

# Helping Homeless People

Delivering the Action Plan for  
Prevention and Effective Response  
Homelessness Monitoring Group First Report – January 2004



© Crown copyright 2004

ISBN 0 7559 0464 8

Published by  
Scottish Executive  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh

Produced for the Scottish Executive by Astron B33972 01-04

Further copies are available from  
The Stationery Office Bookshop  
71 Lothian Road  
Edinburgh EH3 9AZ  
Tel: 0870 606 55 66

The text pages of this document are produced from 100% elemental chlorine-free, environmentally-preferred material and are 100% recyclable.

# Helping Homeless People

Delivering the Action Plan for  
Prevention and Effective Response  
Homelessness Monitoring Group First Report – January 2004

## FOREWORD



I welcome this first progress report from the Homelessness Monitoring Group, and would like to extend my thanks to its members for investing their time and hard work in assessing progress thus far in our long term goal towards resolution of homelessness in Scotland.

The Group is vitally important as we take forward the ambitious, wide-ranging agenda set by the Homelessness Task Force and endorsed by both the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament. It continues the cross-sector approach, which is key if we are to prevent homelessness occurring and to tackle homelessness effectively when it does occur.

The report is tremendously encouraging in acknowledging the rapid and significant progress which has been made in the time since the Task Force recommendations were made. It helpfully records the impact of these changes and is clear in its message that we must ensure that adequate information systems are in place to inform future developments. I endorse, wholeheartedly, this blend of positive belief in the need for change alongside a pragmatic approach to ensuring that change is rooted in reality.

The Executive remains focused on our goal of providing permanent accommodation for all unintentionally homeless people by 2012 - we are committed to preventing homelessness occurring in Scotland and to tackling homelessness in all its forms. We want to ensure that every homeless person receives a personal and holistic, as well as practical and sustainable, response to their needs.

There is still much to be done if we are to achieve these objectives but this report charts the course on which we have embarked and reveals that we are going in the right direction. I look forward to continuing to work alongside partners - the Monitoring Group, providers of critical services and people who have experienced homelessness - who are equally dedicated to realising our ambition.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret Curran".

**MARGARET CURRAN**  
Minister for Communities

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

**FIRST REPORT FROM THE HOMELESSNESS MONITORING GROUP  
TO SCOTTISH MINISTERS**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Paragraphs</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1-12</b>
<b>Progress with delivery</b>	<b>13-52</b>
• <b>Legislation</b>	<b>16-22</b>
• <b>Culture and Training</b>	<b>23-25</b>
• <b>Housing Policy</b>	<b>26-32</b>
• <b>Benefits</b>	<b>33-35</b>
• <b>Action to Prevent Homelessness</b>	<b>36-41</b>
• <b>Homelessness Strategies</b>	<b>42-46</b>
• <b>Action to Deliver an Effective Response to Homelessness</b>	<b>47-51</b>
• <b>Further Research</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Monitoring Effects of Changes</b>	<b>53-80</b>
• <b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>53-54</b>
• <b>Information sources</b>	<b>55-60</b>
• <b>Trends and Challenges</b>	<b>61-80</b>
<b>Priorities for 2004</b>	<b>81-85</b>
<b>Appendices:</b>	
<b>A: Membership and remit of the Homelessness Monitoring Group</b>	
<b>B: Progress with Homelessness Task Force Recommendations</b>	



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

**FIRST 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. We have held eight meetings between July 2002 and January 2004.
  
2. This is our first report. It:-
  - reviews the progress made across the country in delivering the recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force, in the time since their final report was published in February 2002;
  
  - sets out arrangements put in place to monitor the effects that recent legislative changes and new policy directions are having on the ground; and our understanding of the effects of these changes; and
  
  - identifies the areas where we believe stronger progress needs to be made and which should form the priorities for the forthcoming year.
  
3. Since the Task Force reported our work has covered:
  - advice on delivery plans for individual Task Force recommendations;
  
  - the promotion and communication of the Task Force agenda throughout the country;
  
  - oversight of the assessment of homelessness strategies;
  
  - the setting of performance expectations; and
  
  - the development of performance monitoring arrangements for homelessness.
  
4. We have also provided critical advice to the Executive on the range of new resources and supports being put in place to help direct, fund and facilitate the changes underway.
  
5. The delivery of the Task Force agenda is only in its early stages - there is a long way to go. Yet we are pleased to be able to report that progress has been made since February 2002. In some cases the recommendations of the Task Force have already been met, but further work is required to ensure that these achievements are sustained and built upon.

6. In the case of most recommendations progress has been made in raising awareness and putting in place the framework and conditions to support and shape their delivery. This early work has been vital not only for its own sake, but also to promote the key messages contained in the Task Force's final report. It is crucial that those responsible for implementation are able to embrace the spirit as well as the letter of the recommendations. It is also of paramount importance that the wide range of agencies which formed the audience for the Task Force's report is fully engaged in delivering the recommendations.
7. There are also a number of recommendations where serious work has yet to commence, and in some cases rising homelessness applications, pressure on temporary accommodation, and an apparent increasing demand for support services have meant that local agencies have found it difficult to respond effectively to the recommendations. These trends have coincided with the implementation of the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and it is our initial sense that the two are linked to the extent that latent demand for homelessness services, and related services such as those providing housing support, has been brought to the surface. This has obvious implications for service providers and also means that work to map demand for, and supply of, housing through Local Housing Strategies is of crucial importance in these early phases of implementation, as well as in moving forward to the abolition of priority need by 2012.
8. There are illustrations of good practice in managing these changes arising from homelessness strategies, and we do not underestimate the scale of change required, not only in terms of new legal duties but also as regards changing practice and culture.
9. Changing the culture of homelessness services is central to successful implementation of the Task Force's recommendations. There must be movement from a gatekeeping regime to one which attempts to find positive solutions for each and every homeless household. Homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, should be at the centre of improving homelessness services. Agencies must work together, at both national and local level, to provide services which recognise that homelessness can only be tackled effectively if a holistic approach is taken. There must also be a greater focus on preventing homelessness.
10. Progress is being made in taking forward culture change, and the development of homelessness strategies agreed by local partners is an important element of this. However culture change takes place at a varying pace in different services and localities and must be an ongoing, iterative process, to which we will continue to lend our support.
11. We will draw on the range of work in hand to assess the current position as to the supply and quality of accommodation and the provision of related services, as against demand, and to inform the Ministerial statement on the abolition of priority need which is to be made by December 2005. In particular we will scrutinise the outcomes of research into the abolition of priority need and the

Local Housing Strategies submitted by local authorities. We will also continue to seek detailed evidence of the reasons behind current trends in terms of rising applications, greater use of temporary accommodation and the perceived increase in demand for support services.

12. We will continue to support and promote delivery of the wide range of Task Force recommendations, with a particular focus on those where least progress has been made to date. This will involve clearly identifying those agencies, both national and local, which need to be involved and ensuring their commitment to taking the Task Force agenda forward.

## **PROGRESS WITH DELIVERY**

13. The final report of the Homelessness Task Force was published in February 2002. In presenting its final report, the Task Force was clear that the agenda it recommended would require 10 years until 2012 to deliver in full. The Task Force recognised that its Action Plan to prevent and tackle homelessness in Scotland would only succeed if service providers were geared up to make these changes work in practice and were given time to embrace the culture change inherent in the recommendations.
14. We have set out below an overall review of progress in delivering the recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force at both national and local levels, and the related actions to support that delivery. In focussing on delivery, we are necessarily taking a broad view which sets the Homelessness Task Force recommendations in the context of wider work to prevent and tackle homelessness in Scotland. The following review of progress is intended to demonstrate the wide range of work being taken forward, and the changing context in which this is being done.
15. Detailed coverage of the position in relation to each of the 59 Task Force recommendations is provided in Appendix B.

### **Legislation**

#### **Housing (Scotland) Act 2001**

16. The homelessness provisions of the 2001 Act, which led on from the Task Force's interim report, have all been commenced. Most significantly, this means that all homeless people in Scotland are now entitled to a minimum of temporary accommodation alongside advice and assistance in finding a permanent home. The advice and assistance they are to receive is also prescribed by regulations. This represents a substantial strengthening of rights for those applicants who were not previously entitled to accommodation. For instance, in the first year following the coming into effect of the legislation, 9047 households were assessed as being homeless, but not having a priority need for accommodation. These households are now entitled to temporary accommodation.

#### **Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003**

17. The Executive and Parliament acted quickly to ensure that the legislative recommendations in the Task Force's final report were progressed as a priority, leading to the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 receiving Royal Assent on 9 April 2003. The passing of this Act is a major milestone. It means that Scotland now has what some stakeholders have hailed as the most progressive homelessness legislation in Western Europe. We view this as a significant early demonstration of the Executive's commitment to the delivery of the Task Force's recommendations. We will expect this commitment to be sustained through the implementation of the Act and the delivery of the rest of the Task Force agenda.

18. The Act paves the way for the abolition of the priority need distinction by 2012, it enables Ministers to modify the current local connection rules and it introduces a new regime to investigate and tackle intentional homelessness. It also takes forward the Task Force's recommendations on legislative changes required to prevent homelessness. The legislative process also provided the opportunity to address legislative issues beyond those covered by the Task Force, incorporating suggestions made during the passage of the Bill. The Act therefore ensures that people accommodated under asylum and immigration legislation do not form a local connection as a result of this residence, and introduces a Ministerial power to define unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation. Consultation on the exercise of this power will take place early in 2004.
19. We are pleased that the Act as passed reflects the Task Force's recommendations. Yet this is only an early step in a long process. The Act is not yet in force, but a commencement plan drawn up by the Executive has been agreed with CoSLA and this Group. This sets out that sections 1, 2, 3, 7, 9 and 10 will be commenced early in 2004. These sections deal with the initial expansion of priority need; the Ministerial statement on priority need abolition; and associated powers; the application of local connection rules to refugees; and the power to define unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation and the definition of domestic abuse.
20. The next phase of commencement is scheduled for Spring 2004 and covers sections 11 and 12 - dealing with notification to local authorities of intention to repossess and the grounds for repossession where rent arrears are due to a failure or delay in the payment of Housing Benefit. Finally the commencement plan states that the timetable for commencement of sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 will be kept under review pending the outcome of research projects currently being commissioned. These explore issues relating to the power to modify the local connection provisions, the abolition of priority need and the new regime for intentionally homeless households and are scheduled for completion by late 2004.

### **Guidance, Regulations and Ministerial Statements**

21. Since the 2001 Act was passed, we have endorsed a range of specific Executive guidance on homelessness strategies; on advice and information; on "good reason" for RSLs to refuse a local authority request to house an applicant; on a reasonable period within which the applicant should be housed by the RSL; and on arbitration in the event of a dispute. Most recently, the Homelessness Code of Guidance has been reviewed with input from a Steering Group. The first phase of consultation focussed on the core legislative changes which have already taken place and a revised version of the Code will be published online in early 2004. Work remains to be done to ensure that the Code reflects changing practice and the changing culture of homelessness services, as well as the legislative changes, and this will be taken forward in future phases of the revision process. These future phases will also consider whether issue-based guidance is required which is separate from, but linked to, the Code and how

best to update the Code in a way which keeps pace with change but remains user-friendly.

22. The 1987 Act, the 2001 Act and the 2003 Act all provide powers under which subordinate legislation can be made. While much of this is now in place, several important areas are currently under development. Our remit specifically refers to monitoring the impact of the suspension of local connection and advising on the specific timing and arrangements for the phased expansion and ultimate abolition of priority need. Our work in these areas will inform the content of the ministerial statements under the 2003 Act. Gathering the further evidence on which to base implementation of these provisions of the 2003 Act is essential. We have agreed the briefs for important research projects commissioned to provide the necessary analyses. These studies are expected to complete by late 2004.

