

# Helping Homeless People

Delivering the Action Plan for  
Prevention and Effective Response  
Homelessness Monitoring Group Third Report – April 2006



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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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# HOMELESSNESS: DELIVERING THE ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

## THIRD REPORT FROM THE HOMELESSNESS MONITORING GROUP TO SCOTTISH MINISTERS

### INTRODUCTION

1. We were appointed by the Scottish Executive in May 2002 to support and monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force and report to Ministers - as recommended by the Task Force. Our membership and remit is listed at Appendix A. Three subgroups of the Monitoring Group have also been established to focus on the following areas:

- Planning for the abolition of the priority need distinction by 2012.
- Awareness raising and best practice.
- Planning for implementation of the new accommodation and support regime for intentionally homeless households.

2. This is our third report. It:

- Reviews the progress made across the country in delivering the recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force, with a particular focus on progress made in the time since our last report to Ministers was published in April 2005. As with our previous reports, it should be noted that we are reporting progress made by the Group and its subgroups but also by a wide range of delivery partners;
- Sets out arrangements put in place to monitor the effects of implementation of the recommendations; and our understanding of the effects of these changes - reflecting analytical work carried out to support the production of the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need which was published in December 2005; and
- Sets out the key areas of work for the Monitoring Group and its subgroups for 2006-07.

### SECTION 1 - PROGRESS WITH DELIVERY

3. This section records progress against the Homelessness Task Force's recommendations in the period since our last report. In particular, the following key developments should be highlighted:

- The Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need was consulted on and then published in December 2005. This set out the measures which have been and will be taken to achieve the legislative target that all unintentionally homeless people will be entitled to permanent accommodation by 2012. The Statement contained a series of interim

objectives - including an administrative target that local authorities should reduce the proportion of non-priority assessments by 50% by 2009.

- Local authorities have carried out an assessment of their current position as regards capacity to achieve the 2012 target and the indicators which will be used to measure progress have been set out.
- A revised Code of Guidance on Homelessness was published by the Scottish Executive - taking account of changes in legislation and research evidence.
- Communities Scotland published a report on the findings from their Pathfinder inspections of 5 local authorities, to highlight the key themes that emerged on services for homeless people, and from the inspections of 22 RSLs on their contribution to alleviating homelessness. Communities Scotland carried out 21 individual inspections during the reporting period. A public consultation is currently underway on the agency's approach to regulation and inspection in social housing.
- A symposium has been held to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the future of housing advice services in prisons. The MoD has also sponsored an awareness raising symposium in Scotland to ensure that local authorities and others are aware of the assistance which is available for ex-service personnel.
- The National Rent Deposit Forum Development Officer (Scotland) has provided support and advice to rent deposit schemes in Scotland through networking meetings, training, research and dissemination of information.
- New arrangements have been put in place for the New Futures Fund. From April 2006 Community Planning Partnerships will take the lead in developing the local infrastructure of support services, building on the work of existing New Futures funded projects and other support services in their areas.
- DWP has published *A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work*, marking the beginning of national debate on the future direction of welfare reform.
- A two-year pilot project targeting homeless households in temporary accommodation is underway in the east London boroughs of Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Newham. The project (Working Future<sup>1</sup>) combines measures to tackle the benefits trap created by high rents with targeted assistance to overcome other barriers to employment.
- National Performance Standards for housing benefit administration have been revised to focus more clearly on outcomes and the key enablers that support delivery, and local authorities continue to improve their performance against the standards.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.workingfuture.org.uk> ; see also paragraphs 21 and 39.

- A revised Key Performance Indicator on rent arrears has been introduced in the Accounts Commission Direction for 2006/07.
- Research on single room rent has been published by DWP.
- A series of regional seminars on the importance of social networks were organised by the Scottish Social Networks Co-ordinator and a report of proceedings published.
- A review of the HL1 data collection system has been undertaken and the revised proforma is currently being piloted.

4. The rest of this section lists the progress made against each suite of Homelessness Task Force recommendations. A more detailed progress report covering all 59 of the recommendations, and setting out future action required against each, is published separately as an appendix to this report.

### Legislation

5. Following an extensive consultation exercise, the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need was published on 21 December 2005.<sup>2</sup> This stated that the abolition of priority need would proceed by way of an administrative target to reduce the proportion of non-priority assessments by 50% by 2009 and set out a series of interim objectives towards the 2012 target.

