

<i>item:</i>	5
<i>report:</i>	CYP51/08

HOMELESSNESS AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE by David Goldie

Summary

This report provides information on young people including care leavers who become homeless and about arrangements for the provision of temporary accommodation for young people leaving care and families with children.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Information was provided to the Committee on 22 August, 2008 in relation to care leavers supported by Highland's Throughcare and Aftercare services together with the range of accommodation settings currently used when homelessness occurs.
- 1.2 The Committee requested further information on the use of Bed and Breakfast and hostel accommodation for young people leaving care and how this might be minimised. At a subsequent meeting on 3 October 2008, information was also requested in relation to the wider use of Bed and Breakfast for households with children.
- 1.3 During 2007/8 the Council received 2272 approaches from households reporting that they were homeless or threatened with homelessness. This was a slight increase in numbers from the previous year (2006/07)
- 1.4 The following table shows a breakdown of applicants by age:

	2006/7	2007/8	percentage of all applicants
16 – 17	197	191	8
18 – 25	651	695	31
26 – 59	1270	1287	57
60+	99	99	4
All	2217	2272	100

- 1.5 Young people under the age of 25 years make up 39% of all homeless approaches. These figures include young people who have previously been in the care of the local authority and where the local authority has parental responsibility.
- 1.6 The above figures also include households with children which account for 654 households (29%) of all homeless applications.

- 1.7 The Council has a range of legal duties to all homeless applicants in that we must provide them with information and advice, make an assessment of their homelessness in accordance with the homeless legislation and if required provide them with temporary accommodation. Where the applicant is unintentionally homeless and in priority need we must secure permanent accommodation.
- 1.8 In the last year 10 care leavers applied to the Council as homeless. The Council's current homeless policy will assess any applicant under the age of 25 as being vulnerable and therefore in priority need, if they have at any time in their life been in the care of a local authority. During 2007/08 an additional 48 applicants under the age of 25 applied as homeless stating that they had previously been in the care of a local authority.

2 Temporary Accommodation

- 2.1 There is tremendous pressure on the Council in relation to the provision of temporary accommodation. Currently the Council uses its own properties, properties leased from other social housing providers (RSLs), properties leased from private owners, as well as bed and breakfast and hostel type accommodation.
- 2.2 The following table shows the number of units of temporary accommodation currently available to the Council.

Temporary accommodation by ownership type	Properties	Rooms
Council owned	84	22
Leased from private owners	109	142
Leased from RSLs	70	0
Total	263	164

- 2.3 In addition to the above the Council does purchase bed spaces in other bed and breakfast accommodation as required on a regular basis.
- 2.4 During 2007/8 the Council had 1032 of its own properties available to let. This number decreases each year. The time people spend in temporary accommodation is increasing from an average of 11.80 weeks during 2006/07 to 12.95 during 2007/08 as the Council has increasing duties to a larger number of homeless households.
- 2.5 The Council has set standards it applies to properties used as temporary accommodation. These standards apply to all properties whether owned by the Council or leased to the Council. Temporary accommodation is inspected after each applicant leaves and repairs and electric and gas checks are done and furnishings replaced where needed. Any day to day repairs are carried out as they are reported in accordance with the Council's repairs policy.
- 2.6 A House in Multiple Occupancy licence is required if three or more unrelated adults share either cooking, toilet or personal washing facilities. Housing and Property staff will advise landlords of this requirement and will not normally use properties

without this licence unless the occupancy rate is less than 3.

- 2.7 Bed and Breakfast accommodation is normally inspected prior to entering into an agreement with a landlord, and will normally be inspected at least annually. The officer inspecting the property will ask for a copy of the fire certificate and if applicable the gas safety certificate. The certificate numbers and date of the last inspection are recorded on our files. The inspection includes checking that smoke detectors are in place and where there are internal glass doors that the glass is safety glass, and generally that the property is safe and the furnishings are of a reasonable standard and fit for purpose.
- 2.8 Temporary accommodation is normally provided in the area where the applicant approaches as homeless. Sometimes the Council is unable to provide appropriate accommodation in the area where applicants apply due to the lack of accommodation in the area. There are occasions where it would not be appropriate to accommodate people locally e.g. in cases where there has been harassment or domestic violence.
- 2.9 An initial risk assessment of each applicant is carried out when considering what would be an appropriate and manageable placement. The assessment will look at the household makeup e.g. single person, family with children etc., the type of accommodation available and in the case of accommodation with shared facilities who else might be accommodated there.
- 2.10 Staff will also take into consideration the skills the household has in relation to managing the property. Young people should never be accommodated in properties where it is felt that they may not be safe.
- 2.11 Many young people approaching as homeless, who have left the family home for the first time, or those leaving care, are not able to manage a tenancy. They may have few of the budgeting, cooking or door keeping skills that are necessary to sustain a tenancy. In addition to this many young people going into a tenancy on their own find that they are very lonely and vulnerable. Each young person leaving care will be offered support by Barnardos Springboard who can help them to plan for the future, prepare for leaving care, provide emotional support and assist the young person to make contact with other services. Young people leaving care are also offered practical housing support to help them cope with the day to day living skills required to sustain a tenancy.