### **Culture and training**

23. Culture change is never going to take place overnight. However we believe that the national consensus that has built up around the Task Force's recommendations represents an opportunity for developing high-quality homelessness prevention and response services. The Scottish Parliament's endorsement of the report soon after it was published was an important part of this process. Since then the Task Force's key messages have been reiterated in guidance and widely communicated through conferences, targeted seminars and workshops that have been hosted by a range of external stakeholders across the country.
24. The process of developing and delivering homelessness strategies has also been, and remains, crucial. It is a process requiring new collaboration between local authority departments and with partners outwith Councils in order to produce workable strategies. At its best, joint working has included elected members, homeless people, council tenants and other members of the public as well as 'professional' stakeholders. It has put in train programmes for education and awareness raising, providing a foundation for building values, attitudes and behaviours in both statutory and voluntary agencies necessary to achieve responsive and personalised services. This is enormously beneficial in ensuring that the issue of homelessness is well understood and that the whole community is aware of, and engaged with, the action being taken. However, there is still evidence of a lack of strong and effective corporate and inter-agency working in some areas.
25. The Homelessness Task Force stressed the principle that services and processes put in place to prevent and tackle homelessness should have at their centre people directly affected by homelessness. This principle has been promoted in all relevant Executive guidance and feedback related to homelessness. The assessment of homelessness strategies revealed good examples of involvement practice, both in strategy development and in the intended approach to delivery. However, the essential contribution which can be provided to service development through the involvement of people affected by homelessness

needs to be given widespread practical effect throughout all service organisations.

### Housing Policy

26. The Task Force stressed that the complexity of homelessness necessitates a multi-faceted approach. We believe that there is now widespread understanding and acceptance that providing a roof alone is not enough to resolve homelessness for most people. A wide range of services, beyond those traditionally focussed on housing, need to come together to provide a comprehensive response which takes account of all the issues facing the homeless household.
27. Having said that, however, the housing dimension is fundamental. We welcome the high priority being placed by the Executive and Communities Scotland on the development by local authorities of Local Housing Strategies (LHS), which are due for submission to Ministers by April 2004 at the latest. We also welcome the high priority attributed to homelessness within guidance on the preparation of LHS.
28. However, the links between homelessness strategies and LHS need to be strengthened in relation to setting out what is required within local areas to make possible the phased expansion of priority need. It is essential that these strategy processes produce sound local estimates of housing requirements associated with priority need expansion, as a vital contribution to the overall supply and demand assessment for affordable housing. We have agreed the brief for Executive research to support assessment of the capacity of local authorities to respond to the demands resulting from the expansion of priority need. The outcomes of the local assessments and the national research will be a high priority for scrutiny in the coming year.
29. The type and location of accommodation is also being scrutinised much more carefully. Planning through homelessness strategies linked to LHS should set out local authorities' proposals for eliminating the use of B&B for homeless families with children and addressing shortfalls in accommodation provision for young people. There is clear evidence in homelessness strategies of action being taken to eliminate over time the use of B&B for families and progress will continue to be monitored. The Scottish Executive will also consult on the exercise of Ministerial powers to determine suitable forms of temporary accommodation. However, we have concerns about the adequacy of accommodation planning for young people.
30. We welcome the progress being made with the re-provisioning of large-scale hostels where these exist - a process now underway in Glasgow, which has the largest population of hostel dwellers, and also in Aberdeen.
31. A national framework for furnished tenancies, as recommended by the Task Force, has now been established by Communities Scotland. £3m has been distributed to 28 local authorities in 2003/4 and £3m will be distributed in each of the next two financial years, to meet the target of 1000 additional furnished

tenancies per year. A national furniture co-ordinator has also been appointed to support the work of local furniture recycling projects and their linkage to homelessness strategies.

32. The Task Force emphasised the importance of innovative approaches in relation to access to accommodation. It recommended the expansion of rent deposit guarantee schemes drawing on the lessons of earlier pilot projects. It also recommended the potential application of lead tenancies, subject to the results of evaluation. The Executive has commissioned evaluations of rent deposit guarantee schemes and lead tenancies. The rent deposit scheme study was published in September 2003 and has been widely disseminated. Its findings will help inform development of rent deposit guarantee schemes in all local authority areas by 2004 and will provide the basis for new guidance. The study also highlighted existing barriers to the success of rent deposit schemes and overcoming these must be explored further. The study on lead tenancies will complete shortly.

### **Benefits**

33. The Executive has liaised regularly with DWP, emphasising the importance placed on the Task Force's recommendations and exploring ways in which these can be pursued in the UK context. DWP has confirmed that it is taking account of the Task Force's recommendations and other recommendations from a range of sources in current reviews. In some areas it is unlikely that reform will be taken forward as a high priority although in others, such as housing benefit, reform is already underway.
34. Housing Benefit performance statistics currently available for 2003/4 indicate that, of those Scottish authorities for whom information is available, there is wide variation in terms of indicators such as the average number of days taken to process new claims (from 20 to 138 in Scottish authorities, as compared to a UK median of 44) and the percentage of new claims decided within 14 days (from 100% to 17% in Scottish authorities, as compared to a UK median of 71%). The assessment of homelessness strategies revealed that only a very small number of authorities had incorporated standards and targets relating to Housing Benefit - the need to address this issue has been emphasised in the Assessment Panel's feedback to local authorities.
35. Between December 2003 and Summer 2004 DWP will be researching and developing a strategic policy paper on homelessness. The aim of the paper is to see how DWP interventions, in combination with those of other agencies, can ensure that homeless people have the chance to get and keep a job and to ensure that the benefit regime does not act as a barrier to getting work or receiving financial support as appropriate. As with other reviews, we will want to ensure that this work takes account of the Task Force's recommendations and will evaluate its outcomes against the recommendations.

## Action to Prevent Homelessness

36. A greater focus on prevention is building new and stronger links between the services provided by institutions from which people often become homeless, and services in the community. Assessment of homelessness strategies has revealed that many local authorities are reviewing and strengthening their approach to preventing homelessness. This has resulted in greater involvement of education and social work departments, for example, and more effective partnerships between voluntary and statutory agencies. Local authorities and other landlords are also reviewing their procedures and policies relating to anti-social behaviour, rent arrears and repossession to ensure that these do not lead to avoidable homelessness. Some local authorities have further work to do in putting in place comprehensive strategies to prevent homelessness in their area and provision will continue to be reviewed as strategies are further developed and put into place.
37. The Executive has taken part in discussions with the Scottish Prisons Service and the MoD to ensure that the Task Force's recommendations are taken into account in shaping future approaches to preventing homelessness amongst ex-prisoners and armed service leavers. In both cases the Task Force recommendations were in line with, and consequently have helped to shape, emerging policy.
38. The Scottish Prisons Service (SPS) has rolled out a through-care approach, which aims to address the post-prison needs of inmates, and is establishing 'Link Centres' in all Scottish prisons. These centres are designed to enable individual prisons provide services that assist offenders in returning to society and living as part of a community. Housing advice services are now in place in every Scottish prison - agencies providing these services work from the Link Centres ensuring that they work together with other services to ensure a holistic approach to preventing homelessness. The Executive has also evaluated the advice projects for prisoners and ex-offenders funded through the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the findings are being used to inform evolution of housing and homelessness advice services within and linked to the through-care approach.
39. The MoD, following the publication of its strategy for Veterans, is developing impetus on the changes to its pre and post discharge support services for veterans. It is reviewing possible development of the role of the Veterans Agency to provide wider welfare services to veterans, resettlement advice and assistance and sign-posting to services in the community. It is also developing policy for vulnerable service leavers for launch in 2004. It is expected that this will introduce an improved system of pre-discharge assessment, signposting of services and a mentoring scheme.
40. We were pleased that, in relation to young people leaving care, the recommendations of the report of the Through-care and Aftercare Working Group, mirrored virtually all of the Task Force's recommendations in this area. New duties on local authorities to improve services for those leaving care come

into effect on 1 April 2004. For the first time, these will include a duty to ensure careleavers are provided with appropriate accommodation. The Executive is funding the next two years of the leaving care element of the Scottish Council for Single Homeless project on leaving home and housing education.

41. It is essential that all relevant agencies are actively engaged and working together to *prevent* homelessness wherever possible. Communities Scotland has conducted an initial exploration with relevant institutional regulators of how the advice programmes of different institutions might best be regulated to achieve appropriate advice standards. However, tangible progress has yet to be made in this key area.

### **Homelessness Strategies**

42. All 32 local authorities have prepared homelessness strategies for their areas and these have been submitted to the Executive. These are central to the achievement of the national homelessness agenda - around a quarter of the Task Force recommendations are reliant on their delivery through homelessness strategies. We have approved the establishment of a cross-sector assessment panel, the process for carrying out assessments and the provision of constructive feedback to local authorities. The Panel comprises representatives from the Scottish Executive, Communities Scotland, CoSLA and the health and voluntary sectors. It is clear from the assessments that there is substantial variation in the quality of strategies and we have summarised later in this report the key areas which require further attention.

### **Funding**

43. We have noted that to enable the delivery of homelessness strategies the Executive has now allocated funding to local authorities for the 3-year period 2003-2006. We welcome this development having advocated the streamlining of homelessness funding to introduce greater simplicity and flexibility. The allocation of resources through to 2006 means that Councils and their partners now have a clear funding basis for homelessness strategies over the next 2-3 years.
44. We have also advised upon and supported the move towards a system of Local Outcome Agreements for homelessness, derived from homelessness strategies. These new agreements will allow funding to local authorities to be governed by a more strategic approach, based on clear target outcomes which local authorities will seek to achieve through homelessness expenditure. The new outcome agreements will also embrace the existing separate agreements governing expenditure on the Rough Sleepers Initiative.

### **Regulation**

45. Communities Scotland has statutory responsibility for regulating local authorities' homelessness functions, and is represented on the Strategies Assessment Panel. We have noted that the Agency devised and tested its

inspection regime for local authority homelessness services last year. This regime is being applied to inspections underway in the first 5 “pathfinder” authorities in the programme - East Lothian, Stirling, Angus, West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde. This is the start of a rolling programme of inspections. RSLs are also subject to inspection - at least once every five years. Communities Scotland is taking account of the content of homelessness strategies and the response of Councils to the feedback when carrying out inspections. We have also noted that, as part of the inspection process, Communities Scotland will implement the Task Force’s recommendation regarding monitoring the number and quality of accommodation offers made to applicants under the homelessness legislation.

46. The evidence from inspections will lead to identification of both good and poor practice. The Strategies Assessment Panel is also currently gathering examples of such practice identified through the assessment process - these will be communicated in due course through appropriate networks. In time this will feed into updates to guidance.

### **Effective response**

47. Preventing repeat homelessness, and ensuring solutions are sustainable, is also key to the agenda we are monitoring. Much of this work is also being taken forward via homelessness strategies and the points at paras 42-46 above apply.

### **Health**

48. The top priority for the Health and Homelessness Steering Group and the Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator over the last two years has been driving and monitoring the introduction of Health and Homelessness Action Plans. While this has been a prolonged process, the Plans for 14 of the 15 NHS Health Board areas have now been assessed and approved by the Steering Group and the necessity of links to homelessness strategies has been promoted strongly. However one Board does not have a finalised action plan and there is a considerable commitment to ensure that this Board addresses this omission as a matter of priority. We welcome the specific practical initiatives undertaken in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross to implement dedicated schemes for homeless people, using the flexibility of personal medical services contracts, and the specialist health centre for homeless people under construction in Aberdeen. However specialist health services should be transitional, so it is essential that mainstream health services are also able to respond appropriately to the needs of homeless people.
49. The Executive’s Health Department, working with the Health and Homelessness Steering Group, has developed a further package of measures to sustain the focus on health and homelessness. This includes a second phase of Health and Homelessness Guidance to Health Boards in 2004, assessment procedures and training. It also involves revision of the health and homelessness performance indicator to ensure a concentrated focus by Health Boards upon the practical delivery of the Task Force’s recommendations.