6. The 2012 planning subgroup played a major part in pulling together the information which underpinned the Statement and was published alongside it in a technical annex<sup>3</sup>. A pro-forma was developed which asked local authorities to state their current and projected position in relation to homelessness applications and assessments; levels of lets required to meet this demand; level of lets available; information on support needs; and wider housing need. Tribal HCH were commissioned to analyse the results - this analysis was published in August alongside the consultation paper on the content of the Statement.<sup>4</sup> The technical annex draws on this information and sets it alongside trend based modelling to consider two possible future scenarios. See paragraphs 52-59 of this report for further details.

7. Research work relating to the accommodation and support needs of intentionally homeless households has been ongoing throughout the course of the year and has been overseen by the Intentionality subgroup - the final report will be published shortly and will inform our view as to the implementation timetable for sections 4-6 of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003. A small number of authorities have been funded by the Scottish Executive's Justice Department during the course of the year to develop 'Breaking the Cycle' pilot projects - providing accommodation and support for families with a history of anti-social

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/21133010/30107>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/20142423/24243>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1033/0016815.pdf>

behaviour - and the lessons learned from these may also be of relevance to implementation.

8. Changes to the local connection provisions within homelessness legislation will be consulted on and brought into force during the course of this year. The consultation material will take account of our discussions on this issue. The Scottish Executive is also currently holding a series of meetings with stakeholders to consider further some of the key issues identified during the consultation on draft regulations under section 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and will take forward work on implementation of section 11 of the 2003 Act which requires landlords and lenders to inform local authorities of impending homelessness.

9. Statistics relating to compliance with the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 were published for the first time on 28 March 2006 - further details are contained at paragraph 45 of this report.

### **Culture and training**

10. As in previous years, members of the Monitoring Group and delivery partners have been involved in a number of activities designed to raise awareness of homelessness and identify and disseminate good practice. In particular, the Awareness Raising and Best Practice subgroup has been formed and has:

- Overseen the development of a study into knowledge, understanding and views of homelessness carried out by the Chartered Institute of Housing, which will be published shortly.
- Advised on the scope of the pilot study into the implementation of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004.
- Advised on the drawing up of a specification for research into the efficacy of activity being carried out by local authorities to prevent homelessness.

11. An updated version of the Code of Guidance on Homelessness was distributed by the Scottish Executive in May 2005<sup>5</sup>. A new loose-leaf and web format was used to facilitate easier use by practitioners and future updates. The Awareness Raising and Best Practice subgroup will have a key role in considering the most effective ways in which to identify and disseminate good practice and to develop the suite of new/updated guidance which was referred to in the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need. Many local authorities have held local events to raise awareness within their communities and the consultation on the Statement also provided useful opportunities to engender political debate.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Housing/homeless/guidance>

<sup>6</sup> Consultation events with elected Members took place in Edinburgh (12 September), Aberdeen (3 October) and Glasgow (10 October). Text of the Parliamentary debate held to coincide with the consultation is available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-05/sor1027-02.htm#Col20119>.

12. Inspections carried out by Communities Scotland check the extent to which service users are involved in improving services - to date inspections indicate varied practice across local authorities but do identify positive practices in some areas. More broadly, inspections have revealed a similar picture in relation to the promotion of values, attitudes and behaviours which deliver responsive and personalised services. Good practice noted included the development of a customer charter for homelessness and a positive approach to person centred interviews, however weaknesses were also identified relating to approaches based on rationing entitlement rather than identifying solutions and placing the onus on homeless people to provide proof for assessments for example.<sup>7</sup>

13. The Scottish Housing Best Value Network has piloted and evaluated a peer review programme for homelessness services which included service users as part of the review teams. Feedback from the service users involved has been positive and the Network intend to continue this aspect of the process in the reviews which are carried out in future. An evaluation of the peer review pilot has been published.<sup>8</sup>

14. Scotland hosted the Homeless World Cup during July 2005. This provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the issues faced by homeless people and to challenge some of the stereotypes and stigma attached to homelessness and we would encourage delivery partners to consider similar opportunities.

