

**ANNUAL  
HOMELESSNESS STATEMENT  
2010-11**



## 1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Falkirk Homelessness Strategy for the period 2008-2013 was approved by Falkirk Council on 10 December 2008 following extensive consultation with stakeholders. A commitment was made within the Strategy to provide an Annual Homelessness Statement and this is the third such Statement to be produced.
- 1.2 This year's Annual Homelessness Statement has been prepared alongside a new Local Housing Strategy which will cover the period 2011-16. The guidance that was published in 2008 on the preparation of local housing strategies emphasised that there is no longer a need for separate homelessness strategies: the LHS is now "...the sole strategic document on housing, homelessness and support issues." This is a positive step forward in the integration of homelessness with wider issues of housing supply and quality. In this context, it is proposed that the monitoring of the Action Plan which forms part of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 will be incorporated within the wider monitoring framework for the LHS. However, it is considered useful to continue to prepare an Annual Homelessness Statement that brings together the main issues relating to homelessness in a format that is accessible to key stakeholders.
- 1.3 The Homelessness Strategy is based on the Vision that, by 2012, no one in the Council area need be homeless. Three key themes have been identified which underpin all the actions set out in the Strategy:
- **Prevention:** we will prevent homelessness by raising awareness of the help that is available in the area and by developing new services to meet local needs,
  - **Accommodation:** we will make best use of the available accommodation by assisting people to explore the full range of housing options available in the area,
  - **Support:** we will help vulnerable people to access the support they need so that they do not become homeless again.
- 1.4 This report addresses the issue of homelessness in the Falkirk Council area during the period 2010-11, sets out the progress that has been made and looks at the current nature and extent of homelessness in the area in the context of the wider Local Housing Strategy which considers the state of the economy and the effect this can have on homelessness.
- 1.5 The Statement covers four key issues:
- **Trends in Homelessness** – Section 2 of this Statement provides information on local trends in homelessness over the past five years to provide a context that will help local people and other stakeholders understand the causes of homelessness in the area, who is most affected by it and the problems that they face,
  - **Performance Indicators** – Section 3 provides a detailed analysis of performance in meeting a range of targets associated with the delivery of services and provision of housing to homeless people. Work on the development of a robust Performance Management Framework in respect of homelessness has been a key priority for the service over the past year and good progress has been made since the last Statement was published.

- **Homelessness and Equalities** – Section 4 looks at how different groups in the local population are affected by homelessness so that any issues with regard to inequality can be identified and remedial action taken.
  - **Homelessness Strategy Action Plan** – Section 5 provides an update on progress against those targets in the Strategy that were due to be completed by 31 March 2011.
- 1.6 Finally, the Statement also looks at the challenges to be faced in the coming years if the vision of the Homelessness Strategy is to become a reality and identifies key issues that need to be tackled to take services for homeless people in the Falkirk Council area forward in the context of the national 2012 homelessness target.



## 2. TRENDS IN HOMELESSNESS

2.1 This section of the Annual Homelessness Statement 2010-11 shows homeless trends in both the Falkirk Council area and Scotland as a whole over the period 2006-11. The principle issues to note are:

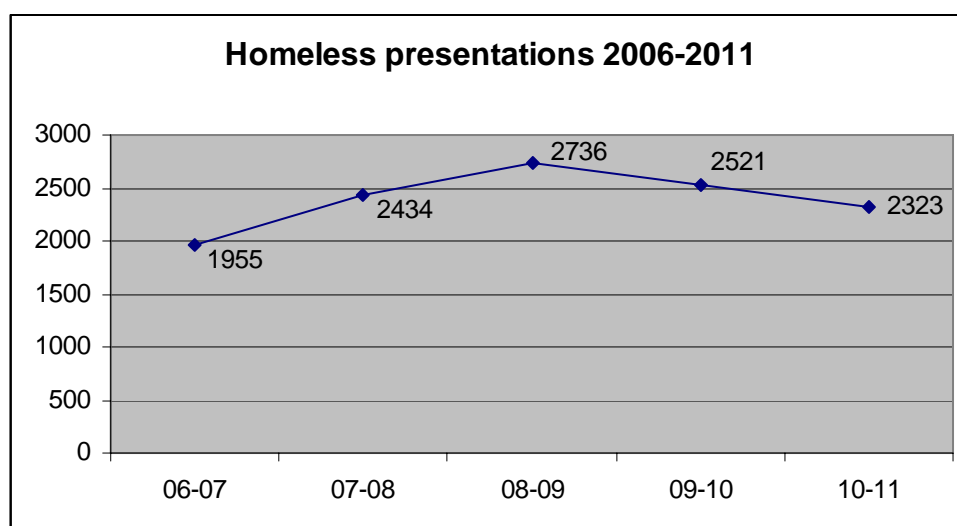
- A further 8% decrease in homeless presentations in addition to the 8% decrease in 2009-10,
- A continuing high level of presentations from single people,
- A decrease in the percentage of applicants assessed as having a priority need for housing from 90% in 2009-10 to 83% in 2010-11. This is an area of concern that will be explored later in this Annual Statement,
- The main reasons for homelessness are relationship breakdown and disputes within households,
- Households with children under age 17 account for just over a third of all applications.

2.2 The information provided below shows key trends in homelessness in the Falkirk Council area and, where there is either a close correlation or a marked variance from the Scottish trend, this is considered.

### Homeless Presentations

2.3 Over the last 18 years there has been a national trend of increasing homelessness presentations until 2005-06. Since then presentations have reduced by around 7%. In Falkirk, the rise in presentations continued until 2008-09 but they have now fallen by 8% a year since then, although they are still 19% higher than they were five years ago as shown in Figure 1.

