 2009/10. This is positive. Length of stay in furnished self contained accommodation and hostel accommodation have increased and we found that some homeless people have been in temporary accommodation for long periods of time. Homeless people that we spoke to during the inspection were concerned about the length of time that it takes for the Council to provide them with settled accommodation. Following our re-inspection the Council told us that it has introduced target timescales for the average length of stay in Rio House and Greyfriars Hostel.
- 4.39 During our re-inspection we found that the Council now maintains contact with homeless households while they are in temporary accommodation to ensure that households are aware of the progress being made with their homeless and housing application. It also uses this contact to provide advice, assistance and support as required. Homeless people that we spoke to advised us that they were happy with how the Council maintained contact with them and the advice and support it provided.
- 4.40 The Council has a good understanding of where it can further develop and enhance its temporary accommodation to meet need. For example, it has well advanced plans to re-provision 54 mainstream Council properties at St. Catherine's Square into temporary accommodation which will provide a mix of forty three studio flats and eleven two apartment flats for single people. This development has the potential to significantly reduce the Council's use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Following our re-inspection the Council told us that, since August 2010, it has incrementally reduced its use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- 4.41 The Council has a good approach to developing its service to meet the needs of different client groups. It has started work to provide homeless people aged between 16 and 24 years with a dedicated supported accommodation facility. The Council is also taking forward its plans to provide young homeless people with a foyer facility in Perth.

- 4.42 The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 prohibits Councils from using unsuitable accommodation for households with children and pregnant women for longer than 14 days unless exceptional circumstances apply. Since our last inspection the Council has developed how it monitors its performance and during 2009/10 the Council breached the order on five occasions. Although this has significantly reduced, at the time of our re-inspection, it remained a weakness. The Council has since told us that it has further reduced this figure and that from April 2010 it has breached the order on one occasion.
- 4.43 During our last inspection we found that the Council did not set minimum standards for its temporary accommodation, especially for Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The Council has now set comprehensive standards, introduced a management and compliance framework for temporary accommodation and has appointed a dedicated Homeless Property Coordinator with responsibility for ensuring these are met and maintained. Some homeless people that we spoke to told us that some Bed and Breakfasts did not provide access to cooking facilities. The Council is aware of a small number of Bed and Breakfasts that do not meet all of the standards and is working with these establishments to address this.
- 4.44 With the exception of the Bed and Breakfast establishments that did not fully meet Council standards we found that the quality of temporary accommodation was generally good. Service users that we spoke to were happy with the quality of accommodation the Council provided across the range of accommodation options.
- 4.45 The Council provides people in temporary accommodation with a welcome pack with specific information. It tailors these packs to the type of accommodation it provides. The packs include useful information on the accommodation, service standards and include information on sources of independent advice. The welcome pack currently provided to homeless people in bed and breakfast accommodation does not make it clear that the accommodation should provide access to cooking facilities. However the Council told us that it intends to update this information.

- 4.46 The Code of Guidance recommends that Councils consider proximity to family and friends, accessibility of healthcare, employment, education and training, and support when placing people in temporary accommodation. We found that the Council takes a customer focussed approach to this issue and works to provide homeless people with accommodation that meets their needs.
- 4.47 The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation for people it assesses as not having a priority need or being intentionally homeless, for a period that will give them a reasonable opportunity to find accommodation for themselves. The Code of Guidance recommends that local authorities should assess the circumstances of homeless households when assessing what is a reasonable opportunity. We found that the Council does this and that it has a flexible approach. We asked the Council for information on the final outcomes obtained by these applicants however, it was unable to provide us with accurate information. This means that the Council does not know how successful it is in assisting this group of homeless people.
- 4.48 The Council has significantly improved how it manages its temporary accommodation since our previous inspection. It has appointed a designated officer to reduce of the length of time that self contained furnished temporary accommodation is empty. It has improved this from an average of 65 days during 2005/06 to 26 days during 2009/10 which is better than that of its mainstream empty homes. This improved performance has had a significant impact on the availability of temporary accommodation and on the ability of the Council to provide homeless people with good quality accommodation. Since our re-inspection, the Council told us that it has further improved its performance in this area and that its current performance is, on average, between 16 and 18 days.
- 4.49 During 2005/06 the Council secured permanent accommodation for 79% of the people who it assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need and to whom it had a duty to secure settled accommodation. This was higher than the national figure of 71% and excludes lost contact cases, withdrawn applications and those resolved prior to discharge of duty. However, during the year 2009/10, the percentage of homeless applicants to whom the Council has a duty to secure

settled accommodation, fell to 41.7%. This is significantly below the national figure of 75%.

