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| item: | 5 |
| report: | CYP44/09 |

IMPROVING ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE **by David Goldie**

Summary

This report provides an update on issues relating to young people and families with children becoming homeless, including the use of temporary accommodation.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 November 2008 the Joint Committee requested information relating to families with children becoming homeless including the use of temporary accommodation.
- 1.2 During 2008/9 the Council received 2,327 approaches from households reporting that they were homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is just slightly more than the number of approaches in the previous year (2,296).
2. The following table shows a breakdown of applicants by age of the main applicant:

| | 2006/7 | 2007/8 | 2008/9 | % of all applicants (2008/9) |
|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 16 – 17 | 197 | 191 | 176 | 8 |
| 18 – 25 | 651 | 695 | 704 | 30 |
| 26 – 59 | 1270 | 1287 | 1335 | 57 |
| 60+ | 99 | 99 | 112 | 5 |
| All | 2217 | 2272 | 2327 | 100 |

- 2.1 In 2008/2009 young people under the age of 25 years made up 38% of all homeless approaches, which is 1% lower than 2007/08. These figures include young people who have previously been in the care of the local authority and where the local authority has parental responsibility.
- 2.2 The number of young people applying as homeless who reported that they were

leaving the care of the local authority during 2008/09 remains at the same level as 2007/08. (10 individuals, or 0.4% of approaches).

- 2.3 The above figures also include households with children, of which 678 approached us in 2008/09. This accounts for 29% of all homeless approaches, the same proportion as in 2007/08.
- 2.4 As reported previously the Council currently assesses 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.
- 2.5 During 2008/09 127 applicants under the age of 25 applied as homeless stating that they had previously been in the care of a local authority. This is an increase of 77 applicants (61%) on 2007/08 figures. The increase in numbers may be as a result of staff training and a general increase in the awareness of this client group. Staff are now better able to identify applicants who fit into this category who may not previously have been identified as former care leavers.

3 Temporary Accommodation

- 3.1 The Council now collects data on the proportion of young people under the age of 25 who sustain their tenancies for at least a 12 month period. For 2008/09 88.5% of young tenants had sustained their tenancies for at least a year.
- 3.2 **The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004**
As reported to the Joint Committee on 28 November 2008 the above order states what is acceptable as accommodation for families with children or pregnant women. There has been a significant improvement in the Council's performance on this in the last year.

| | Number of Breaches |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 30 June 2008 | 16 |
| 30 September 2008 | 18 |
| 31 December 2008 | 12 |
| 31 March 2009 | 14 |
| 30 June 2009 | 0 |
| 30 September 2009 | 5 |

4 Increasing Housing Options for young people

- 4.1 Planefield House, Inverness which provides intensive support to young people is now operational. The property accommodates 5 young people and concentrates on young people leaving care.
- 4.2 A supported lodgings scheme run by Barnardos Springboard is underway and to date 3 landlords have been recruited and another is currently undergoing assessment. The 3 approved landlords can provide places for 4 young people. The recruitment of landlords is ongoing.

4.3 Protocol for Accommodation and Support for Young People Leaving Care

Housing and Property Services and Social Work Services have developed a protocol to highlight roles and responsibilities and this is being implemented.

4.4 The aim of the protocol is 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 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.

4.5 The Council's Housing and Social Work Committee considered changes to the Highland Housing Register allocations policy on 11 November 2009. As part of the changes it was agreed to extend eligibility of Care & Support Points to clients in a wider range of settings, including through and after care, and kinship care.

The revised policy will be implemented from April 2010, subject to consultation.

5 The Children (Scotland) Act 1995

This Act outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff in Housing and Property Service, Social Work Service and other Council services when dealing with situations involving families with children or young people for example by:

- assisting them to sustain a tenancy or
- if they present as homeless or are at risk of eviction.

5.1 Housing and Property Services and Social Work Services are currently working on incorporating the duties placed on the Council under the Children's Act into the GIRFEC programme. This will achieve a more seamless assessment, planning and review processes for families with children and young people.

Recommendation

Committee is asked to note the progress made in relation to the use of accommodation.

David Goldie

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