### Housing Policy

15. The Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need reiterates that the supply of, and access to, appropriate and affordable housing is fundamental if homelessness is to be prevented and tackled effectively. As is outlined above, a significant amount of analytical work has been undertaken this year to begin a dialogue with local authorities regarding the specific implications of the 2012 target for their area. The Executive has commissioned Professor Bramley to update his previous work on housing need<sup>9</sup> and Newhaven Consultants to develop a local affordable housing pro-forma which will provide a consistent method of assessing need across Scotland. Communities Scotland is currently consulting on the Scottish Housing Investment Framework, including seeking views as to how the distribution mechanism for funding under the Affordable Housing Investment Programme should reflect the implications of the 2012 target.

16. Issues relating to the allocation of social housing to homeless people were prominent throughout the consultation on the Ministerial Statement - and were particularly highlighted by MSPs and local elected members. In response the Statement contained a commitment to consider further clarification of the existing guidance on allocations and to carry out further research. Research into the applicant's experience of allocations is currently being carried out by Dudleston Harkins Social Research and a specification for research looking at the tensions between allocations policy and practice is being developed. We recognise that

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs\\_009118.pdf](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_009118.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sbe.hw.ac.uk/shbvn/AnnualReport05.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/pubcs\\_010483.pdf](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/pubcs_010483.pdf)

there may be tensions between good practice in relation to allocations and the provision of temporary accommodation and will offer advice on the basis of further information on lettings and temporary accommodation which will be provided to us during the course of this year.

17. The fourth of the large homeless hostels in Glasgow is due to close in July 2006, and numbers of single homeless applications and repeat applications continue to decrease in the city. The wide range of tailored support packages being put in place, and accommodation provided by GHA and other RSLs, are allowing more former hostel residents and those being diverted from hostel accommodation to achieve positive outcomes in their housing situations.

18. The national furniture grant scheme continues to meet its target of providing 1000 furnished tenancies a year. We have considered the scheme during the course of this year and have recommended that it be continued for the 2006-07 financial year but that the operation of the scheme be considered further with a view to ensuring that it is meeting the Task Force's objectives in the most effective way. Funding for 2006-07 has been identified and has been allocated to local authorities.

19. Access to a rent deposit guarantee scheme is not currently available in all local authorities throughout Scotland as a small number of schemes are currently being redeveloped. The National Rent Deposit Forum Co-ordinator (Scotland) continues to work with local authorities to offer support and guidance on schemes, and we will maintain an interest to ensure that universal access is available.

## **Benefits**

20. We noted last year that there was a need to consider progress against the suite of recommendations relating to DWP/Jobcentre Plus activity in the context of the wider work being undertaken by these agencies, in order that these recommendations could be taken forward in the most appropriate manner. Officials from DWP and Jobcentre Plus attended our November 2005 meeting and have subsequently provided further information pertinent to the recommendations.

21. There have been a number of significant developments over the course of the year - including the establishment of the Working Future pilot<sup>10</sup> and the publication of A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work<sup>11</sup>, marking the beginning of a national debate on the future direction of welfare reform - which highlight the continued need for a focus on benefits issues over the coming year. We are pleased to note recent improvements in the administration of Housing Benefit - with 21 Scottish authorities meeting the Performance Standard for processing new claims in the second quarter of 2005/06 and the average number of days taken to process new claims improving by over 3 weeks from 2002/03 to the

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.workingfuture.org.uk> ; see also paragraph 39.

<sup>11</sup>

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/N11/Newsroom/NewsroomArticles/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=10031448&chk=npPTAQ](http://www.direct.gov.uk/N11/Newsroom/NewsroomArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=10031448&chk=npPTAQ)

first half of 2005/06 - and will take an interest in monitoring whether these are sustained.

## Action to Prevent Homelessness

### Evictions

22. Following on from the publication of Communities Scotland's Evictions in Practice study, Audit Scotland have revised the arrears indicator to attempt to address the concerns expressed by the Homelessness Task Force. The revised indicator was set out in the Accounts Commission's Direction for 2006/07, published in November 2005. In our discussion of this issue we identified the need to explore the need for further action to prevent homelessness by tackling wider issues related to rent arrears.

23. Shelter Scotland submitted examples of illegal eviction cases to the Scottish Executive during 2005. The Executive has contacted ACPOS, CoSLA, the Crown Office and Shelter Scotland to organise a meeting in order to consider how complaints of illegal eviction and harassment could be handled between the police and local authorities in the context of private landlord registration.