- 4.50 The Council increased the percentage of its homes that it allocated to homeless households from 31% during 2005/06 to 54.7% during 2007/08, which is a significant improvement in performance. However, this declined to 46% during 2009/10. The Council was able to demonstrate that this is a direct result of a mismatch between the accommodation requirements of homeless households specifically for one bedroom properties, and a shortage of supply.
- 4.51 The Council has recently set a target to allocate between 58% and 65% of its empty homes to homeless applicants. It will review this target in six months. Setting such a target is a good approach, however it is unclear how the Council will achieve this given the mismatch between demand and supply as noted above.
- 4.52 The Council is excellent at maintaining contact with homeless households following an assessment decision where it provides temporary accommodation. Of all homeless applicants where an assessment decision was made the percentage that the Council lost contact with before it had discharged its duty declined significantly from 29% during 2005/06 to 2.7% during 2009/10. This performance is excellent. Of those homeless people where the Council has a duty to provide settled housing, the Council lost contact with only 6.6% of applicants during the year 2009/10, which is significantly lower than the national figure of 17%.
- 4.53 The Code of Guidance emphasises that Councils should seek to minimise the time that people are homeless and should secure accommodation quickly. As at June 2010, the Council had 490 homeless households with homeless priority need waiting for re-housing. The Council seeks to provide a permanent home for homeless households quickly. The average case duration between assessment decision and case closure during 2006/07 was 32.8 weeks, which is significantly higher than the national figure of 23.9 weeks. The performance of the Council has deteriorated to 35.8 weeks for 2009/10, which is also higher than the national

performance of 29.2 weeks. The Council continues to take a long time to provide settled housing for homeless applicants.

- 4.54 Under its allocations policy the Council has a target of 12 months to provide an offer of housing to applicants who have been awarded band A priority for housing. This applies to people who have been in temporary accommodation for over 6 months. This target timescale will assist some homeless households who have been awarded band A priority. At present the Council does not have a specific target time for providing homeless households more generally with an offer of housing or for securing settled accommodation, although it is considering the possibility of introducing such a target. It told us that this may be possible once it had gathered sufficient information on past performance and projected future performance. This is positive.
- 4.55 The Code of Guidance emphasises that homeless people should be treated the same as other households in the choice that they have and in the number of offers that they may be entitled to. The Council allows mainstream applicants to choose up to six lettings areas and it makes them more than one offer of accommodation. Homeless applicants are allowed to choose an unlimited number of areas but the Council will only make them one offer. If homeless applicants refuse this, the Council removes their homeless priority. However, these applicants still remain entitled to two additional offers of accommodation under their mainstream allocation priority.
- 4.56 During our previous inspection we found that the Council's allocation decisions lacked transparency. In response to this, the Council introduced a new allocations policy in April 2010. We examined a number of allocations made since the introduction of the new allocations policy and found clear audit trails in place.
- 4.57 One of the Council's medical categories is classified as having 'no housing need at all' in its allocations policy. We saw that the inflexibility of its allocations process means that certain properties will be allocated to applicants with this medical category, in preference to people with housing need. This has an impact

on the Council's effectiveness in meeting need and also on how quickly it is able to provide accommodation for those in greatest housing need. When we raised this with the Council it took immediate steps to address it.

- 4.58 During the previous inspection we found that homeless people were less likely to be housed in more desirable homes such as cottage type properties. We saw that the Council has effectively dealt with this weakness, with the percentage of cottage type properties let to homeless households increasing from 7% in 2005/06 to 33% during 2009/10.
- 4.59 At the time of our first inspection we also found that homeless people were more likely to be housed in properties where there was little or no demand and properties regarded as difficult to let. At the time of the previous inspection, homeless households were housed in 56.86% of low demand properties during 2005/06. The Council has taken action to address this weakness with the percentage falling to 38% during 2009/10.
- 4.60 The Council has effective arrangements for section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. During 2009/10 the Council made 129 referrals and 107 resulted in a successful allocation. The Council makes section 5 referrals within the framework of a common housing register and a common allocations policy with local partner RSLs. For RSLs that are not part of these the Council uses a vacancy led approach for section 5 referrals. The Council's approach to working with local RSLs is working well and is effective.
- 4.61 In addition to the above, the Council seeks to obtain accommodation for homeless households within the private sector where it is an appropriate solution. The Council has a Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme in place and has established PKC Lets, a Council letting agency for private sector stock to further improve access and choice. It is too early to assess the impact of these initiatives. The Council has also put in place comprehensive procedures and staff guidance for the effective use of Section 32A to discharge permanent duty.

