

HOUSING IMPROVEMENT TEAM ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

NAME OF HIT: Housing Options

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY DURING THE YEAR:

The main focus of the Housing Option Improvement Group has continued to be the transfer of the homelessness service to the AHSCP, with the role of the group slightly changing for this period to become the project working group with a focus on delivering the project plan.

The outcome of the service review was to establish a new Homelessness Solutions and Prevention Team, to sit alongside the Homelessness Support Service within the AHSCP. The team will deliver services in relation to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. Establishment of the Team commenced late 2022 with team members coming into post between January and April 2023.

The Homelessness Prevention and Solutions Team have been undergoing rigorous training as well as working with members of the project team to establish the approach to the prevention of homelessness in Angus, which includes developing new customer pathways and processes ensuring both a person centred and trauma informed approach for those customers facing a homeless situation as well as ensuring the service is easily accessible to those who find themselves facing a homeless situation in Angus.

The transfer of the homelessness service commenced in April 2023 on a phased approach and is progressing well and on schedule with the project plan. The four phases are as follows:

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| Phase 1 | Commenced 17 April 2023 All new prevention and homelessness cases in line with the customer pathways from the Arbroath, Montrose and Carnoustie areas undertaken by the Homelessness, Prevention and Solutions Team |
| Phase 2 | Commenced 24 July 2023 All new homelessness cases from all three Community Housing Teams undertaken by the Homelessness Prevention and Solutions Team |
| Phase 3 | Scheduled for 1 September 2023 Transfer of Out of Hours Service |
| Phase 4 | Scheduled for 30 October 2023 Full transfer of the homelessness service including the transfer of existing homelessness and prevention of homelessness cases currently being managed by the Housing Service. |

A service level agreement is in place between Angus Council and the AHSCP to ensure the governance arrangements which includes quarterly review meetings and a risk assessment. The transfer of the homelessness service from the Housing Service to the AHSCP raises the potential for a number of risks which would impact on customers, staff, and the delivery of a statutory homelessness service and these are being closely monitored. This risk assessment will be updated following completion of the phased transfer to ensure that it reflects any emerging risks related to the full-service implementation and any failure to meet our statutory homeless duties.

During this period, the homeless service has continued to be provided by the Community Housing Teams. This has been challenging due to having to free up the resources which previously sat within the Community Housing Teams to allow the new team in AHSCP to be established. This has significantly impacted the workloads of the Community Housing Teams as they have been continuing to provide the homeless service with reduced resources.

We have continued to monitor performance during this period given the concerns around resources and recognise that some of our data integrity has been impacted as well as the case management of homeless and prevention cases. This is as a result of reduced resources and also for the reasons outlined in our initiation document for the transfer but we are confident this will improve as we reach full transfer.

PRIORITIES FOR NEXT YEAR:

Complete the transfer of the Homelessness Service to the AHSCP.

Review the role and membership of the housing options improvement group taking account of the transfer of the service and the new partnership approach to homelessness with the creation of a new joint action plan.

Continue to monitor closely the homeless and housing options performance, particularly over the transition period of the transfer and in line with the Service level agreement.

Review tenancy sustainment figures to establish any patterns, trend, and reasons by the fluctuating figures.

PROGRESS AGAINST CHARTER OUTCOMES AND SUMMARY OF KEY PERFORMANCE DATA AND ANALYSIS (NOTING ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN PERFORMANCE):

Homeless Applications

Homeless applications in 2022/23 increased by 14%, following a reduction in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. We are experiencing a year-on-year increase in homeless applications. We received 614 homeless applications in 2022/23 in comparison to 538 applications in 2021/22. Latest Scottish Government statistics show that homeless applications are now exceeding pre-pandemic levels for all. This reflects the challenges in recent years with external pressures such as recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, housing supply and affordability, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the economic climate. All of these have an impact on demand for housing and homelessness services.

The profile of applicants is consistent with previous years. Single person households continue to make up the greatest proportion of homeless applicants, 82% of applications were from single person households, an increase of 8% from the previous year, and 14% of applications included children in the household – this is a reduction on the number of applications from families with children from the previous year (decreased by 11%).

Applications from 26–59-year-olds continue to make up the majority of homeless applications and the number of applications made by younger people under 25 is increasing on previous years in line with overall applications. The dominance of young single households applying as homeless needs to be considered as we develop approaches to both prevent and respond to homelessness in Angus.

Applications from households with White Scottish and Other British ethnic origin continue to represent the majority of homeless applications (89% of applications). There was one application from a household who were ineligible for assistance or had no recourse to public funds.

We have also seen a 29% increase in the number of people being assessed as homeless who have at least one additional support need identified.

Relationship breakdown/ being asked to leave continues to be the most common reason for homeless applications in Angus and has continued to increase over the past 2 years. There has been a slight increase in applications following action by landlord or lender, but these are significantly lower than anticipated. The number of applications resulting from non-domestic violence or harassment has also reduced, whereas applications resulting from a violent or abusive relationship has slightly increased but is still significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels and prior to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Housing Policy, a reduction of 45%. There is also

work ongoing to implement a policy with the aim to prevent homelessness arising from harassment or non-domestic violence, in line with the domestic abuse policy.

The number of homeless applications with a decision within 28 days has reduced to 30 days from 36 days in 21/22 but is still above the Scottish Average of 21 days.

The average number of days from homeless application to closure of a homeless case has slightly increased from 149 days in 21/22 to 154 days in 22/23, this remains below the Scottish average of 266 days.

Households Accessing Temporary Accommodation

The number of households in temporary accommodation has remained steady this year, with 98 households being in temporary accommodation as 31 March 2023, this is a very slight increase from 96 households as of 31 March 2022 showing an increase of 3%, having peaked in 2020/21, following the first lockdown because of a temporary suspension of allocations during this period.

The number of households with children in temporary accommodation remained relatively low at 10 households as of 31 March 2023, which is the same figure as 21/22 and there have been no households with children placed into B&B in 2021/22 or 2022/23. We are continuing to monitor the use of unsuitable accommodation and breaches of the Order on a monthly basis alongside reporting on the impact of the recent changes to local connection.

The average length of time in temporary homeless accommodation has increased to 173 days from 152 days in 2021/22. This remains below the Scottish average which sits at 223 days. 155 households entered temporary accommodation during 2023/23 with 121 households exiting.

Tenancy Sustainment

Tenancy sustainment continues to remain high. Percentage of new tenancies to existing tenants sustained for more than a year was 87.80% compared to 85.11% in 2021/22. Percentage of new tenancies to applicants who were assessed as statutory homeless by the local authority sustained for more than a year also very slightly increased to 86.07% having previously been 85.94% in 21/22. The percentage of new tenancies to applicants from the landlord's housing list sustained for more than a year dropped slightly to 87.43% having previously been 91.09% in 21/22 with the percentage of new tenancies to others sustained for more than a year having significantly increased from 50% in 21/22 to 100% in 22/23.