### Vulnerable groups

24. A symposium to discuss the future of housing advice services in prisons was held in November 2005 and a report of the event published in April 2006. The recommendations agreed by delegates are being considered by the Scottish Executive in the context of the new framework established by the Management of Offenders Act 2005. We will continue to monitor the implementation of any new arrangements put into place.

25. Revised guidance on providing housing for people leaving the armed forces was launched in July 2005 to coincide with Veterans Awareness Week. An awareness raising symposium was also held in April 2005 and led to the establishment of a Veterans Programme Scotland Steering Group - this includes representatives from MoD, Scottish Executive, Communities Scotland, Veterans Scotland, Veterans Agency and a large number of ex-service benevolent organisations and is considering a wide range of issues including homelessness and appropriate accommodation for ex-service people. A Prison In-Reach project has been established in Scotland, offering ex-Service personnel access to organisations able to provide assistance to help them resettle in civilian life after release. We will maintain a watching brief - particularly in relation to new data available from the revised HL1 which includes a question relating to service in the armed forces by people applying as homeless.

26. Statistics relating to outcomes for looked after children indicate that the proportion of careleavers who were known to have had an episode of homelessness fell in 2005. We will continue to request updates on the implementation of Regulations and Guidance relating to support for young people leaving care.

## Innovation Fund

27. A new Innovation Fund to support the development of demonstration projects focussing on the prevention of homelessness has been created and bids sought from local authorities.

## Homelessness Strategies

28. Communities Scotland published a themed report on their findings on homelessness in the Pathfinder inspections in June 2005. The key findings were as follows:

- Appropriate service access arrangements are in place, but not always well publicised;
- Some homeless people were prevented or discouraged from applying for assistance;
- Most authorities quickly interviewed people who were looking for assistance, but did not always record initial approaches as formal homeless applications;
- There was evidence of good practice in relation to assessment of applications, but also a range of weaknesses;
- Not all notification letters provided good information and advice;
- People lost contact with councils because of poor communication or tracking of applications by the councils;
- All authorities operated appropriate review or appeal processes;
- Authorities were doing a lot of work to develop local advice and information partnerships, and advice and information services to young people were a strength;
- All authorities were committed to a shift in the focus of services to the prevention of homelessness;
- All authorities were dealing with increased levels of need for temporary accommodation and the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation was increasing in three authorities;
- Two authorities failed on several occasions to meet their duty to provide temporary accommodation to people who were roofless;
- The councils had differing approaches to allocating houses to homeless people: some provided them with more choice;
- Not all of the authorities were using section 5 referrals to maximise the availability of houses for let to homeless people; and
- Inspectors saw some good contributions by RSLs to alleviating homelessness, but also some confusion around section 5 duties and responsibilities.

29. Progress reports on homelessness strategies show that local authorities are making good progress in terms of putting in place a range of provision to prevent and tackle homelessness in their area. This includes advice and information services; housing support services; mediation services; housing education projects; and employability services for example. Many authorities have also taken action to increase the availability of good quality temporary accommodation and furnished accommodation. However a number of authorities also refer to the significant

challenges posed by rapid increases in homelessness applications; a lack of suitable temporary accommodation which results in a continuing/increasing usage of B&B; and a lack of affordable accommodation (particularly in certain localities within the wider authority area).

30. The Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need set out that the Scottish Executive will continue to request an annual progress report and outcome agreement against authorities' homelessness strategies. The 2012 planning subgroup is currently engaged in considering an appropriate template for indicating performance against the five top-level outcomes we consider in Section 2:

- No-one need sleep rough;
- Existing homelessness becomes more visible;
- Sustainable resettlement is secured for people who become homeless;
- Fewer people become homeless in the first place; and
- The duration of homelessness is reduced.

31. Communities Scotland have set their inspection programme for this year and we will pick up the key findings from this, and from previously published reports, in our year's work. We will also take account of issues highlighted in local authorities' progress reports for 2005/06 which are due to be submitted to the Executive by 28 April. Where specific issues are identified by Communities Scotland inspectors these will be addressed through the improvement planning process agreed between Communities Scotland and the authority involved. The Awareness Raising and Best Practice subgroup is also considering the most effective ways in which to identify and disseminate good practice guidance in order to support local authorities and other delivery partners to address some of these issues.