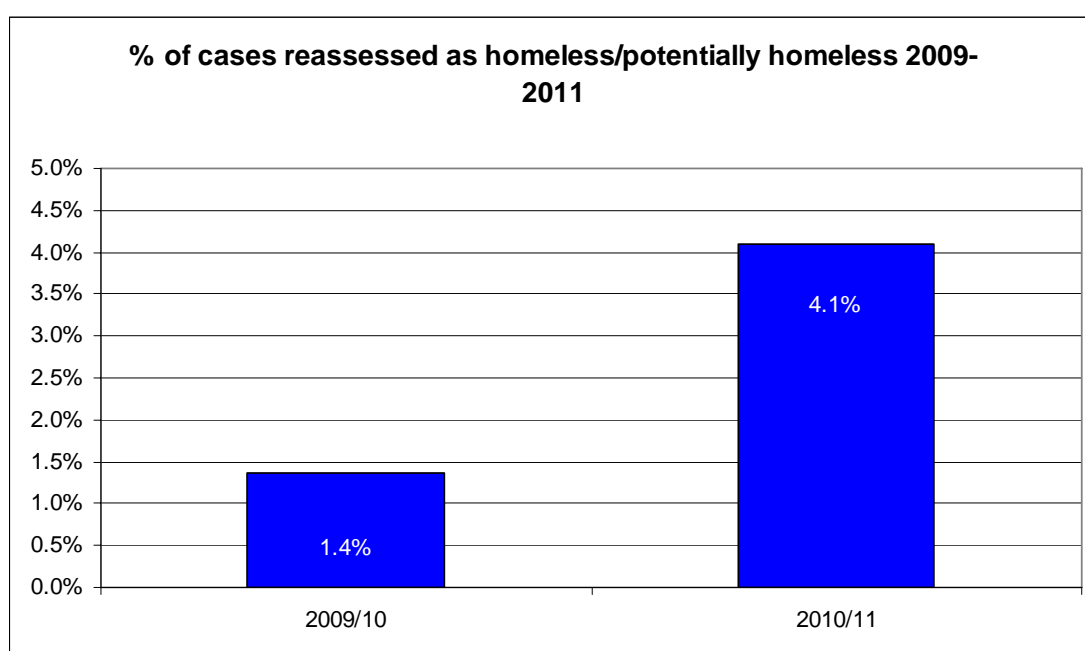
#### Homeless Presentations (Falkirk Council Area) 2006-11



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
Figure 1

2.4 In 2010-11 there was a reduction of 198 in the number of homeless presentations compared to 2009-10. This represents an 8% decrease. There is evidence that part of this decrease is related to a 3% fall in the number of people presenting as homeless because of financial difficulties and this is explored below. Another factor could be that housing applicants now have a better understanding of how the Home Spot choice-based housing allocation scheme operates and are better able to resolve their housing need without presenting as homeless. As the Council implements more homelessness prevention measures as part of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 (such as the “housing options approach”) further analysis of the impact of actions taken will be necessary to ensure that anticipated outcomes are being achieved.

#### Repeat Applications



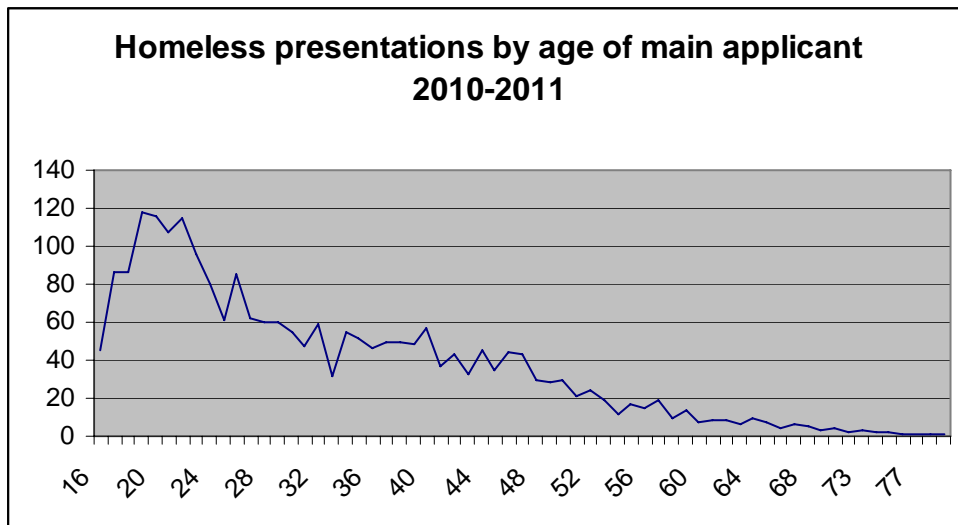
Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System

Figure 2

2.5 However, whilst overall presentations have fallen over the past two years, the percentage of repeat applications has gone up by around 2.5% in the past year as shown in Figure 2. This is primarily a result of more accurate recording. Analysis of repeat applications shows that the vast majority are a result of relationship breakdown – people have gone back to a relationship and resolved their homelessness for a period of time and then the relationship has encountered further difficulties leading to a repeat homeless presentation.

### Age of homeless applicants

- 2.6 Homelessness is an issue which predominantly affects young people under the age of 25. Figure 3 shows the age profile of homeless applicants in 2010-11.



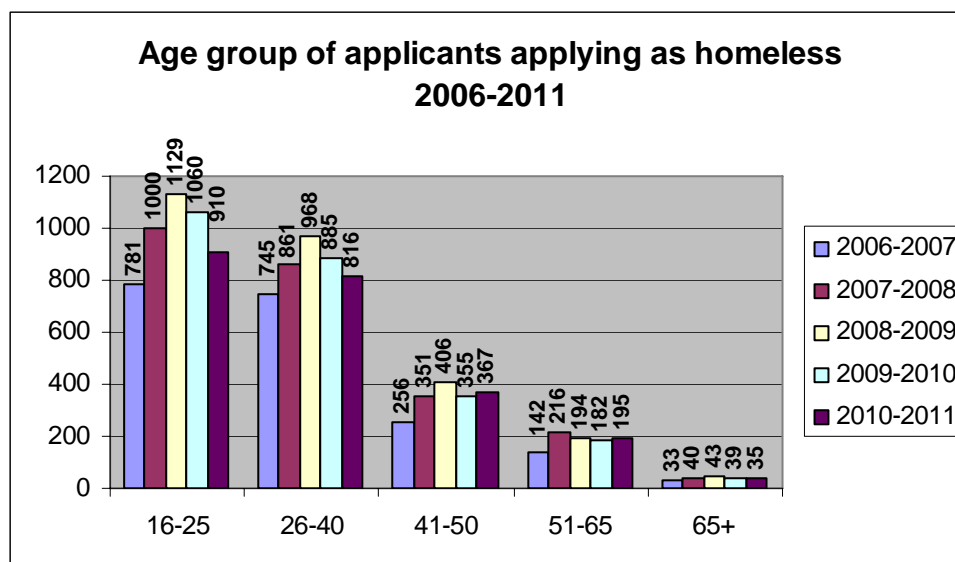
Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System