## **Employment**

50. DWP and Jobcentre Plus have set assistance for the 'hardest to help' client group as one of their priorities. The definition of that group includes homeless people alongside clients from disadvantaged areas, ex-offenders and substance users. Jobcentre Plus is actively engaging with relevant partners to deliver the Task Force recommendations and significant progress has been made in several areas. Examples include:

- Protocols for joint working, assessment and action (piloted in Dumfries and Glasgow)
- Supported employment activity (e.g. Step Up pilots in East Ayrshire and Dundee and Wise Move project in Edinburgh)
- Linkages with New Futures Fund projects
- Use of New Deal Innovation Funding to assist the voluntary sector engage with private companies to support homeless people into work (e.g. Streetwork in Edinburgh)
- JobCentre Plus contract with Big Issue in Edinburgh

## **Social networks**

51. We have endorsed a Communities Scotland proposal that the Rock Trust receive seed-corn funding to set up a network to build befriending, mentoring and mediation services for homeless people across Scotland. This network, commencing in early 2004, will establish links to local authority homelessness strategies and other national policy objectives and promote approaches for enabling the social networks of homeless people to be (re)built. The network will be managed through a steering group in partnership with various players in the field, namely the Befriending Network Scotland, Scottish Mediation Network, Scottish Mentoring Network, CoSLA, SFHA, Social Work (South Ayrshire), Shelter Scotland, SCSH, GAMH, SACRO and service users' representatives. Representatives of relevant stakeholders will also be invited to join the network as deemed appropriate by the steering group.

## **Further research**

52. As recommended by the Task Force, research and analysis on minority ethnic people and homelessness in Scotland is well underway. This is examining what additional actions may be necessary for providing homelessness services to black and minority ethnic people. The study is expected to make practical recommendations of use to local authorities and many other agencies and will be published in the early part of 2004.

## EFFECTS OF CHANGES

### Desired outcomes

53. In fulfilling our monitoring remit, we will judge success in preventing and tackling homelessness across the country against five high level national outcomes. These are:

- no-one need sleep rough;

The Scottish Executive set a target that this outcome should be achieved by 2003. Substantial progress has been made and this should continue to be maintained.

- existing homelessness becomes more visible;

In setting this outcome we intend that homelessness which is currently hidden will be revealed, i.e. that people who are statutorily homeless but not roofless will come forward. As is outlined below, homelessness applications are rising and it is possible that this is as a result of people coming forward to claim their new entitlement to accommodation, brought in by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

- sustainable resettlement is secured for people who have been homeless;

This outcome is intended to measure whether homelessness is being tackled effectively, and in a manner which ensures that repeat homelessness is avoided. Current statistics on repeat homelessness indicate that 6% of homelessness households (2857 households) apply more than once a year. The Scottish Executive has stated that it aims to substantially reduce the number of households becoming homeless more than once in a year by 2006.

- fewer people become homeless in the first place; and

This outcome is intended to focus on preventative measures. As is noted elsewhere in this report, homelessness applications are rising at the present time, but it is hoped that over time the number of people presenting as homeless will reduce.

- the duration of homelessness is reduced.

Where homelessness does occur, we want to focus on ensuring that the relevant services are engaged quickly and effectively. Current statistics show that 3032 applications (16% of the total) take more than 4 months to be resolved.

54. Achieving the above outcomes will require continuous improvements in joint working between departments and agencies, better informed and more involved service users, and more appropriate service responses from both

statutory and voluntary agencies. To measure progress towards all of these outcomes and to gauge the ongoing effects of both legislative and policy changes we are drawing upon information from a variety of sources.

### **Information Sources**

55. We now have the benefit of an improved system for collecting homelessness statistics. The new electronic data capture system was introduced in December 2001 with the approval of the Task Force. Replacing an out-dated paper-based system, it provides more detailed information on applications by individual households and more timely reporting. The new HL1 return allows cases to be registered and updated on a continuous basis, as well as enabling applications made by the same household to be linked (thereby ensuring more information on cases of repeat homelessness). Snapshot information on households in temporary accommodation is still collected via the HL2 return.
56. In future, we will also consider other formal statistics collected regularly by the Executive and Communities Scotland from local authorities and other landlords as well as more general survey information, such as new homelessness data from the Scottish Household Survey. As recommended by the Task Force an expanded suite of questions on homelessness has been included in an improved Scottish Household Survey (SHS). The additional questions will help address information gaps by providing a wider understanding of homelessness trends and hidden homelessness. The new questions were piloted in 2002/3 and introduced in the SHS from April 2003 onwards. The first full year of data is expected by August 2004.
57. To measure progress towards the Executive's target that by end 2003, no-one need sleep rough, independent researchers have been commissioned to undertake twice-yearly (May and October) assessments of rough sleeping in each local authority area. Local projects provide details of the numbers sleeping rough collated during the course of a two-week period, and a total of direct-access spaces available on two given spotter nights. For the purposes of this research, rough sleeping is defined as *'having slept outside in a place not specifically designed for human habitation, at least once in the last seven days'*. The last commissioned count took place in October 2003.
58. The research revealed that the total number of individuals identified across Scotland during the count period was 328. This was a significant improvement on earlier counts (May 2003 - 400, October 2002 - 404, May 2002 - 406, October 2001 - 471, May 2001 - 500). The research found that, on the October 2003 weekend spotter night, there was a surplus of direct-access places to meet demand from the number of people counted as sleeping rough but, on the mid-week spotter night, there was a deficit of 13 places across Scotland.
59. From the appraisal of homelessness strategies, we are aware of the main issues arising from local authorities' assessments of homelessness which underlie the strategies, and also of the gaps identified in the initial strategies. As Communities Scotland's inspection process rolls out, inspection reports will be an increasingly important source of information.

60. We are complementing formal data collection exercises with views and perceptions fed back from those tasked with implementing the Task Force's recommendations. We commissioned an informal survey of council staff on the impact of the new homelessness legislation and a report on wider views of the Task Force recommendations, compiled following stakeholder seminars. Coupled with the statistics, these exercises have provided insights into how the Task Force recommendations and the new legislation are being received on the ground and the impacts on policy and practice. They have also helped to highlight some of the key trends and issues to be addressed in moving forward.

## Trends and Challenges

### **Rising applications**

61. The Task Force noted that in the ten years from 1989-90 - 1999-00 the number of applications under the homelessness legislation rose by 58%, from 29,068 to 46,023. The most recent data indicates that a further increase has taken place, with 51,504 applications in 2002-03. These changes occurred in 3 main stages: between 1989 and 1993, 1997 and 1999 with the current rising trend beginning in 2001. In recent years the observed increases in levels of applications have primarily been due to the increase in the numbers of single-person households applying, with no or very little variation in applications from other household types.

62. We believe that a factor in the latest rise in applications has been the growing recognition of the need to tackle homelessness amongst single people and other groups traditionally regarded as 'non-priority'. This recognition culminated in the extension of a minimum entitlement to temporary accommodation alongside advice and assistance to all homeless people effected by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This view has been borne out by council staff who replied to our informal survey. It appears that much of the overall increase is attributable to people coming forward who previously would not have applied as they would have had no entitlement to accommodation. We view this as a positive development - as hidden homelessness becomes visible it is more likely to be addressed.

63. The rising level of applications is, understandably, an issue for local authorities. It means additional costs in handling cases and, to a greater extent, in arranging for the provision of accommodation and support for those found to be homeless. The varying levels of increases across local authorities, and local circumstances as regards demand and supply of social housing and the level of housing support infrastructure, mean that this is not a uniform concern. It is however a significant one in many areas - the further development of local housing and homelessness strategies will set this out more clearly.

64. A number of approaches can be explored to address this issue. Local authorities' duties to assess the nature of homelessness in their area and to develop homelessness strategies, linked to local housing strategies, present an opportunity to map out the scale of the issue and to develop a strategic

response. This process should also provide a firm evidence base from which to prioritise spending. Executive research to establish a model methodology for assessing the capacity of local authorities to meet the target of abolishing priority need by 2012 will support such work. The informal survey underlined the importance of planning - it indicated that in general where authorities had invested time in planning, and in engaging relevant local partners, the impact of legislative changes was being absorbed more readily.

65. There are a number of specific steps which local authorities may wish to consider in looking to boost the supply of accommodation available to people resettling from homelessness. For instance strengthening relationships with the private sector may prove fruitful, and this is an option which is being actively explored by some local authorities as part of their homelessness strategies. An increased focus on preventing homelessness occurring in the first place could also prove beneficial for many local authorities, a point stressed in feedback on homelessness strategies. The development of services such as support programmes for those facing eviction, befriending and mentoring services for young people setting up home for the first time and general debt advice should be considered.
66. We also recognise that on some occasions when councils plan for specific provision for homeless people this is met by considerable opposition from the local community. Local authorities should ensure that agencies providing accommodation consult and involve local people at the earliest opportunity.

### **Rising numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation**

67. Closely tied to the rising number of applications, and the new rights bestowed by legislation, is the increase in the number of homeless households accommodated in temporary accommodation. Statistics show that there has been a sustained increase during 2002-03 in the numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation by local authorities under the legislation. The figures as at 30 September 2003 (6,141) show an increase of 31% over those for 30 September 2002 (4,704), although there are substantial variations between local authorities. The most recent figures also show an increase over the previous year of 29% (from 1,490 to 1,924) in the numbers of households with children in temporary accommodation. It must be noted that the numbers of households with children in temporary accommodation have displayed a degree of fluctuation both upwards and downwards over the past few years.
68. The latest figures show that 55% of households (3,369 households) in temporary accommodation were in local authority accommodation, with a further 26% (1,579 households) in hostels and 18% (1,108 households) in bed and breakfast accommodation. Households with children tended on the whole to be provided with local authority accommodation (86% - 1651 households), with a minority (8%) being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. As at 30 September 2003, there were 148 households with children in bed and breakfast accommodation. This varied by local authority, with seven local authorities having more than 10 households with children in bed and breakfast and 10 local authorities having none.

69. The pressures on temporary accommodation were particularly emphasised by local authority staff replying to the informal survey. Many authorities reported that the level of demand for temporary accommodation had been even greater than anticipated and some that this had led to an increase in the use of B&B. The Executive remains committed to eliminating this usage for children with families, and local authorities are setting targets for achieving this in developing their homelessness strategies. The Executive has made funding available which can be used to develop alternative temporary accommodation, and local authorities are taking a number of steps locally in order to relieve the pressure on existing temporary accommodation. Following commencement of section 9 of the 2003 Act, Ministers will also have powers to prescribe the form of accommodation which can be provided. The Scottish Executive will consult on the exercise of these powers in early 2004.
70. The steps taken by local authorities have included commissioning research into the current use of temporary accommodation and developing a specific strategy based on the research findings. Other authorities are exploring options for reducing the time spent in temporary accommodation and improving throughput - this has involved, for example, reviewing allocations policies, considering long-term lease arrangements with the private sector and RSLs and focussing on increasing move-on accommodation.
71. We would advise all local authorities to consider such options, but recognise that there is likely to be a continuing issue which we will monitor closely.

### **Support needs**

72. The statistics show that after an initial drop in the early 90s, there has been a consistent upward trend since the mid-90s in the proportion of applications assessed as priority need - in 1995-96, 41% of applications were assessed as priority need, rising to 53% of applications in 2002-03. This increase in priority need assessments has been more marked among applications from single-person households - this has risen from 25% in 1996-97 to 47% in 2002-03. There is substantial variation among local authorities, with Glasgow assessing 76% of applications from single-person households as priority need.
73. It may be that in some cases this reflects changes in local authorities' assessment practices, in terms of scrutinising the individual circumstances of each homeless applicant more closely. Responses to the survey reflect authorities' perceptions that more applicants have a higher level of support requirements than in previous years. These include learning difficulties, substance misuse, behavioural problems and mental ill health. Some authorities have reported that it is difficult to find suitable accommodation for such applicants; that it is difficult to develop more supported accommodation given the uncertainties surrounding funding streams and the recruitment of support staff; and that real issues can arise where applicants are not willing to engage with support provided. We would stress that local authorities must begin to plan for an increase in community care and support assessments and

the ongoing support that will be required to permanently re-house these client groups.

