

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFORMATION REPORT – MINISTERIAL STATEMENT FOR MODIFYING LOCAL CONNECTION
REFERRALS: CONSULTATION

REPORT BY JOHN MORROW, SERVICE LEADER (HOUSING)

ABSTRACT

This report provides information to members with regard to the Scottish Government's latest consultation paper to suspend the operation of local connection referrals between local authorities in Scotland. A decision is not required in terms of the current Scheme of Delegation to Officers and the Order of Reference of Committees.

1. SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION

Local connection is defined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as a connection which a person has with an area because:

- they are or were in the past normally resident in it, and this residence was of their own choice; or
- they are employed in it; or
- they have family associations; or
- they have special circumstances.

Local authorities currently have the power under section 33 of the 1987 Act to refer homeless households who do not have a local connection with them to another local authority where they do have such a connection.

In 2019/20 97% of homeless applications made in Angus had a local connection to Angus (compared to 92% of applications nationally) and 0.7% of applications were referred to another local authority (compared to 0.5% nationally).

Last year, the Scottish Government issued a consultation paper inviting views on a recommendation from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) to give Scottish Ministers the power to modify local connection referrals between local authorities in Scotland. [Report No 108/19](#) sets out Angus Council's response to the consultation.

Following the consultation, the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 (Commencement No. 4) Order 2019 commenced the local connection provisions and requires Scottish Ministers to publish a Ministerial statement setting out the circumstances and general criteria for modifying referrals.

The Scottish Government are now consulting on the core content of the draft Ministerial statement and their proposal to address barriers for people facing homelessness by suspending local connection referrals.

Schedule 1 sets out the Ministerial statement and Angus Council's responses to the consultation questions.

While generally supportive of the proposals and draft statement, there continue to be concerns around the possible impact on some local authorities that may attract a disproportionate number of applicants with no local connection or may have limited capacity to absorb any increase in applications that arise. As well as potential increase in homeless applications, there continue to be concerns that applicants will not be able to exercise real choice and will be encouraged to apply as homeless to neighbouring authorities or areas where there are less pressures on the availability of accommodation.

2. REPORT AUTHOR

This report has been compiled by John Morrow, Service Manager (Housing) who can be contacted by emailing COMMUNITIES@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices: **Schedule 1** – Consultation Response