Figure 3

- 2.7 39% of applicants are aged below 25. The next most significant age groups experiencing homelessness are people between 26 and retirement age although the numbers show that homelessness reduces as people get older - very few people over retirement age become homeless. There is a significant correlation between the age of an applicant and the main cause of homelessness – relationship breakdown. Younger people are more likely to become homeless because either they can no longer live in the parental home or they are less likely to be in stable long term relationships.
- 2.8 However, it must be noted that young people are also much more likely to be establishing an independent home of their own for the first time and a proportion of those young people will present as homeless if they are unable to meet their housing need in the market or if they are unaware of the range of housing options that may be available to them.
- 2.9 A major focus of the recently introduced “housing options approach” is helping people to consider what they are really looking for – sometimes it is not a Council tenancy – and to assist them to find it. Unfortunately, the housing benefit regulations work against young people who are trying to set up home – if they are under the age of 25 and are not responsible for dependants they are not able to claim Local Housing Allowance for a private sector tenancy of their own – they are only eligible for assistance to rent a room in a shared property. Given that many people in this age group are on relatively low earnings a significant proportion of them will be unable to pay a full private sector rent.
- 2.10 In many cases the greater flexibility that the private rented sector offers compared to the secure tenancies offered in the social rented sector makes it highly suitable for young people who may not wish to stay in one property for many years to come. Unfortunately, this fact does not sit comfortably alongside the benefit regulations and means that young people who cannot afford to buy a home have fewer housing options than older people and are more likely to be dependent on the social rented sector to meet their housing needs.

2.11 A particular concern is that in January 2012, the UK Government proposes to increase the age of eligibility for Local Housing Allowance from 25 to 35 – this will mean that even more people will not be able to resolve their housing need in the private rented sector and will therefore be even more reliant on housing in the social rented sector.

**Homelessness Presentations by Age (Falkirk Council Area) 2010-11**

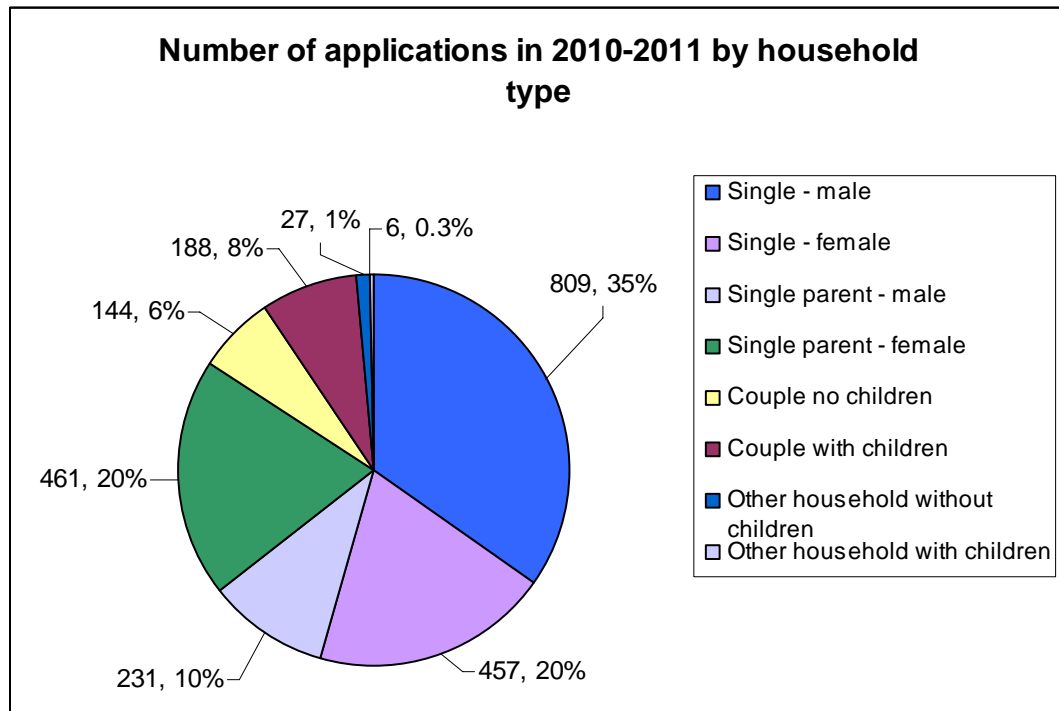


Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System

**Figure 4**

2.12 Figure 4 shows that the age distribution of homeless applicants has been very consistent over the last five years. In line with the overall reduction in applications since the peak in 2008-09, there has been a reduction in the numbers of homeless people aged under 26 during the last two years, whereas presentations from the older age groups have changed very little in this time period. It is anticipated that younger people will continue to make up the bulk of homeless applicants. As noted above, young people are far more likely to be setting up home for the first time and many are reliant on the social rented sector to meet their housing need because of the housing benefit regulations that exclude them from private sector properties. In addition, younger people are less likely to be able to obtain mortgage finance in an economic climate which is demanding deposits in excess of 20%.