4.62 In summary, the Council has a good approach to providing temporary and settled accommodation. It provides good quality temporary and settled accommodation and has addressed most of the weaknesses in the service that were identified at the time of the 2007 inspection. The Council has made good progress progressing initiatives to maximise access to the private rented sector. However, its use of bed and breakfast accommodation has increased, the Council continues to breach the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 in a small number of instances, and continues to take a long time to secure settled housing.

5. Is the homelessness service at Perth and Kinross Council managed for improvement?

Leadership and strategic planning

- 5.1 The Council has well established arrangements for service planning. In its 2008 Best Value Audit, Audit Scotland found that “the Council and its partners share a clear and ambitious vision that reflects local needs through the Perth and Kinross community plan.” The community plan sets out the shared vision and priorities for Perth and Kinross and details how the Community Planning partners, including the Council, will deliver these. The corporate plan sets out how the council will support the community plan and identifies the high-level objectives the Council is working towards to meet local needs. In particular, the corporate plan highlights the key priorities agreed by the Council.
- 5.2 Perth and Kinross Council’s Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) includes in its priorities for the area to, “close the inequalities gap, particularly in relation to poverty, educational opportunity, health and housing” and also to “increase available affordable housing.”
- 5.3 The Council’s interim Local Housing Strategy, covers the period 2009-2012 and sets out the overarching strategic direction for all housing and related issues across Perth and Kinross detailing its four main investment priority themes.
- 5.4 The operational delivery of its homelessness service sits within the framework of the Council’s corporate strategies and priorities. The Council’s Homelessness Strategy was approved by its Housing and Health Committee in February 2010. The Council involved a multi-agency steering group which included key services within the Council, NHS Tayside, voluntary sector agencies and registered social landlords, to develop the strategy. This helps reflect the Council’s commitment to a partnership approach to tackling homelessness.

- 5.5 The strategy sets out the Council's vision for the prevention and alleviation of homelessness and has three key strategic themes, these are:
- the prevention of homelessness, including the availability of information and advice services;
 - access to accommodation, including temporary, resettled and permanent housing; and
 - availability of support and care services.
- 5.6 To assist the Council and its partners work towards achieving the aims and objectives of the strategy, the Council established a Homeless Strategy Monitoring and Implementation Group in April 2010. It has developed a Homeless Strategy action plan and outcome monitoring framework which it links to the three main themes. Each of the Council's Homelessness Team plans are directly linked to the strategy's themes and aims.
- 5.7 We saw that the Council, its staff and local members have worked together to address the weaknesses we found in its homelessness service. Within a relatively short time frame, it has achieved significant improvement across its services and has demonstrated strong leadership, capacity and the drive to deliver its improvement plan objectives. We found that staff are encouraged and empowered to look for solutions to problems.

Performance management, planning and reporting

- 5.8 In its 2008 Best value audit, Audit Scotland found that, "performance management is well developed. The Council has integrated its corporate and community plan vision with its service plans – the Business Management Improvement Plans (BMIPs). These translate the four-year aims of the corporate plan into annual targets. The service plan objectives are then translated into service level actions through team plans, which link to individual's objectives through the Employee Review and Development (ERD) process."
- 5.9 The development and implementation of a comprehensive performance management framework has underpinned, and made a significant contribution to, the Council's management of its homelessness service. The Council introduced

the framework in April 2008 and has used it to help identify areas of weakness, barriers to improvement and resource issues. The framework has also helped the Council to map service improvements and link practice to outcomes for service users. The framework links to the BMIP, the Council's inspection Improvement Plan and the Homeless Service's five team plans. It incorporates all the performance indicator information presented to the Senior Management Team each month, as well as highlighting continuing improvement and progress towards targets.

5.10 The Council has developed a self evaluation toolkit, based on the principles of "How Good is Your Council". It has based its 'How Good is our Homeless Service' Framework around six key, high level questions and incorporates current guidance:

- what key outcomes have we achieved?;
- how well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?;
- how good is our delivery of key processes?;
- how good is our management?;
- how good is our leadership?; and
- what is our capacity for improvement?