74. The vital contribution of support provision to the successful implementation of the Task Force agenda is clear and it is essential that Supporting People, the new policy and funding framework to support vulnerable people in different types of accommodation and tenure, is fully bedded down. We welcome initiatives to recruit into, and encourage professional development within, the social care services. We believe these initiatives should be developed further and we will lend our support wherever practicable. It should also be noted that the Executive will commission research into support provision for intentionally homeless households, prior to commencing the relevant sections of the 2003 Act. This work will result in guidance for service providers on possible models of support and accommodation provision which will meet the needs of these applicants, whilst bearing in mind the needs of the wider community. Good practice in the provision of support to homelessness applicants will also emerge from the Communities Scotland inspection programme and the assessment of homelessness strategies and we will play a role in ensuring that this is disseminated.

#### **Homelessness/general lets**

75. We appreciate that the new legislation may be having an effect on the proportion of social lets which are made to people who are homeless, against lets to others on the housing list. The main evidence for this at the moment is anecdotal but this is an area which we will monitor closely in future. In considering our advice to Minister on the phasing out of priority need we will explore the impact which such expansion is likely to have on the availability of housing for those who are not homeless, to ensure the pace of this phasing is sustainable.

76. We also recognise that the most recent legislative changes may have wider-reaching implications in terms of patterns of housing allocations and more general housing market effects in the longer-term. We will remain alert to the potential knock-on effects of homelessness policy and will monitor these, including interactions with other policy initiatives such as Supporting People and the legislative developments around anti-social behaviour.

#### **Homelessness Strategies: Key issues**

77. We fully recognise that different authorities have started from different bases in terms of homelessness services and resources, and as expected, the quality of different strategies varies considerably. Overall the assessment panel are encouraged by the initial quality across the country and reported that a few strategies are excellent and have set a leading standard.

78. The most common areas to emerge as requiring strengthening are:

Evidence of corporate responsibility and working within local authorities, and of member engagement and commitment;

Clarity in the sign up, role and contribution (including resources) of partners;

Clarity of main priorities and related actions and the sequencing and timing of the delivery of these;

Involvement of people who have experienced homelessness;

Linkage to the Local Housing Strategy and coverage relating to analyses of priority need expansion; and

Coverage of key elements of the Task Force agenda - most notably:

- Prevention (insufficient emphasis in several cases)
- Housing Benefit targets
- Bed and Breakfast usage for families with children
- The employment dimension, and
- Social networks.

79. The Panel believes that excellent inter-departmental and inter-agency planning, training and working is taking place in some authorities. In particular, links between local authority housing departments and local voluntary agencies appear to be well established in many areas. However, the common thread to emerge from the assessment process is that the majority of local authorities need to approach homelessness more corporately. In many cases there is only limited recognition of the wide range of departments who should be engaging with the strategy, and in some cases even housing and homelessness issues are not being addressed jointly. In addition, concerns about the level of engagement of external partners led the Panel to encourage local authorities and their partners to literally sign up to homelessness strategies, to ensure that the common agenda, roles and respective contributions are clearly set and understood at an early stage.

80. The Panel has provided feedback to all 32 authorities and will meet again shortly to consider the responses to feedback, the dissemination of good practice and the continuing process of monitoring and evaluating strategy implementation.

## **PRIORITIES FOR 2004**

81. Our view of the priorities for the next phase of delivery is outlined below. These reflect our view of the essential next steps, taking account of the issues raised in feedback we have received from stakeholders. We have also set out the action we intend to take to ensure that progress is made.

82. The priorities are:

### **Promoting culture change in service provision**

#### Next steps

- All services coming into contact with people who have experienced homelessness to promote values, attitudes and behaviours which deliver responsive and personalised services.
- Joint training to take place across local agencies.
- People who have experienced homelessness to be better informed and more involved in the design and delivery of the services they use.

#### We will aim to:

Continue to promote and support action which makes culture change a reality.

Ensure that our Group is accessible for people who have experienced homelessness.

### **Housing supply and quality**

#### Next steps

- Introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Standard
- Local Housing Strategies to be submitted by April 2004
- Research into expansion of priority need to be completed

#### We will aim to:

Feed into, and draw upon, the work set out above in order to assess the current situation on supply and quality of housing and inform the Ministerial statement on the abolition of priority need which is required to be made by December 2005.

## Implementing legislation

### Next steps

- Commencement of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003
- Publication of a revised Code of Guidance on Homelessness
- Production of regulations under s.7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Provision of support to local authorities and other service providers charged with implementing homelessness legislation
- Consideration of unsuitable accommodation regulations under s.9 of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003

### We will aim to:

Ensure that the agreed commencement plan is followed and that local authorities, other service providers and homeless people themselves are given adequate support to understand and prepare for implementation of the new legislation

Monitor local authorities' implementation of their legislative duties towards homeless people - including overseeing the continuous improvement of homelessness and housing strategies and development of local outcome agreements specifying clear outcomes which local authorities will seek to achieve with their homelessness funding.

Secure a sound evidence base to inform the detail of the commencement plan for the 2003 Act.

Provide comments on draft regulations, and consultation material, as necessary.

### **Further delivery of Homelessness Task Force recommendations**

The following recommendations should be given a higher priority in the next year:

- Those focussing on benefits issues
- Those focussing on preventing homelessness amongst institution leavers
- Those focussing on improving tenancy sustainment
- Those focussing on improving access to health services and employment opportunities or meaningful occupation
- Recommendation on illegal eviction and harassment

### We will aim to:

Clearly identify the agencies responsible for taking forward the recommendations, and ensure they are aware of this responsibility and addressing it.

Feed into research/reviews being carried out by DWP, determine to what extent these deliver against the Task Force's recommendations and consider the need for further action.

Ask the Scottish Executive to raise with DWP the specific issues relating to barriers to sustaining tenancies established under rent deposits schemes, as noted in recent research.

Ensure that Communities Scotland and the Scottish Executive work with the agencies that regulate prisons and care facilities to ensure clear standards for housing and homelessness services are set and monitored.

Ensure that the Executive discuss illegal eviction and harassment with ACPOS and the Crown Office, as recommended by the Task Force.

Ensure that Health services and local authorities work together to mainstream health services for homeless people.

Continue to monitor the delivery of these recommendations through homelessness strategies.

Ensure that Executive guidance reflects these recommendations and emphasises their importance.

### **Monitoring the decommissioning and reprovisioning of Glasgow's hostels and the delivery of RSI services**

#### Next steps

- Closure of 250 bed hostel in Glasgow.
- Continued provision of direct-access accommodation and support services, including preventative measures, for people sleeping rough.

#### We will aim to:

Monitor the progress of the Glasgow Homelessness Partnership in achieving the milestones set out in the delivery plan for the Glasgow hostels programme.

Ensure that support services funded through the Rough Sleepers Initiative are effectively integrated into homelessness strategies

## Social care/support

### Next steps

- Supporting People strategies to be assessed, and reviewed alongside homelessness strategies and Community Care plans.
- Supporting People pipeline funding to be reviewed and decisions made for subsequent years.
- Good practice on using Supporting People funding to be disseminated.

### We will aim to:

Support national work on workforce planning for the social care sector by building a clearer picture of the social care support demands associated with the new homelessness duties, the workforce supply to meet these demands, and possible solutions to help address recruitment and retention of social care workers.

Ensure that the needs of homeless households are taken into account in work being taken forward to bed in Supporting People.

-----

83. In order to support the tasks outlined above, we will also continue to develop and communicate the Group's performance framework and data for monitoring delivery of Task Force recommendations and their effects, and to build wider understanding of homelessness trends and reasons for these.

84. More specifically we will advise the Executive on the quantification of its target to substantially reduce, by 2006, the number of households becoming homeless more than once in a year. We will also monitor progress against this target and promote action to help its achievement.

## HOMELESSNESS MONITORING GROUP

### Members

Robert Aldridge	Scottish Council for Single Homeless
Councillor Frank Ellis	CoSLA
Linda Ewart	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick	CoSLA
Suzanne Fitzpatrick	Department of Housing Policy, University of York
Mike Neilson	Development Department, Scottish Executive
Liz Nicholson	Shelter Scotland
Catriona Renfrew	Greater Glasgow Health Board
Mark Turley	CoSLA
Karen Watt	Communities Scotland

### Secretariat

Laura Dolan	Homelessness Team, Scottish Executive
Brad Gilbert	Homelessness Team, Scottish Executive
Isabel Drummond-Murray	Homelessness Team, Scottish Executive
Anna Donald	Homelessness Team, Scottish Executive
Sue Irving	Health & Homelessness Co-ordinator, Scottish Executive

## Remit

Support and monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force. In doing this, the Monitoring Group will be expected to:

- comment on proposals, and related guidance, for implementing Task Force recommendations;
- advise on the specific timing and arrangements for the phased relaxation of priority need;
- monitor the impact of the suspension of the local connection provision;
- monitor movements in statistical indicators at both all-Scotland and local levels;
- promote and facilitate benchmarking across statutory services;
- support ongoing work to promote and communicate change and improvement in the performance and culture of all the various agencies providing services related to homelessness
- monitor the level and impact of the involvement of people directly affected by homelessness, at local level and within the Monitoring Group
- work closely with Communities Scotland as the body regulating local authorities in the performance of their homelessness functions and with other groups such as the Health and Homelessness Steering Group;
- oversee the monitoring and review of the development and delivery of local authority homelessness strategies;
- monitor the delivery of the Rough Sleepers Initiative Local Outcome Agreements and their integration into local authority homelessness strategies;
- periodically review the Task Force recommendations to ensure their continued relevance in the light of progress, new developments and changing circumstances
- submit periodic progress reports to Scottish Ministers, and report formally on progress in the delivery of the Task Force recommendations.

## PROGRESS WITH HOMELESSNESS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislation	Recommendations 3-5, 24 and 25
(3) Expansion of priority need (4) Revision to operation of intentionality (5) Suspension of local connection (24) Court action on repossession orders (25) Requirement to notify local authority of proceedings for possession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These 5 recommendations have been taken into legislation through the Homelessness (Scotland) etc Act which received Royal Assent in April 2003. The Council on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), based in Switzerland, awarded Scotland the Housing Rights Protector Award for 2003 in recognition of this legislation.</li> <li>• A draft update of the Code of Guidance on Homelessness has been the subject of public consultation. This follows input from a Steering Group comprised of representatives from the Executive, Communities Scotland, Shelter, Scottish Council for Single Homeless and the Chartered Institute of Housing. The new version of the Code will be produced in a format which will accommodate changes as the Act is implemented and Task Force recommendations progressed. It will be published early in 2004.</li> <li>• A timetable for the commencement of the provisions of the Homelessness Act has been agreed.</li> <li>• Three studies to inform planning for the delivery of the Act provisions and preparation of the required Ministerial statements will be commissioned by the Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland. The studies, which are expected to complete by late 2004, will deliver analyses relating to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the planned expansion of priority need</li> <li>ii. methodology for monitoring the effects of modifying local connection rules</li> <li>iii. accommodation and support models for those found intentionally homeless</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Culture & training	Recommendations 1 and 33
<p>(1) The objectives of increasing homeless people’s control and extending their choices, and achieving the effective participation of people affected by homelessness in the development of future policy, practice and service delivery should be widely promoted and given practical effect in all activities directed at tackling homelessness.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="240 528 1374 745">• To date, involvement principles have been promoted in all relevant Executive guidance related to homelessness, particularly guidance on local authority homelessness strategies, health and homelessness and the Supporting People programme. The importance of the practical application of these principles has been stressed in feedback on homelessness strategies to local authorities. This emphasis will be reinforced further through Communities Scotland inspections and in time the identification of noteworthy practice.</li> <li data-bbox="240 786 1374 909">• The Homelessness Monitoring Group has agreed as part of its remit, ‘to monitor the level and impact of involvement of people directly affected by homelessness at local level and within the Monitoring Group, and report on this annually’. A start has been made to monitoring involvement through the assessment of homelessness strategies.</li> </ul>	

(33) All service providers, statutory and voluntary, should ensure that they are promoting values, attitudes and behaviour which deliver responsive and personalised services. They should ensure that staff are supported and trained in serving people affected by homelessness. Training should cover, as appropriate, the definition of homelessness, risk assessment techniques to help 'first to know' agencies respond effectively, joint working with other agencies, support packages, consultation techniques and how to help and empower people experiencing homelessness to find appropriate solutions. Joint training approaches should be pursued. The training programmes run by the Scottish Training on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (STRADA) partnership should include coverage on serving homeless people.