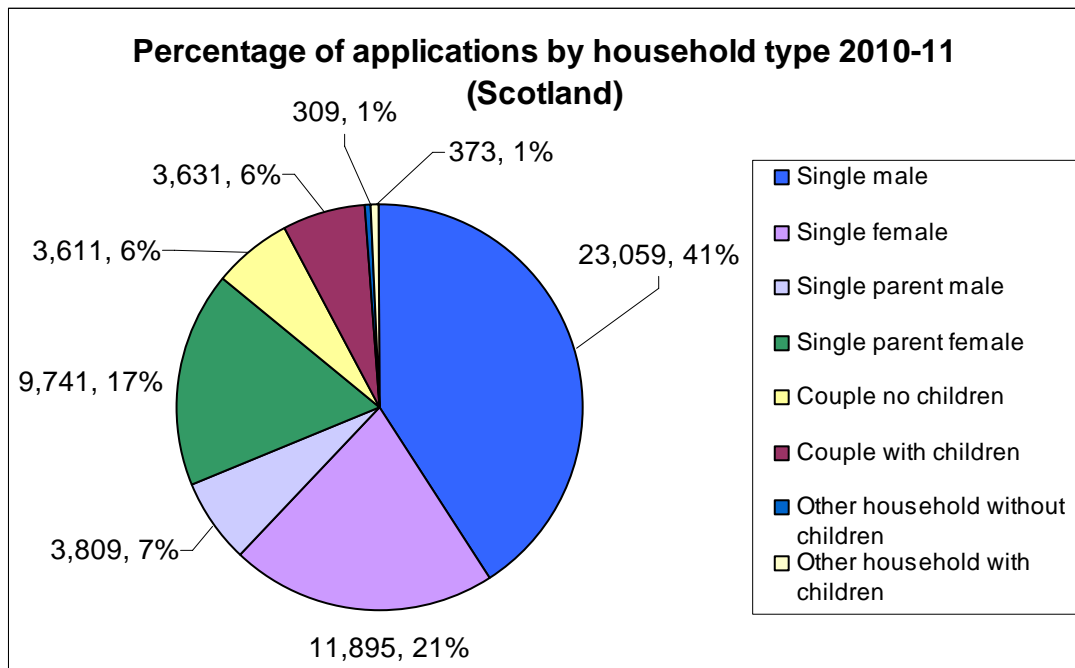
Homeless Applications by Household Type, 2010-11 (Falkirk)



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
Figure 5

2.13 Figure 5 shows the type of households who became homeless in the Council area in 2010-11. Single men (35%) formed the largest group of homeless applicants followed by single women (20%) and female one parent families (20%). There are no significant changes from the previous year and the data is consistent with the position across Scotland as shown in Figure 6 (although single men make up a greater proportion of overall applications in Scotland - 41% - than in Falkirk).

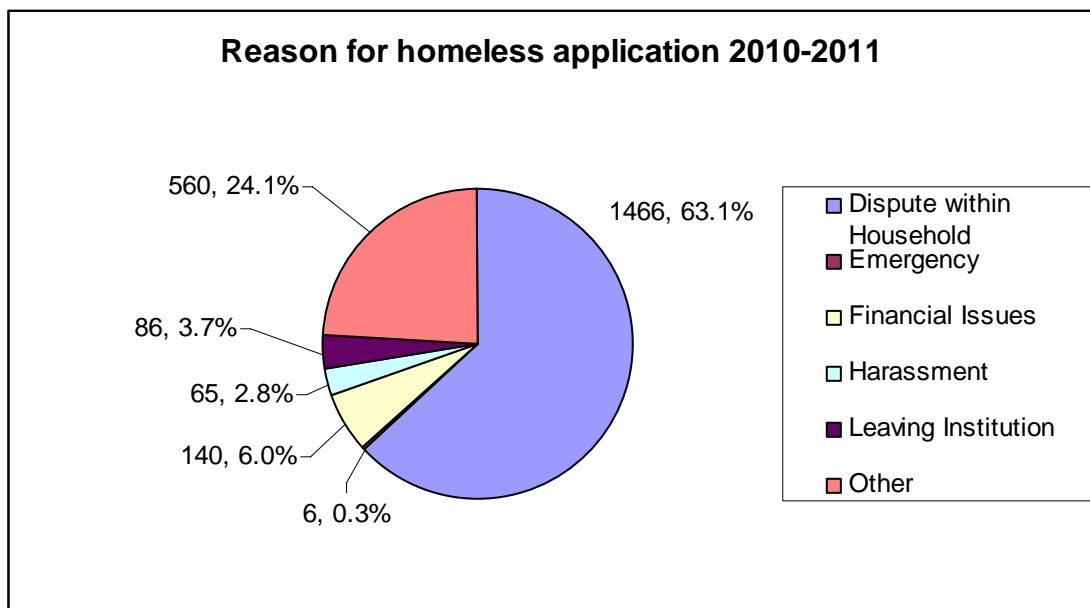
**Homelessness Applications by Household Type (Scotland) 2010-11**



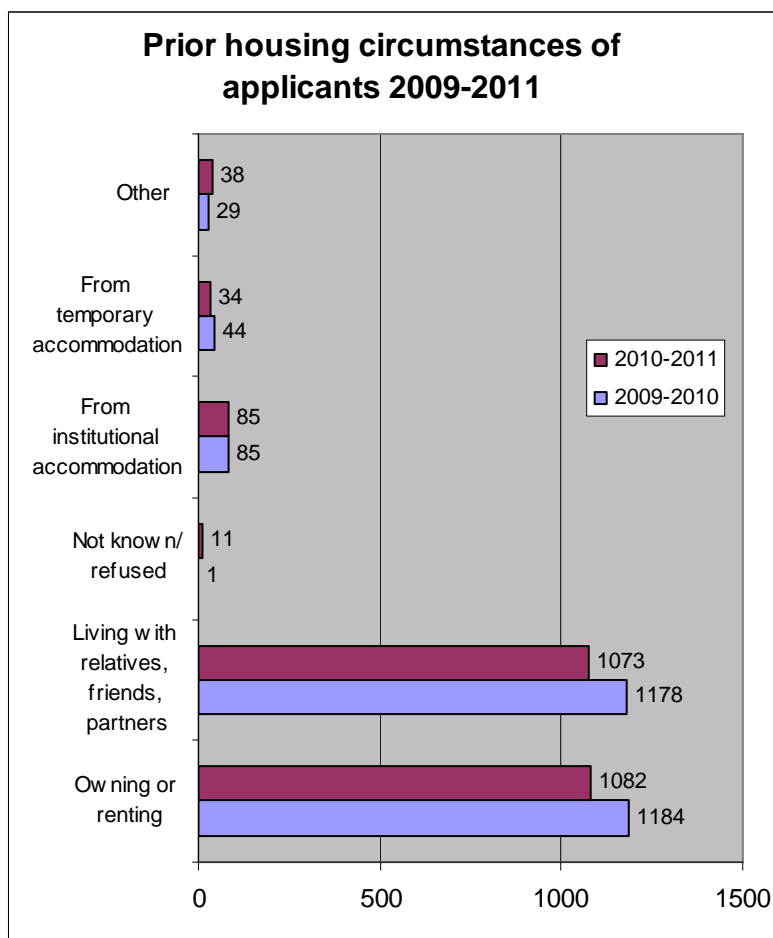
Source: Scottish Government  
**Figure 6**