## Effective response

### Temporary and supported accommodation

32. The Glasgow Hostels decommissioning programme has progressed - with the fourth hostel in the programme due to close in July this year. We welcome the fact that the number of households with children in B&B has begun to reduce throughout Scotland. However, we remain concerned about the use of temporary accommodation - particularly that the numbers of households in temporary accommodation continue to rise, that there have been breaches of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004, and that only 21% of households assessed as non-priority were recorded as receiving temporary accommodation despite the fact there is universal entitlement.

33. As part of their progress reports on 2004/05 local authorities were asked to provide, where relevant, an explanation for low levels of accommodation outcomes recorded for non-priority households. A number of authorities explained that there were recording issues which meant that they felt that the official statistics did not accurately reflect practice. The Executive is currently

considering a variety of methods to ensure that official recording through the HL1 accurately reflects practice, with advice from the 2012 planning subgroup and from the HL1 review group.

34. However, a range of issues relating to the availability and accessibility of temporary accommodation which were adversely affecting outcomes for homeless people were also mentioned in local authorities' progress reports. In the main these focussed on people being unwilling/unable to take up offers of temporary accommodation due to its location or cost and on the silting up of temporary accommodation due to lack of move-on options. A number of authorities indicated that meeting their statutory duties was challenging given overall availability of temporary accommodation and the impact of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 and disability discrimination legislation. These difficulties were confirmed by Communities Scotland's inspections of homelessness services.

35. In light of these continued difficulties, we will continue to place a high priority on the provision of temporary accommodation throughout the course of this year. We will draw on recent statistical data, Communities Scotland's inspection reports and information from the pilot study into the impact of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 to advise on further action required to ensure that homeless households receive good quality temporary accommodation which supports their transition from homelessness.

### Health

36. Monitoring the implementation of the Health and Homelessness Standards is not a component of the new delivery and performance management arrangements for NHS Scotland as set out in Ministers' Key Objectives, Targets and Performance Measures for the NHS and Local Delivery Plans: Guidance 2006/07. A survey of NHS Boards is being undertaken at present in order to establish a baseline as to how well the Boards are responding to the Standards and to identify areas where further support may be required. We will take account of the outcomes of this survey - and the views of the Health and Homelessness Steering Group - in order to advise on how ongoing monitoring and support should be taken forward. There is also a need to do more to identify whether local authorities are recording information about the GP registration of homeless people - the 2012 planning subgroup will take account of this in considering a template for indicating performance against homelessness strategies.

### Employment

37. A new Jobcentre Plus external relations team has been established to work closely with all key stakeholders to promote and support initiatives to help disadvantaged customers, including homeless people, into work. Jobcentre Plus has taken a decision to prioritise homeless customers and is working with local authorities across Scotland to identify ways of making vacancies available to clients who require additional support.

38. The interests of homeless people have been reflected in the preparatory work for the Employability Framework which has been ongoing through 2005-06. The Framework will reflect the need for local services to work together to assist those most disadvantaged in the labour market to access training, move into employment and develop their skills in the workplace. The Scottish Executive will encourage local partnerships to mainstream approaches which were identified as being successful from New Futures Funded projects.

39. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is currently funding the Working Future pilot project which aims to improve opportunities for homeless families in temporary accommodation to find and sustain work or training. The project involves reducing the households' rents to an average social rent in return for participating with proactive services to increase labour market participation. We will maintain our interest in this pilot project in order to ascertain whether it is relevant for Scotland.<sup>12</sup>

### Social networks

40. A series of seminars organised by the Social Networks Co-ordinator were held across Scotland in the Summer of 2005. The co-ordinator will remain in place throughout the course of this year - her work programme is steered by a reference group consisting of representatives from the Scottish Executive, Scottish Council for Single Homeless, Scottish Mediation Network, Scottish Churches Housing Action, Scottish Mentoring Network, Ark Trust, Rock Trust and Befriending Network (Scotland). The Co-ordinator attended our November 2005 meeting and will take account of our feedback in her work over the course of the year.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.workingfuture.org.uk>

## SECTION 2 - EFFECTS OF CHANGES

41. In fulfilling our monitoring remit, we have stated that we will judge success in preventing and tackling homelessness across the country against five high level national outcomes. This has been reiterated in the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need. The outcomes we are working towards are:

- no-one need sleep rough;
- existing homelessness becomes more visible;
- sustainable resettlement is secured for people who have been homeless;
- fewer people become homeless in the first place; and
- the duration of homelessness is reduced.