5.11 The Council has used this toolkit, to demonstrate the strengths of its homelessness service and to help it identify further areas for improvement action. It intends to develop this approach across the housing service this year.

5.12 Although we saw some gaps in awareness of performance by the area offices, we generally found that staff within the homelessness teams are highly aware of the service's performance, across a number of measures. Team leaders are clear about the linkages across the service and work together to find solutions to areas identified for improvement actions. We also saw that staff have the capacity to successfully implement these into improvement action on the ground.

Customer focus and influence

- 5.13 Since our last inspection, the Council has introduced a number of measures to involve service users in the delivery of its homelessness services. It has carried out specific consultation exercises and has introduced a system for gathering customers' views on the way it delivers services. In consultation with service users the Council has also developed a resident's charter for Greyfriars hostel, which sets out its commitment to residents during their stay in the hostel.
- 5.14 The Council holds monthly residents' meetings at Greyfriars. These meetings provide hostel residents with an opportunity to raise issues and become involved in decisions affecting the day to day running of the hostel. The meetings, along with the initial booking in meeting, welcome pack and residents' charter help ensure residents are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- 5.15 Working in partnership with other hostel providers, the Council has established the Homeless Voice Group. The purpose and remit of this group is to work in partnership to involve customers in shaping homeless services.
- 5.16 We saw that the Council is committed to improving its approach to customer care. It delivered a customer care training session to all homelessness staff in 2008 and also held further sessions covering the Council's customer care standards. In addition, a number of staff have formal customer care qualifications.
- 5.17 The Council has delivered training to all homelessness team leaders and managers on the importance of effectively handling customer complaints, including the significance of identifying procedural and training issues. The Council has recently included complaints monitoring in its performance monitoring framework.
- 5.18 The Council undertakes mystery shopping exercises to help it assess the quality of service delivery. In two audits the Homeless Advice Centre received good and excellent ratings. The Council responded to a poor rating by reviewing its procedures and providing additional customer care training for new reception staff.

- 5.19 The Council have also recently set up a Residents Academy for hostel residents and tenants of temporary accommodation. Service users have attended a two day workshop to learn the skills they need to undertake a quality check of the homeless service.
- 5.20 The Council has developed its approach to gathering satisfaction information from its homelessness service users. Questionnaires covering a number of its activities including access, advice and prevention, support and its temporary accommodation are completed by service users. Prior to our re-inspection the survey results, covering the period from October 2009 to March 2010, were published in a “Homelessness Matters” information sheet. Although the number of returns was relatively low, they indicated good levels of satisfaction.
- 5.21 People we spoke to during the re-inspection generally said that they were happy with the services they had received and the level of customer care demonstrated by Council staff.
- 5.22 In addition to the responses to the customer feedback surveys for Greyfriars Hostel and Rio, the Council also gathers feedback from residents through comments made at resident meetings, through suggestion boxes and directly from staff. Responses to this feedback and actions taken by the Council are set out in a “you said, we did” style format and are on the Councils website and on display in Greyfriars and Rio.
- 5.23 Overall, we saw that the Council’s homelessness team works effectively to provide a high quality, customer focussed service. Staff within the service demonstrate willingness to improve the quality of services delivered to homeless people.

Equalities and diversity

- 5.24 The Council’s approach to equalities is guided by its Corporate Equalities Policy, Equalities Strategy and action plan 2007-10 and its statutory schemes for race, disability and gender equality. Its commitment to delivering equal opportunities is a core value of the Council and is reflected in its strategies and plans.

- 5.25 Perth and Kinross Council has systems in place to ensure that all of its services are able to provide access to information in other formats and languages, including telephone translation systems and text phone.
- 5.26 Following our last inspection, the Council undertook to carry out equalities impact assessments for all new key policies and we saw it has done this.
- 5.27 In reviewing the material that the Council makes available to its homelessness service users, our tenant assessors found that the documents are easy to read in plain English, with a good font size and are well laid out.
- 5.28 During our previous inspection we saw that its main homelessness reception facilities were not entirely suitable for or accessible to disabled people. However its new housing advice centre, from which it delivers most of its homelessness services, is compliant with the Disabilities Discrimination Act and offers good, accessible facilities for service users and staff.

