

Housing Options Hub Update for RRTP Sub-group: North and Islands Hub

Please see below a brief note of activities the North and Islands Hub has engaged in since November 2019 in support of Rapid Rehousing delivery.

RRTP Housing Support Event – the Hub hosted a major conference on 31 January attended by all key housing landlord partners from throughout the Hub region, as well as some support and health providers (having provided a similar event for health and social care providers in October). The purpose of the event was to engage all social landlords in Rapid Rehousing, to explore how and why they should contribute and what challenges there were to their engagement. The event was attended by around eighty representatives and was opened by the Minister, Kevin Stewart MSP. Workshops were facilitated by Hub local authority representatives. Early indications are that the event was very successful in helping build partnerships and spark ideas for further collaboration.

Homeless Prevention – the Hub's section 11 project, which had involved four local authorities and seven housing associations, concluded in December. The project is now being evaluated before guidance will be developed. Early outcomes are very positive: homelessness prevented in 96% of cases; rates of eviction reduced by at least 31% and in some cases, 100%. Joint evaluation sessions are now being held with LA and RSL staff, and tenant and homeless applicant experiences will also be captured in order to inform the guidance.

Interim Hub discussions – quarterly Hub meetings are very pressured for agenda space and leave little time for discussion, reflection and learning, and the geography of the North and Islands Hub makes physical meetings challenging and expensive. In December, the first interim meeting of Hub representatives by skype was held. The purpose of these meetings is to allow members that time for more structured discussion and reflection. This first discussion focussed mainly on SHORE and also RRTP implementation by individual member LA's. It was reported to have been very useful by the six local authorities who were able to join, as well as Scottish Government, such that quarterly interim meetings by skype will become a regular feature of the Hub calendar.

January Hub meeting – the regular face-to-face meeting of the Hub was held in January. The external speaker on this occasion was Stacy Angus of Osprey Housing, a housing association within the Hub area. There has been ongoing interest by Hub members in the potential of an app, both to offer sources of advice that may prevent homelessness/support rehousing and also as a tool for the case management of homeless applicants. Osprey have developed their own app to support their tenants and provide easy access to housing management services. Stacy provided a demonstration of their app to the meeting. Hub members will need to decide whether this is an area of activity that they wish to explore further during 2020/1.

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Individual North and Islands Hub Member Local Authorities' RRTP Implementation Updates

Aberdeen City Council

We have started an initiative through the Empty Homes project to identify vacant properties in the city (that do not meet the empty homes criteria of 6 months vacant) and offer assistance to landlords to find tenants. Details are circulated with our Housing Advice and Case Management (homeless) Officers to discuss with service users approaching for housing or homelessness assistance.

We have now gathered almost all the local RSL data for lets and availability from the last financial year. This information will form the basis of discussion around the potential use of Section 5 referrals in the city and expected number of lets to homeless households in 2020/21 from RSLs. An event is scheduled for March to review this and the Section 11 protocol discussed at our last Hub meeting.

Our drug related death forum has completed a data analysis of demand management for non fatal overdose in December.

A test for change has been submitted to embed ADP and Substance Misuse Services in homelessness services.

A workshop with NHS Grampian and our Health and Social Care Partnership has been arranged to review hospital discharges and determine good and bad practice for complex cases.

Work continues on our tenancy intelligence model amalgamating homelessness and tenancy data to identify future problems. Our Health and Social Care Partnership have agreed to provide supporting information to further enhance this.

Aberdeenshire Council

- We continue to focus on measures to address our homeless backlog and at 31.12.19 we had 286 homeless cases who were not on offer. This number has been decreasing gradually in successive months however there is an issue for those who require one bed property due to the lack of availability. We had 301 households in temp, which although still high represents a 25% reduction on this time last year. We have continued to reduce use of B&B and recognise the need to focus on out of hours placements in order to discontinue B&B use completely. We intend developing TA properties that can be accessed directly outwith working hours.
- Average days to complete a homeless case is currently 146 days down from 164.
- We have appointed consultants to review our Void Management processes and this is currently ongoing. There has been commitment from across the Housing Service to the workshops organised, and to implementing the outcomes, with a recognition that improving void performance is vital to achieving Rapid Rehousing.
- We have been working closely with colleagues in Childrens' Services and have a joint commitment to ensuring that Young People leaving care do not

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go through a homeless route in our revised Through Care and After Care housing protocol. A workstream that has come out of a WSA to Youth Justice identifies the opportunity to develop wrap around, sustained and intensive work with 12-25 year olds who are at risk of offending or who have started to offend and are at risk of homelessness.

- A full review of Housing Support provision has commenced and looking at both in house provision and commissioned services. This will determine the model of future delivery and include ongoing provision of HF through our own project and the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Consortium pathfinder project. We have 2 FTE Housing Officers with full case loads and at 31.12.19 24 tenancies had been achieved within the pathfinder but aware that we need to consider how the tenancies within Aberdeenshire will be supported when the pathfinders come to an end.
- We are engaging with RSL partners on a regular basis to ensure that they are informed about Rapid Rehousing and that we are working together to ensure that homeless applicants are prioritised with regard to the offer of permanent accommodation

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

The Comhairle have now trained all staff in Housing First and have also provided training for Members and partner agencies. One FTE post has been appointed to provide Housing First support in Lewis and Harris and a further 0.5 post is currently being recruited for Uist and Barra.