**Causes of Homelessness - Relationship Breakdown**

2.14 Figure 7 below shows that relationship breakdown is by far the more significant cause of homeless presentations in Falkirk and this is consistent with the picture for Scotland as a whole. This is supported by the information provided in Figure 8 which shows the prior accommodation of those who presented as homeless.



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 7**



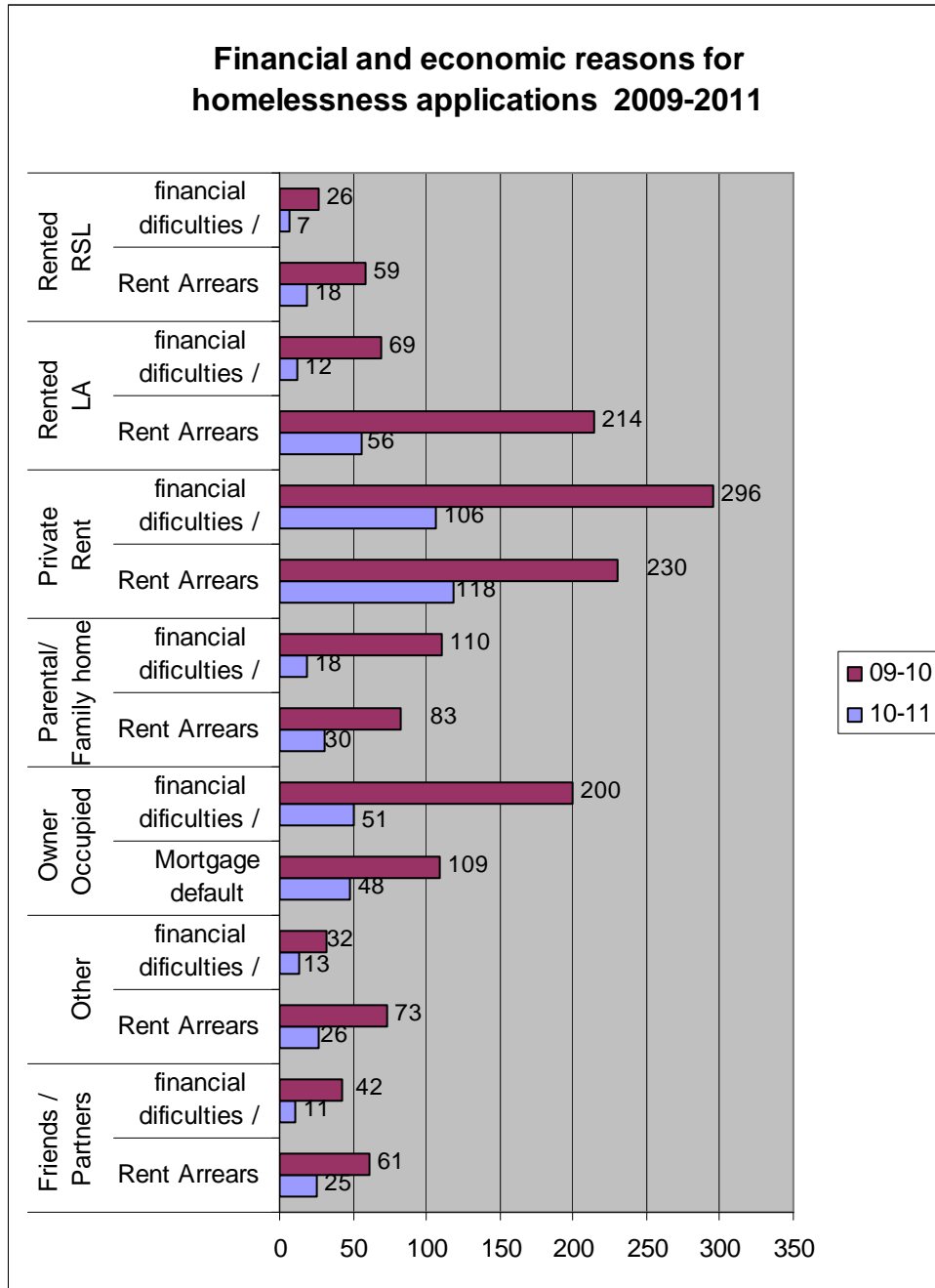
Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 8**

2.15 Figure 8 provides more detailed information about the prior housing circumstances of those who became homeless in the past two years. It shows that the vast majority of people who present as homeless were either living with relatives, friends or partners or were previously owner occupiers or tenants. Very few became homeless as a result of being discharged from an institution of some sort. This information very much backs up the information provided in Figure 7: disputes within a household – whether they be between parents and children or people living together as couples – are the major cause of homelessness in the area. A key issue for ongoing attention is that many people in these circumstances seem to be unaware of how they can resolve their housing need without recourse to the Council. The continued implementation of the housing options approach attempts to raise awareness of other housing options for people to consider, however, there will remain a core of homeless applicants whose financial circumstances mean that the only housing option available to them is a tenancy in the social rented sector.