3 Increasing Housing Options for young people

- 3.1 Work is ongoing in relation to developing more options for young people (including those who have been in the care of the local authority). This includes Planefield House, Inverness which provides intensive support. The property can accommodate 5 young people and will concentrate on young people leaving care. A supported lodgings scheme is also being developed. The recruitment of landlords is underway.
- 3.2 As a move on from intensive supported accommodation it is intended that suitable properties are identified, perhaps in close proximity to existing children's homes, that

will be let to Barnardos Springboard, who will sublet to young people. Barnardos Springboard will manage and support the tenants in this accommodation. This accommodation may be shared (maximum of two people sharing). General housing support will continue during this period of time. Young people will not move on from this type of accommodation until they are deemed ready to move to permanent accommodation, the aim being that this makes the tenancy sustainable and the move less traumatic for the young person.

- 3.3 A protocol to highlight roles and responsibilities is being developed, and will be implemented at the beginning of 2009.
- 3.4 The aim of the protocol will be that care leavers supported by Highland's Throughcare and Aftercare services will no longer apply as homeless on leaving care, and they will not be accommodated in homeless accommodation. In order to deliver this there will have to be sufficient appropriate supported and move on accommodation available to enable young people to develop skills to sustain a permanent tenancy. Their housing application will receive appropriate priority when it is deemed that they are ready to move to a permanent tenancy.

4 Accommodation

- 4.1 The Council currently has parenting responsibilities for 74 young people. The following table shows where they are currently accommodated and those who are waiting for permanent housing. Some young people have not applied for permanent housing and others will not have access to the housing list until they are 16 years of age.

Current accommodation	Number of young people	Waiting for permanent housing	Number under 16 years of age
Own tenancy	24	n/a	
Temporary Tenancy	2		
Family/friend/ relatives or lodgings	18	7	
B & B arranged by the Council	2	2	
Flat/house share	2		
Foster care	8	4	4
**Lost contact	1		
Residential school/unit	8	5	2
Supported accommodation/B & B	6	4	
Kinship care	1	0	
Not accommodated	1		
In prison	1	1	
Total	74	23	6

** Applicant moves between Highland and Aberdeen and only contacts when he feels he requires assistance.

- 4.2 Two care leavers supported by Highland's Throughcare and Aftercare services are currently living in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Both occupy accommodation that is safe and both have the use of kitchen facilities. One has sole use of toilet and washing facilities the other shares these facilities. Both are on the housing register

for permanent accommodation. One applicant has previously been in 2 different temporary accommodation types and the other has previously occupied 4 other types of accommodation and they have been asked to leave because of their behaviour. Both are supported by Barnardos Springboard as they have complex needs and it is unlikely that they would be able to manage to sustain a tenancy at the current time.

5 The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004

5.1 The above order states what is accepted as suitable accommodation for families with children or pregnant women. The definition of family is:

- a woman who is pregnant; or
- a household where a pregnant woman resides or might reasonably be expected to reside; or
- a household where dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside.

5.2 "Suitable accommodation" means accommodation which meets the following descriptions:

- It is within the local authority area,
- It has adequate toilet and personal washing facilities for the exclusive use of the household and has adequate bedrooms for the exclusive use of the household.
- The accommodation must also have adequate cooking facilities and the household must have the use of a living room (these can be shared)
- The accommodation must be accessible 24 hours a day.

5.3 The accommodation must also have access to facilities and services for the purposes of health and education in the locality of the accommodation, taking account of the distance of travel, by public transport or transport provided by a local authority; and the accommodation must be suitable for occupation by children.

5.4 Under current guidance accommodation which does not meet the above standards can be used for a short period of time (14 days) without a breach of the order being committed.

5.5 As at 17 November 2008 the Council are breaching this order with 8 households.

5.6 An internal action plan has been implemented to eliminate the breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. The actions include:

- Making requests to local Registered Social Landlords to provide us with additional properties to use as temporary accommodation
- Running an advertising campaign to attract more private owners willing to lease properties to the Council
- Encouraging households to continue to stay with their families by awarding the same priority on the housing list that they would have if they were in temporary accommodation

6 Summary

6.1 This report presents information on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for

care leavers and families with children. Occasionally bed and breakfast accommodation will be the best option for accommodation in the short term. Where it is used it should be of a good standard and risk assessed. This type of accommodation should not be used for longer than absolutely necessary.

6.2 The Highland Homeless Strategy 2008/9 – 2011/12 was approved by Housing and Social Work Committee on 12 November 2008, subject to final consultation. The Strategy aims to reduce homelessness and provide responsive and effective services. It will do this by refocusing and developing services so that the following 5 high level outcomes are achieved.

- **fewer people become homeless** - those at risk of homelessness will be assisted through early, effective intervention to prevent the crisis of homelessness or repeated homelessness
- **duration of homelessness is reduced** - households experiencing homelessness will receive a quality consistent service; spend shorter periods in appropriate temporary accommodation and be helped to access a wider range of housing
- **sustainable re-settlement is secured** - more effective support will be provided to those who need it so that they can live independently successfully and not lose their home
- **access to settled accommodation is provided** - all unintentionally homeless households will be entitled to settled accommodation by 2012
- **effective joint working** - effective joint working with external and internal partners and corporate responsibility helps achieve the other outcomes.

6.3 Achieving these outcomes will allow us to work towards better options for all homeless people including young people and families.

7. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- note the current position in relation to children and young people occupying temporary accommodation
- note the actions being taken to continue to improve the situation and eliminate the use of unsuitable accommodation.

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