Efficiency and value for money

- 5.29 In its 2008 Best Value Report, Audit Scotland found that, “financial management is very strong in the council and has continued to improve in recent years. A comprehensive reserves policy is regularly updated as part of the budget process and, more recently, medium-term planning has been further developed to better align budgets and corporate objectives.”
- 5.30 Since our previous inspection the Council has significantly increased the amount it spends on delivering its homelessness service from £2,863,530 in 2006/07 to £5,528,543 in 2009/10.
- 5.31 The Council had previously identified that collecting rental income from people in its temporary accommodation was an area for improvement and began working more closely with Housing Benefit and Arrears teams. Relevant staff from the housing benefit teams and the homeless service meet fortnightly. The objectives of this are:

- to assist those who are vulnerable to maximise housing benefit whilst they are living in temporary accommodation;
- to liaise with Welfare Rights, where appropriate, to ensure that all households have the opportunity to have their income maximised; and
- to minimise housing benefit subsidy loss to the Local Authority by ensuring housing benefit is considered in all temporary accommodation cases.

5.32 This approach has been successful in helping the Council to significantly increase the amount of income it receives from £1,211,226 in 2005/06 to £4,770,128 in 2009/10. This goes some way to offset the Council's increased spending on its homelessness services.

5.33 Over the last two years the Council has reduced its expenditure on the costs for bed and breakfast accommodation, and increased its spending on other temporary accommodation.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 This report highlights our findings following this housing inspection. We expect all organisations to respond effectively to our recommendations using their own improvement planning processes. We ask organisations that receive fair or poor assessments overall in their housing management, asset management and repairs service or homelessness service to submit an improvement plan to us within eight weeks of the publication of this report.

- 6.2 Perth and Kinross Council does not need to submit an improvement plan to us.

Sources of evidence

Groups and third parties consulted

- The Council's external auditor
- Homepoint
- Scottish Government's Homelessness Team
- Scottish Public Service Ombudsman
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Local Registered Social Landlords
- Shelter
- Perth & Kinross Council Social Work Department
- Perth Prison Link Officer
- Medical Advisor
- Employability DWP

Interviews/Meetings

- Elected Members
- Chief Executive
- Executive Director of Housing and Community Care
- Depute Director of Housing and Community Care
- Head of Housing
- Head of Strategy and Support
- Head of Community Care
- Lead Officer Criminal justices and Addiction Services
- Internal Auditor
- Service managers
- Staff from Housing Services

Reality checks

- Observation of information and advice to service users
- Observation of hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation
- Shadowing of allocations
- Shadowing of tenancy sign up interview
- Shadowing of assessment and follow-up interviews with homeless people
- Shadowing of temporary accommodation visits
- Review of housing list applications and allocations
- Review of homeless assessments and appeals
- Review of complaints

Key documents reviewed

- Perth & Kinross Council's Inspection Submission
- Relevant policy and procedures
- Minutes of meetings and associated reports
- Publicity material
- Council's website
- Outcome reports for homelessness
- Protocols with other agencies
- Local Housing Strategy

- Homelessness Strategy
- Single Outcome Agreement
- Community Plan
- Corporate Plan
- Service Plans
- Corporate Procurement Strategy

Examples of Positive Practice

These are areas we would highlight as working particularly well, taking account of the organisation's operating context:

Gathering and implementing the views of its service users

We found that the Council has a strong approach to gathering and implementing the views of its service users, particularly in its hostel facilities. In addition to the responses to the customer feedback surveys, for Greyfriars Hostel and Rio the Council also gathers feedback from residents through comments made at resident meetings, through suggestion boxes and directly to staff members. Responses to this feedback and actions taken by the Council are set out in a "you said, we did" style format and are on the Council's website and on display in Greyfriars and Rio.

Sustainability Alerter

The Council has developed a facility on its IT system that helps it to promote tenancy sustainability. The system will automatically prompt the support team once each previously homeless household has been in their tenancy for 6 months and again at 12 months. The team will then call each tenant and check for any potential problems that the Council is aware of. The purpose of this is to identify any difficulties that they may be experiencing in their tenancy and to liaise with the relevant Neighbourhood Services Team to address these before they become unmanageable.

Move-on Team

At the time of our inspection the Council was piloting a Move-on Team. This involves close working between the Homeless Support Team and the Temporary Accommodation Teams to assist homeless households move on from temporary accommodation into secure tenancies. The teams use a handover profile, which allows the effective sharing of appropriate information to help the new tenant. They also provide useful practical assistance. This practical assistance has been extended to include those applicants who move on to Perthshire Housing Association properties.