42. The Statement also required that we should reflect the situation as regards local authorities' capacity to meet the 2012 target in our annual reports. As there has not been a significant passage of time from the Statement itself we will, in the main, reflect the analytical work done to support the Statement for this year's report. However for future years we will take account of emerging information and the advice of the 2012 planning subgroup.

### Top level outcomes

#### Rough sleeping

43. Activity under the Rough Sleepers Initiative is now integrated within local authorities' homelessness strategies. There have been no national counts since our last report. A short life Rough Sleepers Working Group has been established to consider how to take forward the recommendations from the evaluation of the RSI. The Group has considered what changes could be made to the currently available Common Monitoring System to enable outcomes for rough sleepers to be better recorded, and the Scottish Executive will consult local authorities and services on the practicality and usefulness of this in the course of the next 2 months.

#### Existing homelessness becomes more visible

44. We reported last year that levels of homelessness applications continued to rise, although the rate of growth was slowing. Official figures published in November 2005<sup>13</sup> indicated that this continued to be the case with the slowdown in the rate of growth becoming more marked. There were 57,020 applications in total during 2004-05 - a rise of 1% from the previous year, compared with a 6% rise previously. However it remains important to note that it is possible that some homelessness continues to be hidden. For example, the latest information from

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<sup>13</sup> Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: National and local authority analyses 2004-05  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/11/0193147/31478>

the Scottish Household Survey indicated that a significant proportion of households who had experienced homelessness had not approached their local authority for assistance<sup>14</sup> and research indicates high levels of hidden homelessness in black and ethnic minority communities.

45. One of the main impacts of more homeless people becoming visible to 'the system' has been the growth in the use of temporary accommodation. The most recent official statistics<sup>15</sup> show that 7596 households were accommodated in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation at 31 December 2005. The most recent figures also show an increase between 31 December 2004 and 31 December 2005 of 22% (from 2031 to 2373) in the numbers of households with children in temporary accommodation. However fewer families with children were being accommodated in B&B accommodation (78 on 31 December 2005 compared with 108 the previous year). For the first time, data on breaches of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) Order 2004 was also published - there were 33 breaches of the order as at 31 December 2005.

46. We stated in last year's report that the impact on temporary accommodation should be recognised as a key indicator of local authorities' ability to manage the increased duties which they are currently required to fulfil and overall capacity to achieve the 2012 target. This has been reflected in the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need which makes clear that the number of households in temporary accommodation and the time spent there will be a primary indicator in assessing the capacity of local authorities to reach the 2012 target. Further information on the use of temporary accommodation is contained at paragraphs 32-35 of this report.

47. We noted in last year's report that the proportion of applications accepted as homeless should be monitored - this proportion fell by 4% in 2004/05 as compared to the previous year - we will take particular interest in this if the proportion continues to fall.

### **Sustainable resettlement**

48. The most recent annual statistics indicate that at a national level 9% of households applied more than once during 2004-05 with 8% of applications being reassessed as homeless or potentially homeless within 12 months of a previous case being closed. This represented a slight decrease on previous figures. However, the Scottish Executive wrote to local authorities in February 2006 to agree a clear baseline from which to measure the Spending Review target of reducing repeat applications by 2008, as discrepancies were identified in figures returned to the Executive and Audit Scotland. The Executive also hopes to address this issue as part of the revision of the HL1.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/08/03155211/52281#453>

<sup>15</sup> Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: Quarters ending 30 June and 30 September 2005, and snapshot data of households in temporary accommodation at 30 June, 30 September and 31 December 2005: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/03/27113728/0>

49. Audit Scotland is currently considering the development of an indicator which would generate wider information regarding the sustainability of tenancies.

#### **Fewer people becoming homeless in the first place**

50. As has been highlighted above, official statistics continue to show an increase in the number of households applying under the homelessness legislation, and in the number of households being assessed as homeless. The Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need reiterated the importance of focussing on the prevention of homelessness and we would endorse this. The Executive has recently commissioned a research project considering the impact of preventative activity - members of the Awareness Raising and Best Practice subgroup will be involved in steering this and subsequently producing guidance on preventative activity.

#### **The duration of homelessness is reduced**

51. Data published by Audit Scotland indicate that an average of 15 weeks was taken to process a homelessness case in 2004-05, an increase of 5 weeks from the previous year. There is a wide variation in the average time taken, ranging from 2 weeks to 56 weeks, across different local authorities. We recognise that there may be extremely good reasons for taking longer to close off an application and would prefer that time was taken to find and implement sustainable solutions but we are concerned that in some areas homeless applicants have to wait an extremely long time for their situation to be resolved.