- A series of events - conferences, targeted seminars and workshops - have been held across the country in order to promote culture change. These events have sought to raise awareness, understanding and engagement with the new homelessness agenda - and particularly to begin the process of engaging frontline staff in the changes resulting from the Task Force report and accompanying legislation. They included local seminars staged by the Homelessness Monitoring Group. Account is being taken of the valuable feedback from these seminars and other surveys in shaping the priorities for action and communication over the next year. A priority in the next phase of this work will be further promotion of corporate and inter-agency working at both national and local levels.
- Research is planned to assist in meeting this recommendation. The research will examine the attitudes of service providers and local policy-makers towards homeless people; how these attitudes impact upon access to services, movements out of homelessness and the experience of being homeless; and make recommendations on ways in which negative attitudes towards homeless people can be overcome. It will establish a baseline against which shifts in attitudes can be measured over time, through periodic repetition of the study, and form part of the long-term approach to monitoring changes in culture. The study is scheduled for commencement next year, subject to availability of research funding.
- STRADA Training - See recommendation 49

Housing Policy	Recommendations 6-12
<p>(6) Guidance on the preparation of local housing strategies under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 should make homelessness a priority, and this should be reflected in the allocation of resources by Scottish Ministers.</p> <p>(8) Local authorities should assess the local availability of affordable housing for young people seeking their own accommodation for the first time. Housing strategies should include proposals to address any shortfall.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities Scotland guidance (further updated in August 2003) to local authorities on Local Housing Strategies (LHS) reinforced homelessness as a key priority to be addressed within these strategies. LHS are due for submission to Ministers by April 2004 at the latest.</li> <li>• Every local authority requires to assess housing needs across all tenures within its area through its LHS, which should complement the local Homelessness Strategy. The local authority should take into account its duties under the Homelessness Act 2003 and any effect it considers those duties will have on the level of need for affordable housing in its area. This point has been stressed in feedback to local authorities on homelessness strategies (see section on homelessness strategies below).</li> <li>• Communities Scotland is assessing LHS as these are received. The assessment aims to ensure that national priorities have been identified and appropriate action considered locally - specifically in relation to the tackling of homelessness. The LHS process will, along with Executive and Communities Scotland research on affordable housing and priority need, contribute to improved analysis of affordable housing requirements and inform future housing investment planning.</li> <li>• Following submission of the first LHS, the Executive and Communities Scotland will examine if local authorities have, through the combination of housing and homelessness strategies, clearly assessed accommodation provision for young people and identified appropriate responses to any shortfalls.</li> </ul>
<p>(7) If current research confirms the usefulness of lead tenancies, this should be actively pursued by Communities Scotland using resources from their development programme.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An independent evaluation, commissioned by the Executive, of past and present Lead Tenancy Schemes (LTS) is nearing completion. The study will make recommendations on whether or not LTS should be expanded, and, if so, how future LTS might be designed and implemented. It will be published in early 2004. It will inform decisions on the possible expansion of LTS or potential variants on this approach.</li> </ul>

(9) All local authorities should provide access to rent guarantee/deposit schemes by 2004. The Executive should issue national guidance on such schemes based on lessons learned from local pilots; local authorities should also receive initial funding to enable schemes to be set up.

- An independent evaluation, commissioned by the Executive, of rent deposit guarantee schemes in Scotland (including 11 rent deposit/guarantee schemes funded by the Rough Sleepers Initiative) has been completed. This study was published in September 2003 and has been widely disseminated. Its findings will help inform development of rent deposit guarantee schemes in all local authority areas by 2004 and will provide the basis for new guidance.
- Evidence from homelessness strategies indicates that 21 local authorities now have rent deposit guarantee schemes in place in their area, or plan to have these in place by 2004. The remaining 11 local authorities have been invited to clarify the position for their areas.
- Executive funding to local authorities for homelessness and the Rough Sleepers Initiative over the period to 2006 should enable local authorities to either continue, or establish new, rent deposit guarantee schemes. Progress towards the Task Force target on rent deposit schemes will be reviewed by the Monitoring Group in mid-2004. The Monitoring Group will also consider action required following the research's identification of possible barriers to successful implementation of rent deposit schemes.

(10) A national framework for furnished tenancies should be drawn up, with appropriate funding, by Communities Scotland. A national furniture grant scheme and furniture re-cycling network should be established. We propose a target of 1,000 additional furnished tenancies a year for 5 years, at which point further need should be assessed.

- Grant of £3m per annum over the period 2003-6 has been made available through Communities Scotland to fund achievement of 1000 additional furnished tenancies per annum.
- Communities Scotland has prepared a national framework for furnished tenancies, completed design of the furniture grant scheme and issued guidelines and offers of grant to local authorities. The guidelines explain the goods which qualify for grant and the connection between the grant and local furniture re-cycling projects.
- 28 local authorities submitted bids to participate in the furnished tenancies scheme in its first year and all have been allocated funding. Grants from local authorities to housing providers have been based upon needs identified within homelessness strategies. The Monitoring Group will track how the scheme is operating in practice and monitor progress towards the Task Force's recommended target for additional furnished tenancies.
- A national furniture co-ordinator was appointed in March 2003. The co-ordinator is funded by Communities Scotland and based at the Re-cycling Advisory Group Scotland (RAGS) in Edinburgh. The co-ordinator has mapped the supply of furniture projects across Scotland, contacted furniture projects and local authority homelessness strategy officers and publicised the potential role of furniture projects within homelessness strategies. A web-site for furniture projects was launched during September 2003.

(11) The number and quality of accommodation offers to homeless applicants should be monitored by Communities Scotland.

- Communities Scotland has commenced its rolling programme of local authority inspections and continues to inspect RSLs. As part of the inspection process Communities Scotland is checking the quality of accommodation offered to, and secured for, homeless people. Inspections also include review of landlords' systems for monitoring outcomes for 'equalities' groups, including 'equalities' groups within homeless applicants. Information collated through various data returns will be used to form a picture of trends in the allocation of housing to homeless people. Once sufficient data is available, this will be the subject of future reports to the Homelessness Monitoring Group.

(12) Future guidance on choice-based letting schemes should incorporate arrangements to prevent homeless people being disadvantaged.

- Communities Scotland and the Executive are aware of the development of Choice Based Letting schemes in Scotland. This was addressed in the Executive's allocations guidance issued in April 2002 which made clear that any allocation system had to reflect statutory requirements to give reasonable preference to homeless applicants. The Executive will consider this further in the light of any representations from landlords and other interested bodies and issues arising from Communities Scotland's regulation and inspection process.

Benefits	Recommendations 13-17 and 29
<p>(13) The Scottish Executive should pursue with the Department for Work and Pensions how to meet the general need for more information about the operation of the benefits system in Scotland and for research into the impact of benefits policy on homeless people in Scotland.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following discussions with DWP, the Executive plans to develop a specification of particular research and information interests which the Executive will pursue with appropriate Divisions of DWP. This activity will in due course be incorporated into the tracking work of the Monitoring Group.</li> </ul>	
<p>(14) The Department for Work and Pensions should be asked (a) to review the adequacy of welfare benefits payable to 16-24 year olds generally and to young homeless people specifically, (b) to pursue ways of making agencies involved in helping homeless people more aware of the full scope of community care grant provision, (c) to consider making an adjustment to the regulations to permit applications for community care grants to be made prior to the offer of a tenancy, (d) to review whether the overall provision through the Social Fund is helping vulnerable and homeless people in the best way, (e) to consider making homeless people, and people resettling from temporary into permanent accommodation, a priority for funding, and (f) to review non-dependant deductions.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e): DWP has confirmed it is taking account of these and other recommendations from a range of sources in current reviews. A joint study of financial support arrangements for young people focusing on 16-19 year olds, in order to follow up recommendations in the Social Exclusion Unit's report "Bridging the Gap" is, since the Budget 2003, being led by HM Treasury with cross-Government involvement. DWP is also reviewing the operation of the Social Fund.</li> <li>• (f): DWP acknowledge that a case exists for reform, but this is not however a high priority. There is very little prospect of non-dependant deductions being abolished. However, DWP is reviewing their operation to see whether the deductions could be linked with rent levels. At present the deductions are not related to the rent charged.</li> </ul>	
<p>(15) The Scottish Executive should play a full part in monitoring the operation of the broader definition of single room rent and should provide evidence to the DWP of any problems that persist, both in the single room rent arrangements and in the wider measures in place to restrict rents.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Pathfinder' projects for structural reform of Housing Benefit are in place and will run for a period of two years. Pathfinders will run in the private rented sector in 9 local authority areas across the UK, one of which is Edinburgh. They involve moving away from payments tied to individual rents to the payment of a Local Housing Allowance (LHA). A new shared-accommodation rate will be used for those living in one-room accommodation with shared facilities. This will also apply to single under-25s and will be slightly more generous than the Single Room Rent as it will be based on a range of one-room accommodation with shared facilities. The operation of the pathfinders is being monitored and evaluated by DWP.</li> <li>• DWP research is currently underway with fieldwork taking place to interview customers, tenants and landlords about the workings of Single Room Rent. The report is currently scheduled for publication in March 2004. The Executive will take cognisance of the outcome of this research in considering next steps.</li> </ul>	

(16) Local authorities' homelessness strategies should incorporate standards for dealing with housing benefit claims and targets for improvements. Local authorities' performance in delivering these standards and targets should be monitored by Communities Scotland, in collaboration with Audit Scotland, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate. When housing stock is transferred from a local authority to a registered social landlord, care should be taken to ensure that this does not have any adverse effect on housing benefit administration.

- DWP is pressing ahead with a programme to improve housing benefit administration, particularly through the application of the Performance Framework - a set of national standards for the effective delivery of housing benefit. Updates on housing benefit Performance Standards are available on the DWP website.
- Implementation of the above recommendation by Scottish bodies, particularly local authorities through homelessness strategies and those authorities effecting stock transfers, will support this DWP agenda. Assessment of homelessness strategies has examined whether or not standards for dealing with housing benefit claims and targets for improvements have been set. Very few authorities have set such standards and targets and local authorities have been asked through feedback on strategies to address this as a high priority.

(17) The need for more pro-active benefits outreach and for clear service priorities for at risk/homeless groups should be addressed in the design of the new Jobcentre Plus service.

- Jobcentre Plus is working to reach clients who are at a disadvantage in the labour market - clients who include ex-offenders, substance mis-users, people from disadvantaged areas and homeless people. Performance targets for personal advisors in Jobcentre Plus provide incentives for assisting disadvantaged clients. New programmes and services have been introduced targeting specific groups (see recommendations 50-52).

(29) The Department for Work and Pensions should consider granting local authorities discretion to pay housing benefit to those expected to be in prison for more than 3 months if the prisoner agrees to a repayment plan in respect of the additional amount.

- The Social Exclusion Unit (England) report on Reducing Re-offending (July 2002) recommended that the case for enabling more prisoners to retain their housing or pay unavoidable arrears should be considered. A new Unit, established within the Home Office, has been developing plans for acting upon these recommendations. It is understood its consideration of accommodation issues includes further examination of the case for extending the housing benefit cut-off rule and the effects of increased use of community-based sentencing.