Performance Management Framework

The Council has a comprehensive performance management framework for temporary accommodation. It ensures that this framework is regularly improved upon to make sure that it is fit for purpose, meets the needs of staff and provides the information required to effectively manage the service.

Homeless Voice Group

Working in partnership with other hostel providers the Council has established the Homeless Voice Group. The purpose and remit of this group is to work in partnership to involve customers in shaping homeless services. The group utilises the Voice (Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement) toolkit to support engagement activity and involve customers in developing mechanisms that will best enable them to participate.

The Council have also recently set up a Residents Academy for hostel residents and tenants of temporary accommodation. Service users have attended a 2 day workshop to learn the skills required to undertake a quality check of the homeless service.

By including homeless service users as part of this process the Council aims to offer pathways to participation and engagement when they move into their permanent accommodation.

Private Sector Initiatives

In recognition of the fact that Perth and Kinross Council has a reducing stock base and a limited number of vacancies arising each year the Council has introduced a number of initiatives to improve access to the Private rented sector. Such initiatives include the Private Rented Sector Leasing Scheme, the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme, PKC Lettings Agency and the Integrated Housing Options Portal.

Prison Protocol

The Homeless Service has taken a lead role in producing the Tayside Interagency Prison Disclosure and Homeless Prevention Protocol. The protocol has been signed up to by HMP Perth, Angus Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Dundee City Council and Shelter. The protocol responds to the accommodation needs of prisoners and details

the roles, responsibilities and processes to be followed by each of the partners in ensuring that housing needs of prisoners are met. One of the main initiatives arising from the Protocol has been the introduction of weekly homeless surgeries.

Areas for improvement identified in our last inspection

In our last inspection report we identified a number of weaknesses, some of which were significant. The Council has successfully addressed all of these, and has significantly improved its performance in a number of areas. The main weaknesses we identified were:

Access to the homelessness service

- some aspects of the physical accessibility of the homelessness advice centre;
- the Council's lack of monitoring of how applicants access the service or which part of the Council area they are from;
- the distribution and quality of some of the Council's publicity material;
- the Council's lack of monitoring of how long it takes to interview applicants or how many it loses contact with prior to their interview; and
- the lack of transport to take applicants to accommodation out of hours.

Advice and prevention

- the Council's failure to accurately record repeat homeless presentations; and
- the lack of monitoring around homelessness prevention.

Assessment of homeless people

- progress towards the 2012 target to abolish the priority need category;
- the quality assurance process;
- the quality of assessment decisions;
- errors in recording decisions;
- the recording of investigations, evidence, and reasons for decisions;
- the length of time the Council takes to make assessment decisions;
- the length of time the Council takes to send out decision letters; and
- the quality of decision letters.

Securing Accommodation

- the condition and management of Greyfriars hostel;
- its use and management of temporary accommodation;
- the length of time that people spend in temporary accommodation;

- the number for whom the Council considers it has a duty to secure permanent accommodation is reducing and until the temporary directive so was the proportion of lets of its own properties to homeless people;
- the level of choice and the quality of accommodation the Council offers to homeless people is poorer than that for other applicants;
- the Council is unaware of how many of those it houses are able to sustain their new tenancies for a year or more; and
- the recorded outcomes for other homeless applicants are poor with half of these applicants having an outcome of not known.

Glossary

Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)	ASBOs are preventative orders designed to protect individuals from further anti-social behaviour that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress. Breach of an order is a criminal offence, punishable by a fine or imprisonment.
Asset management	Ensuring that current and future assets (houses, land, etc) fully support the organisation's objectives – working towards having the right assets, of the right quality, in the right place at the right time.
Benchmarking	A process used by organisations to systematically compare service processes and performance to identify best practice.
Capital Programme	Programme of major repair works funded mostly from borrowing.
CFCR	Capital funded from current revenue
Common housing register (CHR)	A register of all applicants for social housing used by two or more landlords within an area.
Direct Labour Organisation (DLO)	Internal organisation which carries out work on behalf of housing departments.
HomePoint	<p>A team within the Scottish Government that supports providers of housing information and advice services.</p> <p>HomePoint has broken down advice activities into three types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type I active information, sign-posting and explanation.• Type II casework.• Type III advocacy, representation and mediation.
Housing list	A list of applicants for housing that is used by the local authority to allocate its housing stock.
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	The budget a local authority has from rental income for managing and maintaining its houses and housing services.
ICT system	Information and communication system.
Notice of Proceedings (NOP)	The formal notice provided to tenants informing them that their landlord is taking legal proceedings to seek a court order for recovery of possession of a property.
Partnering	In contract management, a structured approach to improving efficiency and quality of work. It aims to reduce confrontation between the Council and its consultants and

contractors. Partnering requires formalised objectives, agreed problem solving methods and an active search for continued measurable improvements.