#### **Financial Difficulties and the Impact of the Recession**

2.16 There has been significant concern that homeless presentations would rise as a result of the economic recession and the “credit crunch” but, locally, there has been a decrease – from 9% to 6% - in presentations during the past two years which are a result of financial difficulty. This may well be related to the introduction of Section 11 of the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 which came into effect in April 2009. Under Section 11, landlords and lenders who plan to take action to recover a property are now

required to notify the local authority in advance in order that homelessness prevention work can be undertaken with the individuals concerned. Potential homelessness that arises as a result of financial difficulties is probably the cause most amenable to preventative actions being taken and efforts are focussed on providing good quality debt and welfare benefits advice at the earliest opportunity to prevent potential homeless situations developing.



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 9**

2.17 Figure 9 above shows a more detailed breakdown of the type of financial situations which have given rise to homeless applications over the last two years. This situation will require to be closely monitored to ensure that as much preventative work can be done as possible, within the limited resources available for this. Work is currently ongoing within the Council to map advice and information services that are available to

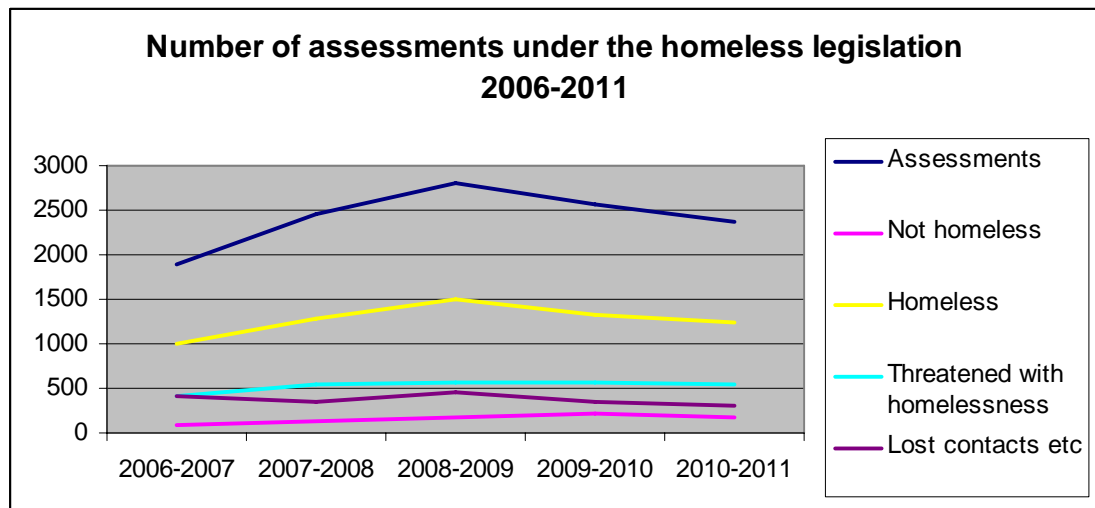
assist local people in the context of the Council's *Poverty Strategy – Towards a Fairer Falkirk* and this will help ensure that as much as possible is being done to help those whose homes are at risk because of wider poverty issues.

### Homelessness Assessments

2.18 Of course, not everyone who presents as a homeless applicant will be assessed as homeless. There are a series of “tests” of homelessness which must be considered in respect of each individual applicant and the outcome of these tests is set out in Figures 10, 11, 12 and 13 below. Figure 10 shows the information relating to each of these tests in one chart whereas figures 11, 12 and 13 show the detailed numbers behind each category.

- 2.19 The issues that must be considered in assessing a homeless application are:
- Is the applicant homeless? (Figure 11)
  - Does the applicant or a member of his/her household have a priority need for housing? (Figure 12)
  - Is the applicant intentionally homeless? (Figure 13)

Assessment Decisions 2006-11

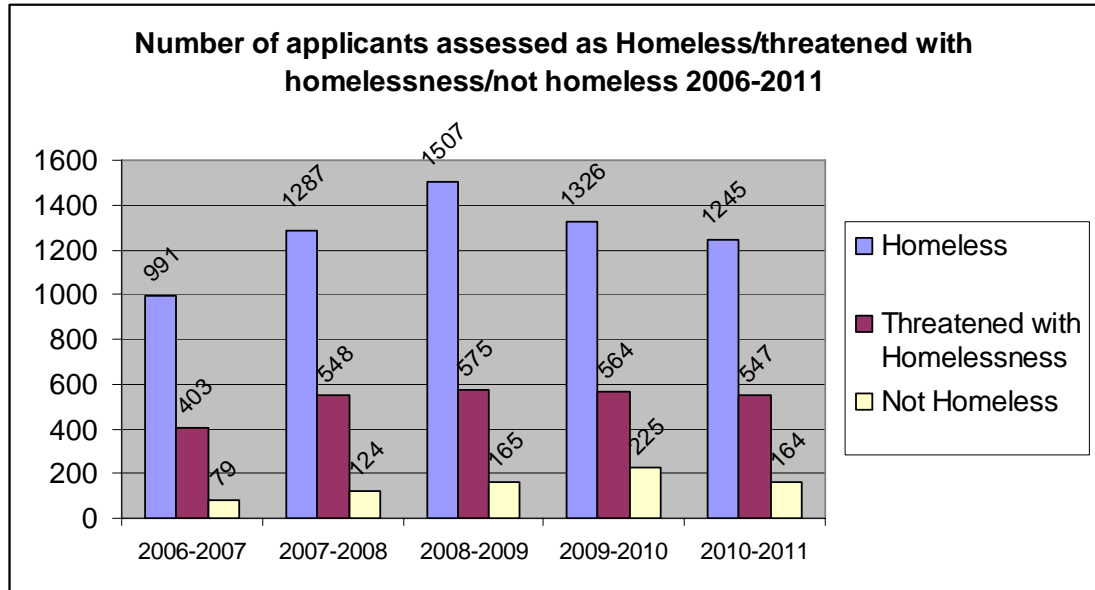


Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
Figure 10

2.20 Figure 10 shows a summary of the outcome of the assessment process over the last five years. This illustrates quite clearly that not everyone who presents as homeless is ultimately found to be homeless.