Prevention	Evictions	Recommendations 22-25
<p>(22) The Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland and Communities Scotland, in consultation with local authorities, should review the appropriateness of the “Current tenants’ arrears as a percentage of net rent due” Key Performance Indicator to determine whether an alternative approach could assist in reducing homelessness by reducing the number of households evicted for rent arrears</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit Scotland has noted the Task Force and Monitoring Group concerns expressed about the existing ‘rent arrears’ indicator but considers this to be a valid indicator. The Monitoring Group has requested the Executive to continue discussions with Audit Scotland with a view to having an alternative or complementary indicator introduced.</li> <li>• The Accounts Commission has however approved the introduction of a new Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) on homelessness for the performance information to be reported by Scottish local authorities in 2003/4. The new SPI is in three parts and aspires to measure levels of assessed homelessness, response timescales (efficiency) and levels of repeat homelessness (effectiveness). Audit Scotland has indicated the first publication of data against the Commission’s 2003/4 indicators is expected to be in early 2005.</li> <li>• To assist the discharging of its regulation function, Communities Scotland is commissioning research on evictions. This will establish the underlying reasons behind the wide variation in eviction rates between different Local Authority and RSL landlords. It will identify good practice examples of landlords using eviction as a last resort and/or employing alternatives to eviction. This 6-month study will be undertaken in early 2004.</li> </ul>		
<p>(23) The Scottish Executive should discuss the issue of illegal eviction and harassment with the police, the Crown Office and local authorities.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This recommendation has yet to be progressed. The Executive plans to undertake a preliminary information gathering exercise to assess the nature and scale of the problem and provide a clear basis for the discussions.</li> </ul>		

Prevention	High-risk Groups	Recommendations 26-28 and 30-31
<p>Those responsible for prisoners, looked after children, long-stay hospital patients and the armed forces should develop high quality housing and homelessness advice services with support from Communities Scotland. Standards for these advice services should be set and monitored within the appropriate regulatory regime for each type of institution. Local authorities should ensure that appropriate linkages are being made between services in institutions and services in the community.</p>		
<p><b>Specific Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prisoners:</b> Following evaluation of the ‘Through-care Centre’ model at Edinburgh prison, the Scottish Prisons Service (SPS) has been rolling out its through-care approach to other prisons. ‘Link Centres’ have been established in all prisons, although they are at different stages in different prisons. SPS will publish a policy document on social care, employability and addictions and advice services shortly. The policy and related guidelines aim to help individual prisons provide a comprehensive and co-ordinated service in order that offenders can be better equipped for return to society and more able to be part of a community.</li> <li>• All Scottish prisons now have housing advice services in place, either via local authority criminal justice social work centres (at Glenochil and Shotts) or funded by the RSI. Housing agencies now work from ‘Link Centres’ within prisons, working together with other agencies in a holistic manner in order to tackle potential homelessness more effectively. An independent evaluation, commissioned by the Executive, of the advice projects for prisoners and ex-offenders funded through the RSI is now complete. The findings will inform the evolution of housing and homelessness advice services within and linked to the throughcare approach. HM Inspectorate has commented favourably on the development of Link Centres and SPS intends to continue to develop the range and quality of services provided. See Recommendation 28.</li> <li>• <b>Looked-after Children:</b> Delivery by local authorities of the recommendations of the Throughcare and Aftercare Working Group encompasses appropriate housing advice to Looked after Children, including advice on what to do in a crisis, before leaving care. See Recommendation 27.</li> <li>• <b>Long-stay hospital patients:</b> Health and Homelessness Action Plans (see Recommendation 42) require to consider admission and discharge planning to ensure that homeless people have their needs addressed at an early stage.</li> <li>• <b>Members of the armed forces:</b> See Recommendation 30.</li> </ul>		

### **Standards and Regulation**

- Tangible progress has yet to be made in this area. Communities Scotland has conducted initial exploration with relevant institutional regulators of how the advice programmes of the different institutions might best be supported to achieve appropriate advice standards. National Standards for housing advice published by Communities Scotland, and the Standards for Money Advice being developed for the Executive's Social Inclusion Unit, will provide a basis for discussion with the relevant institutions. Delivery of this recommendation will be a priority for the Executive and Communities Scotland in the next year.
- The assessment of homelessness strategies indicates that around two thirds of local authorities are clearly addressing their advice and information duties. The remaining authorities have been asked through strategies' feedback to rectify the position. Delivery on the ground will be tested through Communities Scotland inspections.
- It is clear from assessment of homelessness strategies that linkages between services in institutions and services in the community require further strengthening. This has been borne out by the findings of the evaluation of prisons advice projects. This area will be a priority for the focus of the Monitoring Group in the next year.

(27) The statutory obligation to provide aftercare should extend to all children who have spent 6 months or more in the care of the local authority between their twelfth birthday and school leaving age. All looked after children should receive appropriate housing advice, including advice on what to do in a crisis, before leaving care. The Looked After Children assessment and action records should be revised to check that this advice has been given and understood, and that future housing intentions are sustainable. Regular checks should be made on the housing circumstances of those leaving care for a period of at least 2 years. Contingency arrangements should be in place for dealing with emergencies or near emergencies and the careleaver should be aware of them. There should be a standard national form for recording the initial and subsequent housing locations of care leavers for at least 2 years after leaving care. Local authorities' homelessness strategies should seek to identify measures which can be taken, in the light of our comments, to reduce the risk of homelessness among those with a care background.

- The new duties on local authorities to improve services for those leaving care come into effect on 1 April 2004. Regulations to implement the duties were laid before the Scottish Parliament in December. These include a duty on local authorities to ensure careleavers are provided with appropriate accommodation. Assessment materials to allow local authorities to fulfil their duties have been prepared which include a section on the accommodation arrangements and practical living skills of careleavers. In addition, the Executive is funding the next two years of the leaving care element of the Scottish Council for Single Homeless project on leaving home and housing education at a cost of £60,000.
- The Executive has noted the Task Force proposal on extending the statutory obligation to provide aftercare to a much wider range of formerly looked after children. The Executive's working group on throughcare and aftercare of looked after young people has advised that this recommendation would raise a number of practical and financial issues, and may not be feasible. Implementation of the new assessment duty and materials will be monitored and the Executive will also be looking to local authorities' homelessness strategies to address the needs of young people who have been looked after.
- Assessment of homelessness strategies indicates that, in most cases, local authorities have identified specific actions to address the needs of vulnerable groups. Where there appear to be gaps, feedback to local authorities has requested that these be addressed. It is clear however that, in some areas, much greater emphasis needs placed on the planning and supply of accommodation and support provision specifically for young people, and particularly those with a care background. See recommendation 8.

(28) On completion of the forthcoming evaluation, housing advice services currently provided in prisons should be put on a permanent footing.

- An independent evaluation, commissioned by the Executive, of the advice projects for prisoners and ex-offenders funded through the Rough Sleepers Initiative has been completed. This study sets out a series of practical recommendations to inform development of these advice services. It also identifies practical measures to prevent homelessness associated with prison experience and ways to make linkages between services in prisons and services in the community more effective. The study will be published in early 2004. Its findings will be considered shortly by all relevant stakeholders - the Executive, the Monitoring Group, the Scottish Prisons Service, CoSLA, RSI prisons projects - to agree how practice should be improved and the services put on a permanent footing.

(30) In preparing their homelessness strategies, local authorities should take full account of the needs of those leaving the armed forces and their spouses or partners. Guidance to local authorities should stress that people due to leave the armed forces should be classified as threatened with homelessness where their licence to occupy service accommodation is due to expire and they have no other accommodation. Local authorities and other bodies which may come into contact with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, should have procedures in place to identify ex-servicemen/women amongst this group and to signpost the assistance available to them. Following evaluation the Ministry of Defence should extend the SPACES project to parts of Scotland where there are significant numbers of service personnel. The Ministry of Defence should consider establishing a network of accessible contact points providing resettlement advice and assistance to those who have left the services.

- The Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 ensures that a homelessness applicant who is vulnerable as a result of having been discharged from any part of the regular armed forces of the Crown will be assessed as having a priority need. This part of the Act will be commenced in January 2004.
- The updated Code of Guidance on Homelessness (the Code) will state that those leaving the armed forces are at a high risk of homelessness and that local authorities should therefore check that preventative services are available and that appropriate linkages are made prior to discharge. The MoD has introduced new certificates for service leavers which provide evidence of impending homelessness arising from cessation of entitlement to occupy Services Living Accommodation. These certificates will be issued by MoD administration to the Local Authority/Registered Social Landlords to which applications for accommodation are being made by service-leavers. The Code will highlight the operation of these certificates.
- New links have been established with all relevant parts of the MoD - the Veterans Forum, the Secretariat to the Veterans Task Force, the Veterans Agency in Scotland and key MoD resettlement initiatives, specifically the Joint Service Housing Advice Project (JSHAO) and the Spaces Project.
- A joint study by the MoD and the Office of the Depute Prime Minister (ODPM) is developing methods for assessing the nature, costs and extent of rough sleeping and homelessness amongst ex-service personnel. The first phase of the study is focusing on England with follow-on phases covering Scotland and Wales in 2004/5. This work forms part of a wider UK study on ex-service homelessness aiming to identify specific gaps in provision and make recommendations for new measures.
- The MoD has advised it is:-
  - reviewing possible development of the role of the Veterans Agency (which currently administers war pensions and has regional offices in Scotland) to provide wider welfare services to veterans, resettlement advice and assistance and sign-posting to services in the community.
  - developing policy for vulnerable service leavers for launch in 2004. It is expected that this will introduce an improved system of pre-discharge assessment, signposting of services and a mentoring scheme.
  - evolving the operation of the SPACES project to ensure project staff understand new Scottish legislation and policy and are able to tailor services accordingly for those resettling in Scotland. MoD has no current plans to locate a SPACES project in Scotland, but the position will be kept under review in light of the MoD/ODPM research.

(31) Asylum seekers granted leave to remain in the UK should be offered alternative accommodation if they do not wish to stay in the accommodation funded under NASS arrangements.

- The Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 ensures homelessness applicants will not be deemed to have formed a local connection with a local authority merely because they were housed in NASS accommodation there. This will allow these applicants to apply to another local authority for assistance under the homelessness legislation if they so wish.
- Communities Scotland will be checking the quality of accommodation offered to, and secured for, homeless people as part of the inspection process (see recommendation 11).