#### **Capacity to meet the 2012 target**

52. The Ministerial Statement set out the indicators which should be taken into account in determining capacity to meet the 2012 target as follows:

##### **Primary indicators:**

- Number of social lets required to house homeless people and associated impact on waiting lists;
- Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation and time spent there;
- The sustainability of solutions for homeless households; and
- Progress towards the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

##### **Secondary indicators:**

- Voids and void management;
- Support needs;
- Hidden homelessness; and
- Impact of preventative activity.

53. Of the primary indicators set out in the Statement, the use of temporary accommodation gives most current cause for concern - given the continued rise in

the number of households in temporary accommodation set out above. We will continue to focus on issues relating to the provision of temporary accommodation throughout the coming year.

54. Analysis undertaken in preparation for the Statement drew on central information sources and the 2012 proformas which were developed by the 2012 planning subgroup and completed by local authorities. Projections contained within the 2012 proformas suggested that seven local authorities currently felt that they would not have sufficient lets to discharge their duties in 2012. Overall local authorities projected a 120% increase by 2012 in the need for social lets to house homeless households - taking account of projected increases in homelessness and in the proportion of homeless households taking up their entitlement to permanent accommodation.

55. The technical appendix to the Statement presented a summary review setting out future scenarios - one based on councils' assessments and one drawing on trend based models and the most recent homelessness data in relation to 4 groupings of councils: rural/non-rural (excluding 4 main cities)/Glasgow/Other main cities.

56. The main drivers of change and points of difference between the projections were as follows:

Rural: the main driver of change under both sets of projections is the increase in the number of people requiring a social tenancy

Non-rural: The main difference in the projections was the future growth in homelessness which these councils projected at a rate significantly above current trends.

Glasgow: The main difference in the projections was in the decline in homelessness which Glasgow projected at a greater rate than current trends, due to the impact of preventative activity.

Other cities: Overall the pro-formas and the trend-based projection show an approximately equivalent picture in terms of the proportion of lets required for homeless households - however it is important to note that the position of Edinburgh is significantly different to that of the other two cities in this grouping.

57. The following key issues for assessing capacity have been identified as a result of the 2012 pro-forma process and the consultation on the Ministerial Statement:

- There are significant levels of uncertainty around key factors influencing the achievement of the 2012 target - in particular trends in levels of homelessness and relet rates can be unpredictable and need to be closely monitored.

- There is a need to ensure that prevention activity is prioritised and taken account of in projecting future scenarios - although it is recognised that it would be helpful to develop a national framework for evaluating impact on a consistent basis.
- Even where lets are available there is a need to take account of the suitability of the accommodation in relation to the nature of demand. There is also a need to ensure that access to housing association and private rented sector lets is maximised for homeless people.
- There is a need to ensure that data from central information sources is as robust as possible - particular action is being taken to address the data collected from local authorities via the HL1 and HL2 and the Executive and Communities Scotland have also begun to look at lettings data.

58. Throughout the course of this year the 2012 planning subgroup will continue to monitor capacity, taking account of new and improved data becoming available throughout the year. Two new posts are to be created under the joint direction of the Executive and ALACHO (in association with CoSLA) - some of the postholders' work will be steered by the subgroup to ensure a focus on those areas which face the most significant challenges in reaching the 2012 target. Communities Scotland is currently commissioning a wider local affordable housing needs proforma and emerging data from this exercise will also be taken into account by the subgroup.

59. We will report on our view of capacity in greater depth next year - taking account of information from the subgroup and also recognising the importance of taking stock at the midway point from the publication of the Homelessness Task Force's report to the target date of 2012.