2.21 The first test is whether the applicant is homeless. There are three possible outcomes for this test: the applicant is homeless; the applicant is threatened with homelessness in the coming two months; the applicant is not homeless.

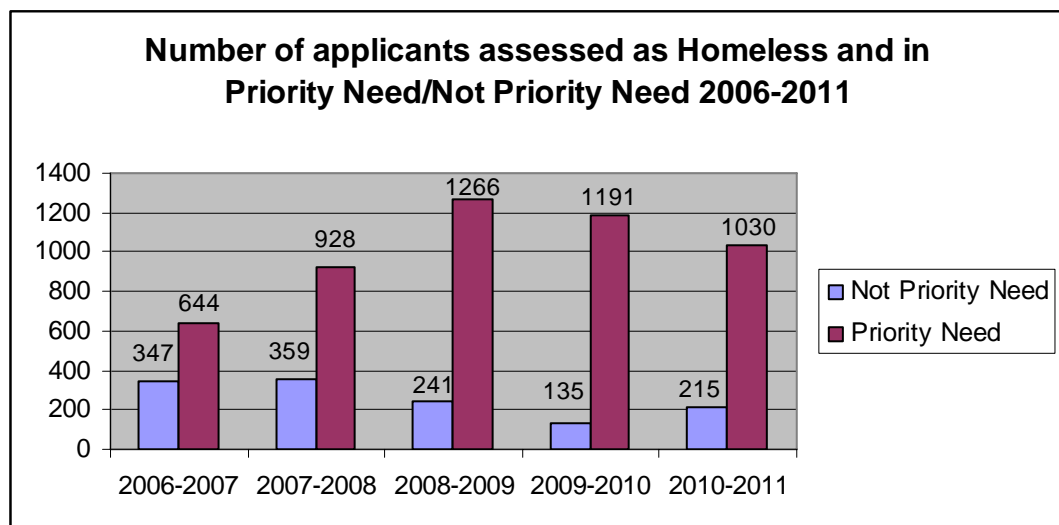
**Is the applicant homeless?**



Source Falkirk Homeless System  
**Figure 11**

2.22 Figure 11 shows the outcome of the first stage in the assessment process and shows that the proportion of applicants in Falkirk found to be homeless has increased by 26% over the last 5 years. This is a result of both the increase in homeless presentations over the period and improved recording systems – the duty system introduced in 2007 means that applicants are recorded at the point of presentation rather than at interview. Once the decision on homelessness has been made, consideration is then given as to whether the applicant has a priority need for housing as defined in the legislation.

**Test: Does the Applicant have a Priority Need for Housing?**



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 12**

2.23 Figure 12 and Table 1 show that the proportion of homeless people found to have a priority need dropped from 90% to 83% between 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Table 1: Percentage of homeless applicants assessed as having a priority need

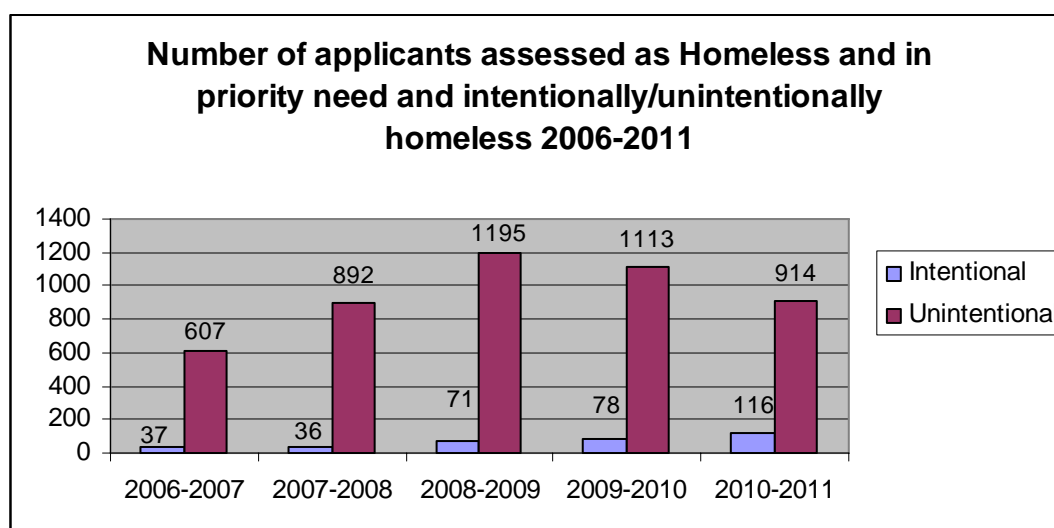
Year	Percentage
2006-07	65%
2007-08	72%
2008-09	84%
2009-10	90%
2010-11	83%

Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System

2.24 The 2009 Interim Target for priority need assessments for the Falkirk Council area was 82% and this was achieved in 2008-09 and then again in 2009-10. However the percentage slipped in 2010-11, although it was still slightly above the 2009 Interim Target. Given that it is the Scottish Government's aim that, by the end of 2012, 100% of homeless applicants who are *not* found to be *intentionally* homeless have to be provided with settled accommodation, this indicator will need to be kept under close scrutiny in the coming months.

**Test: Is the Applicant Intentionally Homeless?**

2.25 Once a decision has been reached that the applicant is homeless and has a priority need, the issue of intentionality is then considered: an applicant is intentionally homeless if he/she does something, or fails to do something, which has led to him/her becoming homeless.



Source: Falkirk Council homeless system

Figure 13

2.26 Figure 13 shows that the number of people who are assessed as being intentionally homeless is very small relative to the overall number of applicants assessed. In 2010-11 only 116 people (11%) of those assessed as homeless were found to be intentionally homeless.