Homelessness Strategies	Prevention	Recommendations 18-21
<p>(18) Local homelessness strategies should review and, as necessary, make proposals for improvements in (i) the arrangements for early identification of those getting into housing difficulties, (ii) the advice and support available for those getting into difficulties, (iii) the advice and support available for those known to be at particular risk of homelessness and (iv) the provision of leaving home and housing education in schools and other youth services. Strategies should take account of the differing and specific needs of families and single people living in urban and rural areas. They should ensure that they take account of the needs of people of differing age, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation and belief.</p>		
<p>(19) Homelessness strategies should review the availability, accessibility and quality of services such as relationship counselling/mediation, financial/debt advice, drug/alcohol counselling, advocacy and proactive action to manage neighbour disputes and tackle harassment. Local authorities should act proactively to ensure that those at greatest risk of homelessness are made aware of the support available, and are helped to access this support.</p>		
<p>(20) Homelessness strategies should provide for specific, concentrated support programmes for those threatened with eviction. These programmes should include the provision of access to independent advice and representation.</p>		
<p>(21) Local authorities should review their policies for arrears management and anti-social behaviour to ensure that they do not lead to unnecessary or avoidable homelessness. Other social landlords should be asked to conduct similar reviews as part of their contribution to local homelessness strategies.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The planning and delivery of local authority homelessness strategies with all partner agencies should respond to recommendations 18-21. Executive guidance to local authorities on the preparation of homelessness strategies was issued in March 2002. This highlighted all Task Force recommendations, but particularly those aimed at local authorities.</li> <li>• All 32 local authorities have prepared homelessness strategies for their areas. These were submitted to the Executive in early 2003. The strategies have been assessed by a cross-sector Panel established by the Homelessness Monitoring Group.</li> <li>• The Panel was chaired by the Executive with representatives from CoSLA, Communities Scotland, the Voluntary sector (Glasgow Simon Community and Aberdeen Cyrenians) and the Health sector. The Panel worked to an assessment system agreed by the Monitoring Group, based on a framework shared with all local authorities in 2002.</li> <li>• Written feedback from the Assessment Panel intended to help local authorities and their partners evolve the most effective strategies possible for their area has been provided to all local authorities. Feedback set out specific action recommended by the Panel and encouraged authorities to share feedback letters with their partners. Responses to feedback from local authorities will be considered by the Assessment Panel shortly.</li> <li>• Communities Scotland is taking account of the content of strategies and also the response of Councils to the feedback when carrying out its inspection function. The main messages emerging from the assessment of strategies are covered in the body of this report. A key point emphasised to many Councils is the need to strengthen the prevention dimension of their strategies.</li> </ul>		

Homelessness Strategies	Effective Response	Recommendations 32, 34-41 and 57
		<p>(32) Local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should provide the direction and create the framework within which all agencies join up to bring together a range of accessible options that open up genuine opportunities for homeless people.</p>
		<p>(34) Local authorities should establish crisis response systems which are flexible and provide individualised responses; ensure that all those without accommodation are able to access at least immediate emergency accommodation until appropriate assessment is carried out; are permanently available and accessible and perform a triage function; include joint protocols and procedures for needs assessment to ensure appropriate support for people with complex or multiple needs; have effective referral arrangements in place; ensure that explicit exit strategies are devised; and monitor and evaluate the outcomes of resettlement services and adjust and improve provision wherever appropriate. The effectiveness of these systems should be subject to inspection by Communities Scotland.</p>
		<p>(36) Local authorities should give priority to ensuring the availability of independent and informed advocacy services within their area and ensure that these services are well publicised. Advice and information should be made available in forms which are accessible by people of all ethnic groups and of all abilities.</p>
		<p>(37) Local authorities should plan the delivery of a sufficient supply, range and location of temporary and supported accommodation. Provision should be made for the (sometimes very different) needs of families, young people and groups who currently find it difficult to access or sustain any form of accommodation. Large-scale hostels should be replaced by alternative provision. Homelessness strategies should include proposals to reduce the use of Bed &amp; Breakfast to a minimum, and to eliminate its use for families.</p>
		<p>(38) Homeless people should, wherever possible, be located in a community in which they feel comfortable and are likely to be fully integrated into community life. Wherever possible they should have the opportunity to live near friends and family and their workplace/school or higher/further education institution.</p>
		<p>(39) Local authorities should ensure that appropriate support packages are available for homeless people during their resettlement.</p>
		<p>(40) Local authorities should plan the provision of barrier-free housing for varying needs and respond quickly to requirements for adaptations to housing stock which will prevent the occupier from becoming homeless.</p>

(41) Local authorities' homelessness strategies should be dovetailed with domestic abuse strategies. In drawing up their homelessness strategies, local authorities should review the information and advice available to those who are, or may become, homeless as a result of domestic abuse, the availability of safe emergency supported accommodation, the availability of suitable long-term accommodation and support packages, and the extent to which local arrangements recognise the needs of children. Homelessness strategies should address the needs of all those who are or may become homeless as a result of domestic abuse, including young people and older people.

(57) Local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should develop practical means of enabling people affected by homelessness to (re)-build social networks. This may involve the use of new independent services or a review, with Social Inclusion Partnerships, of current practice.

- The planning and delivery of homelessness strategies with all partner agencies should also respond to recommendations 32, 34, 36-41, 55 and 57. The position is as outlined above under recommendations 18-21.
- Action on recommendation 36 will be assisted by the findings of an independent study commissioned by the Executive of the homelessness experiences of black and minority ethnic people in Scotland. See Recommendation 2.

(35) The Executive should provide advice on the development of crisis response services and a national database and web-site of homelessness services should be established.

- Executive guidance in March 2002 on the preparation of homelessness strategies included coverage of crisis response services. Where it is considered such services need strengthened to meet the Task Force's concept, this has been highlighted to relevant Councils in strategies feedback. Future advice on such services will be derived from positive practice identified over time by Communities Scotland.
- Shelter has launched a new web-site based support service for practitioners. This aims to engage, inform and support local authorities, registered social landlords and others in implementing the recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force over time. The Executive, Communities Scotland and Shelter require to agree how the web-site improvements underway in each organisation are developed to ensure they are complementary in providing national information and advice, practice support and databases of homelessness services.

Effective Response	Health	Recommendations 42-49
<p>(42) A high priority should be placed upon monitoring of quality and delivery of Health and Homelessness Action Plans. The Health Department's Primary Care Modernisation Group should set out how the primary care needs of homeless people would best be met.</p>		
<p>(48) In the case of primary care services, specialist provision should be seen as transitional for all but a small number of homeless people. It should provide planned support over a reasonable period of time until individuals are re-housed and settled with access to their local GP practice and primary health care team. The general approach should be to support homeless people to maintain their current health networks or to establish new regular contact with mainstream health services.</p>		
<p>Health and Homelessness Action Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the production, quality and delivery of Health and Homelessness Action Plans has been the top priority for the Health and Homelessness Steering Group over the last two years. Health and Homelessness Action Plans for 14 of the 15 NHS Health Boards have been assessed and approved by the Steering Group. Considerable effort is being made by the Health and Homelessness Steering Group and SEHD to ensure that the Board without an Action Plan addresses this omission as a matter of priority; links to homelessness strategies have been promoted strongly; and delivery continues to be monitored closely by the Steering Group.</li> <li>• However, overall progress has been slow. The majority of NHS Boards have started from a low knowledge base on homelessness and some health authorities have been undergoing major restructuring. The timeframe for commencing delivery has therefore been slower than originally anticipated but the implementation of Action Plans is now well underway.</li> <li>• A first round of assessment visits to 11 NHS Boards has been completed. These visits point to encouraging progress now being made by Boards in implementing the Action Plans. The Health and Homelessness Steering Group is following up issues arising from these visits. However, it is clear that Task Force's health recommendations need a more concerted effort if they are to be delivered. The Executive has undertaken to revise the Health and Homelessness Performance Indicator for 2004/5 to include comprehensive coverage of the Task Force recommendations.</li> </ul>		

### Developing Primary Care Services

- Progress on the Task Force recommendations for the Primary Care Modernisation Group (PCMG) is dependent on action across local health systems, extending beyond the remit of the PCMG. However, the work of the PCMG to-date has underpinned the wider programme of investment and reform in primary care and community based services.
- The PCMG published its report “Making the Connections” in early 2002. This set directions for modernisation of primary care services and systems. The intention is to improve capacity in primary care to provide better access to a broader range of services across the population. Underpinning this is the wider aim of reducing inequalities and planning and providing services on an equitable basis derived from an understanding of health need. However, the importance of ensuring that services address the needs of groups in the population who can experience problems with access has also been stressed. The Primary Care Modernisation Group has now been replaced by the Community Health Partnerships Development Group. This Group is supporting the development of Community Health Partnerships described in Scotland’s Health White Paper “Partnership for Care” published in March 2003.
- Specific services are now being established at local level to assist homeless people to access a GP and other services. Examples include dedicated schemes for homeless people using the flexibility of personal medical services contracts, in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross. Health and Homeless Action Plans also identify a range of services currently provided or proposed for development, in conjunction with other parts of the NHS and partner agencies. The Executive’s most recent allocation of primary care investment funding highlighted the importance of improving access and reducing inequalities through developments in primary care services. So, if specialist services are to be transitional it is essential that mainstream services also adapt to meet the needs of homeless people.

(43) All local authorities should record information about the GP registration of all those who register as homeless, and should offer information about local health services to homeless people rehoused outwith their existing GP area.

- Progress on this recommendation is patchy. There is evidence that some local authorities are working with Health Boards to build a picture of GP registrations of homeless people, identifying current local practices, considering arrangements for obtaining information within shared assessments and clarifying how this should link to local advice and information provision. However, there is also evidence that most local authorities have yet to address this recommendation.

(44) NHS Boards should ensure their strategic planning embraces the current and future service needs of homeless people. Drug and Alcohol Action Teams should include, in their planning priorities, the service requirements of homeless people relating to substance misuse. Monitoring of the effectiveness of such processes should be undertaken through the Scottish Executive's assessment of Local Health Plans and Corporate Action Plans on Substance Misuse.

(47) Actions within the national drugs and alcohol plans which will prevent addictions contributing to homelessness and which will tackle substance misuse amongst homeless people should be given high priority. The recommendations of the Glasgow Street Homelessness Team in relation to the development and provision of drug and alcohol services to hostel dwellers should be more widely applied. Local action to tackle substance misuse and homelessness in parallel should be developed through homelessness strategies and Drug and Alcohol Action Team plans. The results of Scottish Executive work on effective interventions in tackling substance misuse should be disseminated to support commissioners and purchasers of services and service providers in both homelessness and drugs and alcohol agencies.

- The Executive launched its publication "Improving Health in Scotland - The Challenge" in March 2003. Health and Homelessness is currently a special focus programme within this strategic framework. This means that the health dimensions of homelessness - including the delivery of the Homelessness Task Force's recommendations on health - have been set within the overall Health Improvement agenda. This aims to ensure that Boards understand and accept that their core strategic planning must embrace the current and future service needs of homeless people. Over time action on Health and Homelessness will move towards a mainstreamed approach.
- Assessment of Drug and Alcohol Action Team Plans for 2003-4 indicates that plans reflect the National Drugs Strategy and the Plan for Action on Alcohol Problems and that the majority have links in place with Health and Homelessness Action Plans and homelessness strategies. Where links are not clear this is being pursued by the Executive. While there are references to developments for homeless people in most plans, the level of detail given is highly variable. However, the coverage for Glasgow is the most comprehensive reflecting the recommendations of the Glasgow Street Homelessness Team in relation to drug and alcohol services to hostel dwellers.
- Since the Task Force reported, the Executive has disseminated a wide range of publications to support planners and practitioners in the field in tackling substance misuse. Key amongst these is "Integrated Care for Drug Users: Principles and Practice". All of the publications are available on the national drugs web-site at [www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/eiu/eiu.htm](http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/eiu/eiu.htm)

(45) NHS Boards should ensure that all children in homeless families are able to access the full range of universal health services for children; and the Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator should monitor this action (para 99(iii)).

(46) NHS Boards should address the provision of mental health services to homeless people to minimise the barriers to access. Being free from substance-misuse should not be an automatic pre-condition for access to services (para 99(iv)).

- Recommendations 45 and 46 feature as priorities within Health and Homelessness Action Plans. However, delivery will need driven as part of a more concerted effort by Health Boards across all Task Force health recommendations and will be monitored closely by the Health and Homelessness Steering Group. Health and Homelessness lead officers within NHS Boards have been specifically tasked with addressing at the local level the issues raised in recommendation 46.
- Consideration is being given to the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 which received Royal Assent in April 2003 and is expected to come into effect in April 2005. The Act represents the first significant updating of mental health legislation in Scotland in over forty years. The Act has two principal implications for homelessness policy and recommendation 46:
- Section 25 of the Act places a duty on local authorities to provide “care and support” to people who are not in hospital and who have or have had a mental disorder. The Act states specifically that “care and support” should be understood as including “residential accommodation”. This duty is a broad statement of principle, which accords with the Executive’s social inclusion and equalities agendas. It has potentially far-reaching effects on local authorities and on service users. The Executive has initiated a scoping exercise along with key partners to explore the implications of this new duty and to examine ways in which the policy intent behind this duty can be achieved. The conclusions of this scoping exercise will be taken forward over the next 18 months leading up to the Act coming into effect in April 2005.
- Part 7 of the Act established a new long-term compulsion order replacing “section 18 orders” in the 1984 Act. These new “compulsory treatment orders” can be based either in a hospital or in the community. With respect to a “community-based compulsory treatment order”, a person can be required to reside in a specified place or required to attend a specified place at specified times for the purpose of receiving medical treatment for a mental disorder. Where a person is subject to a community-based order, it will be imperative that housing providers work closely with other mental health professionals to ensure the effective delivery of the patient’s care and treatment. In the run-up to the coming into effect of the new Act, the Executive’s Mental Health Law Team will be investigating the potential effects of community-based orders on service providers.
- The Home Office has announced that the amendment to section 8 of the Misuse of Drugs Act will not be implemented in the near future, in order to allow for the effectiveness of new powers contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act to be monitored. The Home Office has stated that it is not the intention that professionals carrying out harm reduction and care policies when working with drug misusers should be in fear of prosecution, and is committed to finding the right balance between proper enforcement and legitimate harm reduction and care.