Performance Standards

The nationally-agreed standards RSLs and local authorities are expected to meet in providing housing services and in managing their organisations.

Planned maintenance

The planned renewal or maintenance of key property components.

Pre-inspections

Inspections undertaken to ascertain the nature of the repair required.

Post inspections

Inspections undertaken following work to check the suitability and quality of repairs.

Procurement

The way an organisation obtains services or materials from other organisations or agents.

Qualifying Repair

Repairs that qualify for inclusion in the Right to Repair scheme.

Registered social landlord (RSL)

A landlord providing social rented housing that is registered and regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO)

A tenant-representative group meeting certain conditions set down in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and registered with a social landlord.

Response repairs

Day to day repairs carried out on a reactive basis, distinguishable from planned, capital or cyclical maintenance.

Right to Buy

The right of many Scottish tenants to buy their property at a discounted price, depending on length of tenancy.

Right to Repair

Statutory scheme which sets out timescales for some repairs, and what can be done by a tenant if a landlord does not do the repair within the timescales.

Schedule of Rates (SOR)

A costed list of all or most of the day-to-day repairs that a client is likely to instruct a contractor to do.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)

A minimum quality standard for all of Scotland's social homes. Landlords should achieve the standard by 2015.

Scottish secure tenancy (SST)	The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 establishes the Scottish Secure Tenancy as the tenancy for all tenants of social landlords in Scotland.
Short Scottish secure tenancy (SSST)	Section 34 and schedule 6 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 establish the basic conditions when a short Scottish secure tenancy can apply to some tenants of social landlords in Scotland in place of a full SST.
Section 5 referral	Where, under Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, a local authority can request a registered social landlord that has accommodation in its area to provide accommodation to homeless people.
Shadowing	An inspection technique that involves accompanying and observing staff while they carried out their day-to-day tasks.
SMART criteria	Performance management acronym for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound.
Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI)	Indicators of local authorities' performance that are published by the Accounts Commission for Scotland.
Stakeholder	Any person or organisation using a landlord's service, affected by the landlord's actions or having an interest in the landlord's activities – an interested party.
Tenancy agreement	Legal document or contract between landlord and tenant setting out the rights and responsibilities of each.
Tenant assessor	Trained tenants (not of the landlord being inspected) who are part of the inspection team. They are involved in preparing for inspection, reading landlord materials and on-site visits as well as talking to tenants.
Tenure	The method by which a person occupies a property i.e. tenant, lodger, owner-occupier.
Variations	A term used to refer to the practice of changing a repair works order on site where the contractor feels additional or alternative work to that specified is required.
Void	A property without a tenant. Voids occur in the period between one tenant leaving and another taking over the tenancy.

About the Scottish Housing Regulator

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is an executive agency of the Scottish Government. We exercise independently the regulatory powers of Scottish Ministers in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. We register and regulate independent social landlords. These are usually housing associations, but they can also be housing co-operatives or companies limited by guarantee. We also inspect the housing and homeless services provided by local authorities.

We operate independently and impartially, while remaining accountable to Scottish Ministers for the standard of our work and for inspecting and reporting within the overall context of Scottish Ministers' strategic objectives for the social housing sector and tackling homelessness. A code of practice sets out what Ministers expect from us in delegating their regulatory powers to us. Our independence is further safeguarded by a Regulation Board that supports the Chief Executive to manage and direct the organisation.

Our purpose is to:

- protect the interests of current and future tenants and other service users;
- ensure the continuing provision of good quality social housing in terms of decent homes, good services, value for money, and financial viability; and
- maintain the confidence of funders.

Our work supports the principles of public service reform by promoting good services that are organised around the needs of the people who use them. We encourage registered social landlords (RSLs) and local authorities to be open, accountable, efficient and well governed. And we expect them to provide equal opportunity and open access to their services.

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**The Scottish
Government**



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