Our H&SCP are currently recruiting a clinically skilled member of staff to work with Health, Adult Services, Criminal Justice and Homelessness Services in providing support to clients with multiple and complex needs. I am awaiting an update from the ADP regarding their commissioning of one FTE post to provide support to homeless clients throughout the Western Isles.

Highland Council

Housing First

Our Housing First Advisory Group has finalised our Housing First Pathway in Highland, working procedures and draft paperwork is in the process of being signed off by the Group. Senior Nurse Practitioner, Housing Officer and Salvation Army Support Worker all now in post. Work to finalise the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) is ongoing between the Data Protection Managers of the 3 organisations. Our Housing First Panel will meet to agree our first group of housing First Tenants once the DSA is in place. James Dunbar, Chief Executive, Newstart Highland, has agreed to take on the role of Chair of the Housing First Advisory Group.

Rapid Rehousing Officers

3 x Complex Needs Caseworkers are being recruited using year 1 EHT Funding. The posts will focus on securing permanent housing outcomes for the longest duration homeless service users in Highland. Working in an integrated way with Mental Health, Community Mental Health and Health & Social Care colleagues to help those with medium-level complex needs to manage factors contributing to

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homelessness and repeated engagement with other statutory services. Recruitment processes underway. No suitable candidates were identified during first round of recruitment. External recruitment now ongoing, closing date for applications 11 February.

TFA Share Team/ Transforming TA

Work is underway to develop a new TFA share Team in Highland based on the initial trials carried out to test a model of shared furnished homeless accommodation as one alternative to HMO use as temporary accommodation. Committee Approval was obtained for this 29 January, year 1 EHT Funding is being used for this. A UAO Action plan is being finalised for inclusion within our RRTP.

CHR Allocations Policy Review

Work with RSL partners is ongoing to revise the Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy, Highland Housing Register partners have agreed to a 3 list structure, homeless, waiting list non homeless and transfer. Homeless list will be significantly simplified and ranked in date order. Points modelling is underway. The project target is to have the new Policy operational by 1st April 2020.

Homeless Structures & Processes

Our Housing & Property Committee agreed on 29 January to an internal review of the homelessness service to ensure compliance with the extended Unsuitable Accommodation Order and other homelessness legislative changes as well as RRTP. They also agreed that we will focus our investigation of Intentionality decisions on cases where there is evidence of deliberate manipulation. Mid term review of our Housing Strategy is underway, one of the themes of the review will be RRTP and homeless legislative changes, a workshop session with key partners will take place 11 February.

Moray Council

We have been to our committee and presented a “scaled down” version of our RRTP which reflects the allocation of funds for years 1 and 2. We have also been given the go-ahead from our P & R committee to draw down the RRTP funds from the General Services fund. This means that we can now go ahead and start the recruitment process for some of the posts we are creating.

We continue to reconfigure our temporary accommodation stock and are hopeful of reaching our target of flipping 20 properties in year one. We are also undertaking an audit of our temporary accommodation units with a view to improving the quality.

We have raised our allocations quota for the homeless list to 50% and we are really concentrating on our oldest cases where we have accepted a duty. Currently we only have 2 cases who have been waiting for more than a year on the homeless list.

Orkney Islands Council

We took a committee report to our Education, Leisure & Housing Committee in November 2019 with an update on the money received from Scottish Government. The report advised that we would consider the best options from the

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action plan that we could progress within the money received. It also covered the top priorities that had come out during a Joint Seminar with OIC Councillors and the Board of Orkney Housing Association Ltd and staff from within both organisations. I have attached a link to this report : https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Committees-and-Agendas/Education/ELH2019/ELH13-11-2019/17_Rapid_Rehousing_Transition_Plan.pdf .

Since then we have made a decision to consider flipping a tenancy as a trial – we will be able to ascertain the actual costs associated with undertaking this and be able to consider whether this is a financially viable option for us going forward. In addition we are seeking more information in relation to a Housing options app. We are keen to consider a Mediation Service but we currently have no resource to take this forward.

Shetland Islands Council

Funding for Year 2 has been confirmed as £27k.

There have been delays in projects getting going because we are working with other groups to progress the work.

Prevention of homelessness – Mediation Local Voluntary Agency, focus on Mediation between parent and child for applicants under 21 threatened with homelessness from the family home. We are extending the Service Level agreement we have with Relationship Scotland – Shetland.

Provision of specialist support to those presenting as homeless with mental health and/or substance abuse issues – working with partners in Health and Care via the IJB. We are trying to provide wrap around support to help people maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness. Funding a shared post. Alcohol & Drug Partnership got funding to start up a recovery hub and are looking for a project worker & support.

Community Housing Support Worker will specialise with drugs & alcohol and be able to identify housing issues and provide the support required. Local police Chair of D&A Partnership been in touch about taking this forward.