(49) The Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator, whose remit includes setting standards for homelessness training programmes, should support training on homelessness for health professionals and ancillary staff.

- The Executive's Health Department and Health Scotland commissioned an investigation of national and international examples of good practice in delivering healthcare to homeless people. The results of this study are being used to devise homelessness-related training within the national approach to the training of health workers. It is expected that the Scottish Training on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (STRADA) partnership will play an important role in delivering the relevant training. The overall findings of the research are informing the second phase of Health and Homelessness policy.

Effective Response	Employment	Recommendations 50-54
<p>(50) Jobcentre Plus should, as a key priority, improve gateways for homeless people to access mainstream employment services and programmes. This should include systematic skills auditing of homeless people, ensuring easy access to employment services for homeless people and linking relevant employment initiatives to establish coherent systems for individual progression.</p>		
<p>(51) Jobcentre Plus should work with the Scottish Executive and the Scottish New Deal Task Force to engage employers to develop employment initiatives targeted at vulnerable and homeless people. This should include wider employer participation in relevant transitional employment programmes for homeless people. Jobcentre Plus should examine ways of supporting employers who are willing to participate in initiatives to employ homeless people, particularly smaller employers who lack the resources of the large corporate organisations. Appropriate business networks should be enlisted to promote such initiatives.</p>		
<p>(52) Public sector employers should also examine ways of creating and expanding work opportunities for homeless people. New public sector initiatives should strive to employ homeless people in the provision of their services.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the April 2003 Budget Statement, the Chancellor announced a series of reforms to build upon the success of the New Deals. This included combining the New Deal 18-24 and New Deal 25+ customer base and standardising the eligibility conditions, particularly around early entry.</li> <li>• From April 2004, there will be a common list of circumstances which will entitle volunteers to early access to New Deal services. Homeless people (including rough sleepers) will be able to gain early access to New Deal regardless of age and length of unemployment.</li> <li>• Jobcentre Plus, together with Scottish Enterprise, has developed and piloted a Protocol on Joint Working in Glasgow and Dumfries &amp; Galloway. The Protocol is aimed at encouraging increased joint working between Jobcentre Plus and New Futures Fund staff, including NFF staff involved in Homelessness Projects. The pilots focused on communication, observation, staff development, outreach, improving referral procedures and the development of an evaluation framework. Pilots ran for 12 months and have recently been evaluated. A decision has still to be made on the rollout of the Protocol Pilots.</li> <li>• In 2003, Jobcentre Plus piloted the LinkUp initiative in Tayside and Fife. LinkUp is an extension of the Progress2Work initiative, providing homeless people, those suffering from addictions and ex-offenders with a flexible package of local support and access to Jobcentre Plus services. LinkUp is due to be evaluated in Spring 2004, when the decision will be taken on whether or not to extend rollout.</li> </ul>		

- Jobcentre Plus works closely with the Scottish Executive to support the Scottish Welfare to Work Task Force to deliver its remit to Scottish Ministers. Task Force members are currently involved in developing a business case to persuade employers to consider recruiting those customers currently in receipt of inactive benefits. Additionally, a Task Force sub group has been set up to identify existing good practice and develop and test a recruitment model demonstrating sympathetic practices in the recruitment and retention of disadvantaged workless individuals. Work has been undertaken to identify the barriers to employment faced by these customers and examples of good practice by specific companies have been gathered.
- The Scottish Welfare to Work Task Force will meet in February 2004 to develop their remit for 2004/05. Their focus will continue to be on assisting severely disadvantaged customers back into employment.

(53) Transitional employment programmes should be piloted in Scotland to test the creation of new incentives to work for homeless people. Such pilots should test how flexibility around housing benefit payments could overcome the poverty trap faced by homeless people when trying to access employment. The Department for Work and Pensions should aim to develop and test in 2002 a pilot scheme with The Big Issue in Scotland. If the Department for Work and Pensions is unable to overcome impediments in Social Security legislation which may prevent potentially effective schemes, UK Ministers should consider amending the relevant legislation to remove these hurdles.

- Together with the Big Issue in Scotland, Jobcentre Plus will pilot two “Passport to Work” courses 2003/2004. The courses are aimed at improving the employability skills of homeless people in Edinburgh taking them closer to the workplace and the opportunity of securing sustainable employment in the future.

(54) A clear action plan should be developed to use the results of the ongoing evaluation of New Futures Fund services to transfer successful service elements onto a permanent footing over the next 3 years. If proved successful, the relevance of the Routeways initiative and other similar approaches should be considered for application in Scotland.

- New Futures Fund (NFF) is a major Enterprise Network programme aimed at developing employability amongst the most disadvantaged and excluded individuals in the labour market. It currently operates in 13 local authorities throughout Scotland and resources organisations already working with disadvantaged people to provide an employability enhancement dimension to the service. The voluntary sector is a major service deliverer. The NFF approach is holistic, one to one and customised to the client. The NFF programme began in 1998 with total funding of £34m up to 2005. Around a quarter of NFF projects work with homeless people.
- Mainstreaming NFF is a top priority for the Enterprise Network which is leading work with funders, agencies and individual projects. Scottish Enterprise, with various partners, has developed an Action Plan for the mainstreaming of NFF services. The Action Plan has been informed by evaluation of the operation and impact of the NFF over the period from April 2002 to March 2005 as well as stakeholder views from an NFF conference held in October 2003 to share the interim findings of the evaluation.
- Feedback on homelessness strategies has highlighted that NFF offers opportunities to contribute to the employment dimension of homelessness strategies. In principle agreements to mainstream specific NFF projects have already been reached with a small number of local authorities. In these cases, NFF projects will either be brought in house by local authorities or local authorities will contract with voluntary agencies to continue the provision of the services.

Effective Response	Social networks	Recommendations 55 and 56
<p>(55) The strength of a homeless person’s social networks should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs and of the support offered to them in temporary accommodation and during permanent resettlement. All projects serving homeless people should pursue strategies to promote and support opportunities for positive social interaction.</p>		
<p>(56) A national co-ordination role should be created to build and co-ordinate local mediation, befriending and mentoring services for homeless people across Scotland. This role would also evaluate existing projects, disseminate good practice and facilitate information sharing.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of homelessness strategies has confirmed that stronger action is required in all localities to create opportunities for people affected by homelessness to build personal networks. This has been highlighted in feedback to local authorities, and confirms the need for the national co-ordination and support role recommended by the Task Force.</li> <li>• Communities Scotland held a seminar in conjunction with Shelter Scotland in June 2003 to consider how such a national co-ordination role might operate. The seminar brought together strategic and front line service providers across mediation, mentoring, be-friending and homelessness services and included local authorities. The result of the seminar discussions is the establishment of a national network, with The Rock Trust receiving seed-corn funding to act as host organisation. The network will build and co-ordinate local befriending, mentoring and mediation services for homeless people across Scotland; establish links to local authority homelessness strategies and other national policy objectives; and promote the testing and development of approaches for enabling social networks to be (re)-built.</li> <li>• The network will be managed through a steering group in partnership with the Befriending Network Scotland, Scottish Mediation Network, Scottish Mentoring Network, CoSLA, SFHA, Social Work (South Ayrshire), Shelter Scotland, SCSH, GAMH, SACRO and service users representatives. Representatives of relevant stakeholders will also be invited to join the network as deemed appropriate by the steering group.</li> </ul>		

**Monitoring Group****Recommendation 58**

(58) A monitoring group should be set up to take forward the action programme. The group should pay particular (but not exclusive) attention to movement in the number of households applying under the homelessness legislation; the number of households assessed as homeless; the proportion of homeless households placed directly into permanent accommodation; the number of households experiencing repeat homelessness; the number of homeless households - particularly families with children - in Bed & Breakfast; time spent in Bed & Breakfast; time taken by the local authority to deal with cases, and customer satisfaction indices.

- The Minister for Communities set up the Homelessness Monitoring Group following publication of the Task Force report. The Monitoring Group commenced work in July 2002. The Group has strong links to the Health and Homelessness Steering Group through an overlap in Health sector membership.
- As part of its initial work programme, the Monitoring Group has developed a performance framework for monitoring delivery of Task Force recommendations and their effects. This framework identifies high level outcomes for homelessness and uses key indicators recommended by the Task Force to help track achievement. The Monitoring Group plans to publish this framework once sufficient data is available from new data systems to make it meaningful.
- The Monitoring Group agreed, in 2002, improved arrangements for the publication of formal homelessness statistics released by the Executive. Since then, three sets of enhanced 6-monthly homelessness statistics derived from the new electronic data system have been published. These releases have been accompanied by fuller interpretations of what the statistics conveyed. This marks the beginning of the Monitoring Group's efforts to build wider understanding of the complexities of homelessness, the aims of the legislation and policies flowing from Task Force recommendations, and expected and actual achievements.
- The Monitoring Group will draw up an Action Plan in 2004, based on the priorities set out in this report.

Further analysis and research	Recommendations 2 and 59
<p>(2) Information on the ethnic status of homeless people should be analysed to assess whether any additional actions, focusing specifically on people from black and minority ethnic communities, are required. This should be complemented by a more qualitative study of the experience of homelessness amongst Scotland's black and minority ethnic communities.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A study has been commissioned by the Executive to provide evidence on the provision and use (and non-use) of homelessness services by black and minority ethnic people in Scotland and their experiences in using these services. The study includes refugees and gypsy/travellers. It will identify whether additional specific actions are necessary to prevent and respond to homelessness amongst black and minority ethnic groups. The research includes examination of local authority (HL1) statistics on ethnic status, which has been collected since the Executive's introduction of a new electronic data capture system in December 2001. The study will be published early in 2004.</li> </ul>	
<p>(59) An expanded suite of questions relating to homelessness should be included in the Scottish Household Survey from 2003.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An expanded suite of questions on homelessness has been included in an improved Scottish Household Survey (SHS). The additional questions will help address information gaps identified by the Task Force by providing a wider understanding in future of homelessness trends and hidden homelessness. The new questions were piloted in 2002/3 and introduced in the SHS from April 2003 onwards. The first full year of data is expected by August 2004.</li> <li>• The case for the additional SHS questions was strengthened by recommendations from a separate feasibility study on approaches to "Tracking Homelessness". This study, published in March 2003, was a response to Task Force concerns about the lack of longitudinal research to trace the long-term results of actions. The study has clarified what future longitudinal work would help assess the impacts of homelessness policy, and also what is not possible to do or sensible to attempt. It provides valuable background to inform the design of an evaluation of the Glasgow Hostels Decommissioning Programme, which would aim to compare outcomes across different types of new provision.</li> </ul>	

This document is also available on the Scottish Executive website  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/homelessness](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/homelessness)  
or by contacting  
The Homelessness Team, Scottish Executive,  
Area 1-H(Br), Victoria Quay,  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ,  
Tel 0131 244 0356

© Crown copyright 2004  
Astron B33972

