

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLAN

Introduction

This Temporary Accommodation Plan has been developed as a key part of our Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 and aims to set out clear standards that homeless people can expect if they need temporary accommodation.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people. It is now over 20 years since the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 set out local authorities' duties in respect of temporary accommodation provision for homeless people in "priority need" but over recent years, duties have increased as a result of:

- the **Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** - which extended the right to temporary accommodation to all homeless applicants, for such a period as would be reasonable to allow them to find or access alternative housing,
- the **Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003** - which gave Ministers the power to specify accommodation that is **not** suitable as temporary or interim accommodation and followed this up with the **Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004** which aims to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for households with children or pregnant women. The Order sets out specific standards for the quality and accessibility of temporary accommodation for these groups.

In developing this Plan, we have taken full account of such legislation and recognised good practice and responded to recent increases in demand for temporary accommodation from homeless applicants.

Our Temporary Accommodation Plan is underpinned by four key principles:

1) Access: There should be fair, open access to temporary accommodation at the point of need, with choice being offered wherever possible. This means:

- Information about temporary accommodation should be widely available and easy for all homeless people to use,
- Temporary accommodation should meet the specific requirements of the individual/household as identified through a full assessment of their needs,
- Temporary accommodation should be available for all homeless people irrespective of their age, gender, race, disability,
- No-one should have to sleep rough because they cannot access temporary accommodation.

2) Demand/Supply: There should be enough temporary accommodation to meet the demand for it. This means:

- Trends in the demand for temporary accommodation and occupancy levels within it are analysed regularly so that additional accommodation can be commissioned when necessary, minimising the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation to meet statutory duties,
- Temporary accommodation is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to meet the needs of those in housing crisis,
- Temporary accommodation is located across the Council area to take account of households' needs in respect of education and health arrangements and there should be easy access to shopping and transport facilities,
- There is a sufficient supply of permanent and settled accommodation to meet the longer term needs of those in temporary accommodation.

3) Quality: Temporary accommodation should meet publicised quality standards and be suitable for people whatever their needs. This means:

- Standards for temporary accommodation in terms of furniture and equipment, decoration and cleanliness are publicised and open to scrutiny,
- Regular inspections of all temporary accommodation are carried out to ensure that the required standards are being met,
- There are agreed processes in place for the establishment of temporary accommodation that take account of local circumstances.

4) Support: Support should be available for households living in temporary accommodation if they need it. This means:

- Arrangements are in place to refer vulnerable people in temporary accommodation to those services/agencies who can assist them.

Current Temporary Accommodation Services

Currently, the following temporary accommodation is available in the Falkirk Council area:

- around **200 dispersed properties**. "Floating support" services are provided where required by the occupants,
- **supported accommodation** units that provide temporary/interim accommodation for:
 - young single people,
 - single males over 21 years,
 - people with more complex needs.

Bed and Breakfast accommodation is also used to meet excess demand for temporary accommodation.

Work in Progress

To ensure that temporary accommodation priorities in relation to Access, Demand/Supply, Quality and Support can be delivered, a range of work is currently underway. This includes:

- Considering the staffing structure that will need to be put in place to meet the need for temporary accommodation up to and beyond 2012,
- Continuous analysis of occupancy rates and demand in order to identify if additional temporary accommodation needs to be provided so that the use of bed and breakfast accommodation can be reduced,
- Improving turnaround times within the pool of temporary accommodation to minimise void periods,
- Using a range of stock across the social rented sector to meet the demand for temporary accommodation and maximise the choices available to individual households.
- Developing the Support Needs Assessment process to ensure that a full assessment is made of a homeless person's accommodation and support needs at the point of first contact with the Homeless Service so that they are assisted to move on to sustainable housing options at the right time,
- Ensuring that supported accommodation responds to the needs of vulnerable homeless people,
- Developing new shared supported accommodation for young people as an interim step between fully supported accommodation and independent tenancies,
- Facilitating quicker access to permanent housing options (thus reducing the time people spend in temporary accommodation and, consequently, the need for such accommodation) by:
 - expanding access to housing association properties through the increased use of Section 5 referrals,
 - reviewing the Council's housing allocations policy to ensure that homeless people have appropriate priority for the available housing,
 - increasing the number of rent deposit guarantees that can be provided to assist homeless applicants to obtain settled accommodation in the private rented sector.

Temporary Accommodation Standards

We have developed a set of Standards to ensure that all our temporary accommodation is of a good quality. The Standards take account of wider responsibilities in relation to the Care Commission's National Care Standards for Housing Support Services and those standards set out within the Unsuitable Accommodation (Scotland) Order 2004.

Our Standards require all temporary accommodation should be:

- **Clean,**
- **Safe,**
- **Meet the occupants' needs in respect of bedspaces/bedrooms,**
- **Centrally heated,**
- **Equipped so that the occupants can cook basic meals and store food,**
- **Equipped with a washing machine.**

In meeting the requirements of individual households, every attempt will also be made to allocate temporary accommodation so that occupants' existing arrangements in respect of healthcare and the education and welfare of any children can be maintained.

Monitoring the Standards and Performance Management

Compliance with the Standards will be ensured through:

- Completion of a **Property Checklist** at the beginning and end of every period of occupation with any deficiencies being rectified prior to a new occupant moving in,
- An annual **Property Inspection** to identify longer term requirements in respect of decoration and furniture/equipment replacement,
- Development of an annual **Temporary Accommodation Improvement Programme**,
- **Tenant/Service-user Feedback Questionnaires** – every occupant will be invited to complete a questionnaire to ascertain their level of satisfaction with the property provided for them.

The Way Forward

Specific actions that flow from this Temporary Accommodation Plan are set out in the Action Plan to the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13. Progress on implementing these actions will be monitored through quarterly reports to Falkirk Council Members and to the Falkirk Homelessness Forum Executive Group. An annual report on progress will also be prepared for the wider Falkirk Homelessness Forum and public reporting purposes.