### SECTION 3: PRIORITIES FOR 2006-07

60. Our priorities for 2006-07, and those of our subgroups, are as follows:

- Developing and disseminating new and updated guidance as set out in the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need. In particular we will take an interest in research into allocations policies and any proposed changes to guidance on allocations.
- Considering further action which can be taken to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. We will focus particularly on action required to address homelessness arising as a result of rent arrears and the implementation of section 11 of the 2003 Act.
- Steering the work of the two new posts to be created under the joint direction of the Scottish Executive and ALACHO (in association with CoSLA) - providing support to local authorities in addressing issues relating to the 2012 target.
- Developing a greater understanding of local authorities' readiness and capacity to achieve the 2012 target - building on information gathered in preparation for the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need; resolving data quality issues; and developing a standard format for reporting progress against homelessness strategies.
- Considering the outcome of the ongoing consultation on regulations under section 7 of the 2001 Act and emerging evidence on the effectiveness of support and accommodation models in order to inform future implementation of sections 4-6 of the 2003 Act.
- Focussing on the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless households - based on evidence coming forward from the pilot study on implementation of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation)(Scotland) Order 2004; Communities Scotland's inspections, HL1 data and local authorities' homelessness strategies reports.
- Consider the outcomes of the consultation on local connection provisions.
- Continue to focus on benefits and employability issues in the context of ongoing reform of the benefits system and the launch of the Employability Framework.
- Consider the outcomes of the 'One Year On' survey of NHS Boards and future monitoring against the Health and Homelessness Standards.
- Closure of next Glasgow hostel - Peter McCann House.

## APPENDIX A - MEMBERSHIP AND REMIT OF HOMELESSNESS MONITORING GROUP

Mike Neilson	Scottish Executive (chair)
Robert Aldridge	Scottish Council for Single Homeless
Isobel Anderson	University of Stirling
Liz Burns	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
John Mills	Fife Council
Rab Murray	Glasgow City Council
Catriona Renfrew	Greater Glasgow Health Board
Archie Stoddart	Shelter
Mark Turley	City of Edinburgh Council
Karen Watt	Communities Scotland

### AIMS

- Ensure, and support, delivery of the Homelessness Task Force recommendations.
- Continually review the Task Force recommendations to ensure their continued relevance in the light of progress, new developments and changing circumstances.
- Monitor progress towards the full implementation of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003: advising on the specific timing and arrangements for abolition of the priority need distinction by 2012; the implementation of the new regime for intentionally homeless households; and the modification of local connection provisions.
- Champion change in homelessness services and change perceptions of homelessness.
- Monitor the level and impact of the involvement of people directly affected by homelessness, at local level and within the Monitoring Group.
- Submit periodic progress reports to Scottish Ministers, and report formally on progress in the delivery of the Task Force recommendations.

### VALUES

- Make effective use of available evidence
- Respect and take account of different views, particularly the views of service users
- Work within a structured framework, whilst retaining the ability to adapt as required
- Utilise the expertise of others through the establishment of subgroups on culture change and information requirements
- Focus on constructive engagement and finding solutions
- Share responsibility for meeting the Group's aims
- Transparency

## MEMBERSHIP OF SUBGROUPS

### Awareness Raising and Best Practice Subgroup

Pippa Goldschmidt	Scottish Executive (chair)
Kate Bilton	Scottish Executive
Liz Burns	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Craig Dunlop	Shelter Scotland
Sheila Ferguson	Angus Council
Catherine Jamieson	Glasgow Homelessness Partnership
Joanna McDonald	Scottish Executive
Carolanne Quigley	Communities Scotland
Margaret Taylor	Glasgow Homelessness Network

### Intentionality Subgroup

Anna Donald	Scottish Executive (chair)
Dawn Abell	Scottish Executive
Robert Aldridge	Scottish Council for Single Homeless
Pat Bagot	Scottish Executive
Moira Bayne	Glasgow City Council
Kate Benson	Greater Glasgow Primary Care NHS Trust
Liz Burns	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Craig Dunlop	Shelter Scotland
Mark Feinmann	Glasgow City Council
Julie Hunter	North Lanarkshire Council
Deborah Quilgars	University of York
Paul Tyrer	Scottish Executive
Jan Young	Scottish Executive

### 2012 Planning Subgroup

Mike Neilson	Scottish Executive (chair)
Pat Bagot	Scottish Executive
Derek Bearhop	Scottish Executive
Liz Burns	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Michael Cameron	Communities Scotland
Dan Coote	Scottish Council for Single Homeless
Gavin Corbett	Shelter Scotland
Anna Donald	Scottish Executive
Duncan Gray	Scottish Executive
Val Holtom	South Lanarkshire Council
David Lyon	City of Edinburgh Council
Murdo MacPherson	Communities Scotland
Jill Stewart	Moray Council
Paul Tyrer	Scottish Executive



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

This document is also available on the Scottish Executive website  
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