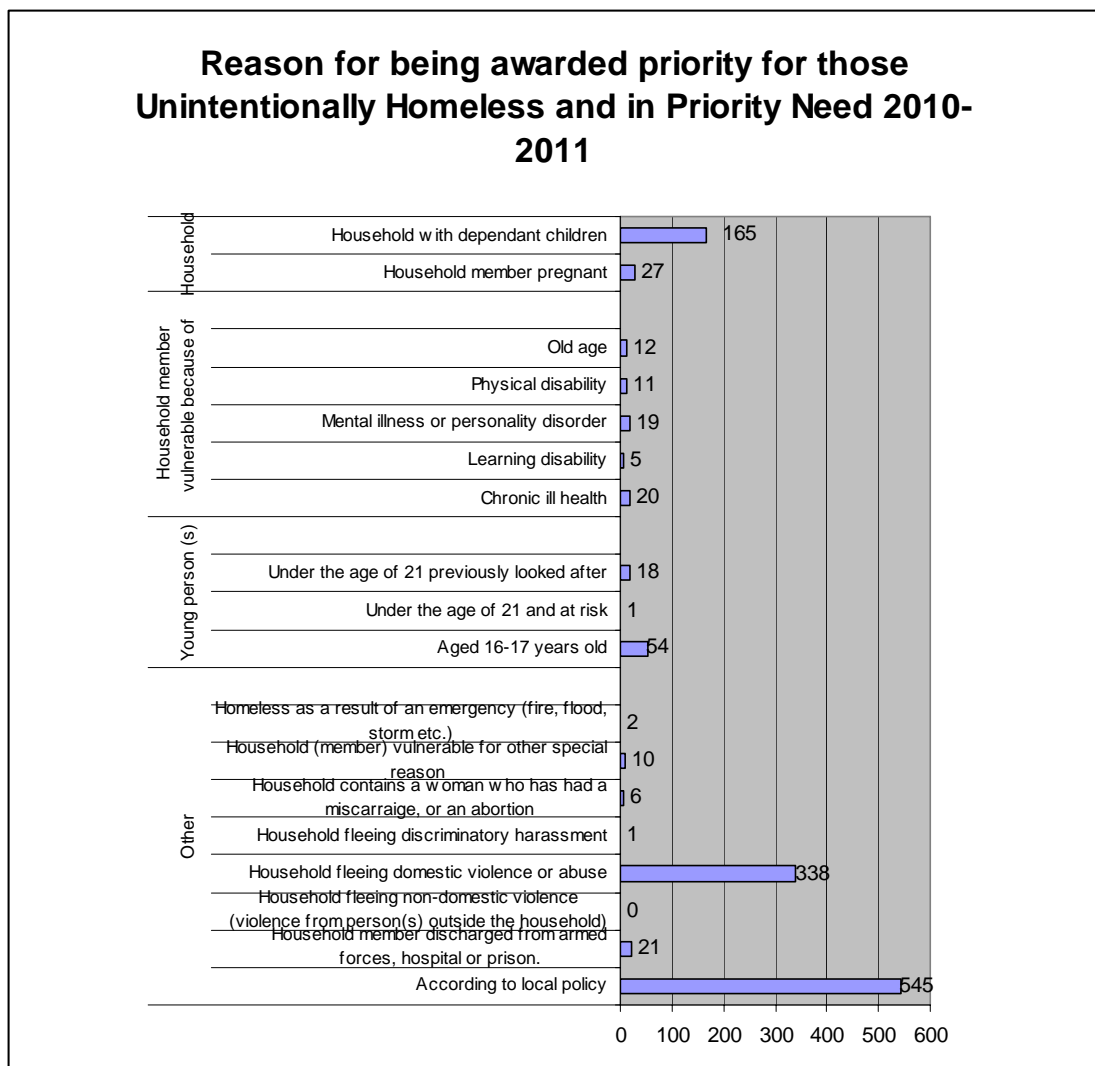
**Local Connection**

2.27 Once the tests of homelessness have been considered, all those who are found to be (a) homeless, (b) in priority need and (c) unintentionally homeless are assessed to

determine whether they have a local connection with the area: where there is no local connection, the Council has to provide temporary accommodation if the applicant requires this but it can refer the applicant back to his/her area of origin for the local authority there to deal with the issue of permanent accommodation. In 2010-11 only 75 applicants (2.9%) of the total assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need were found *not* to have a local connection with the Falkirk Council area. This means that the vast majority of homeless applicants are either people who already live locally or who have a strong connection with the area such as employment or a close family relationship in the area.

**Reasons for Priority Assessment**

2,28 The information provided above shows the extent of homelessness in the Council area in the last five years. It is now appropriate to look in more detail at the nature of homelessness during the same period.



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 14**

2.29 In respect of those applicants who were assessed as unintentionally homeless with a priority need, Figure 14 shows the reasons for their being assessed as having a priority need. The main reasons why homeless people are awarded priority status

are:

- the support needs assessment indicates that the applicant or a member of his/her household is vulnerable (see “according to local policy”),
- the applicant or a member of his/her household is fleeing domestic abuse,
- there are dependant children in the household.

2.30 In respect of the category “according to local policy”, this assessment category takes account of those who were considered to be vulnerable following the support needs assessment which is undertaken at the same time as the homelessness assessment. Applicants whose priority needs status is recorded in this category may also meet the qualifying criteria on other counts but the support needs assessment assists in identifying underlying issues that may mean that an applicant is more vulnerable than others in a similar situation and may require support services to be provided.

- Accommodation at point of presentation
- Self-care and living skills,
- Physical health,
- Emotional and mental health,
- Substance /alcohol abuse,
- Gate-keeping,
- Managing money and personal administration/Employment issues,
- Legal/offending issues,
- Engagement/social interactions, networks and relationships.

2.31 A detailed analysis of the people recorded in this category shows that 50% are young people aged under 25 (Table 2) and of this group 78% are male (Table 3). 85% of those who were found to be in priority need as a result of the support needs assessment process were men (Table 3).

**Table 2**

Age Group	No.	%
16-25	147	50%
26-40	83	28%
41-50	44	15%
51-65	22	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100%</b>

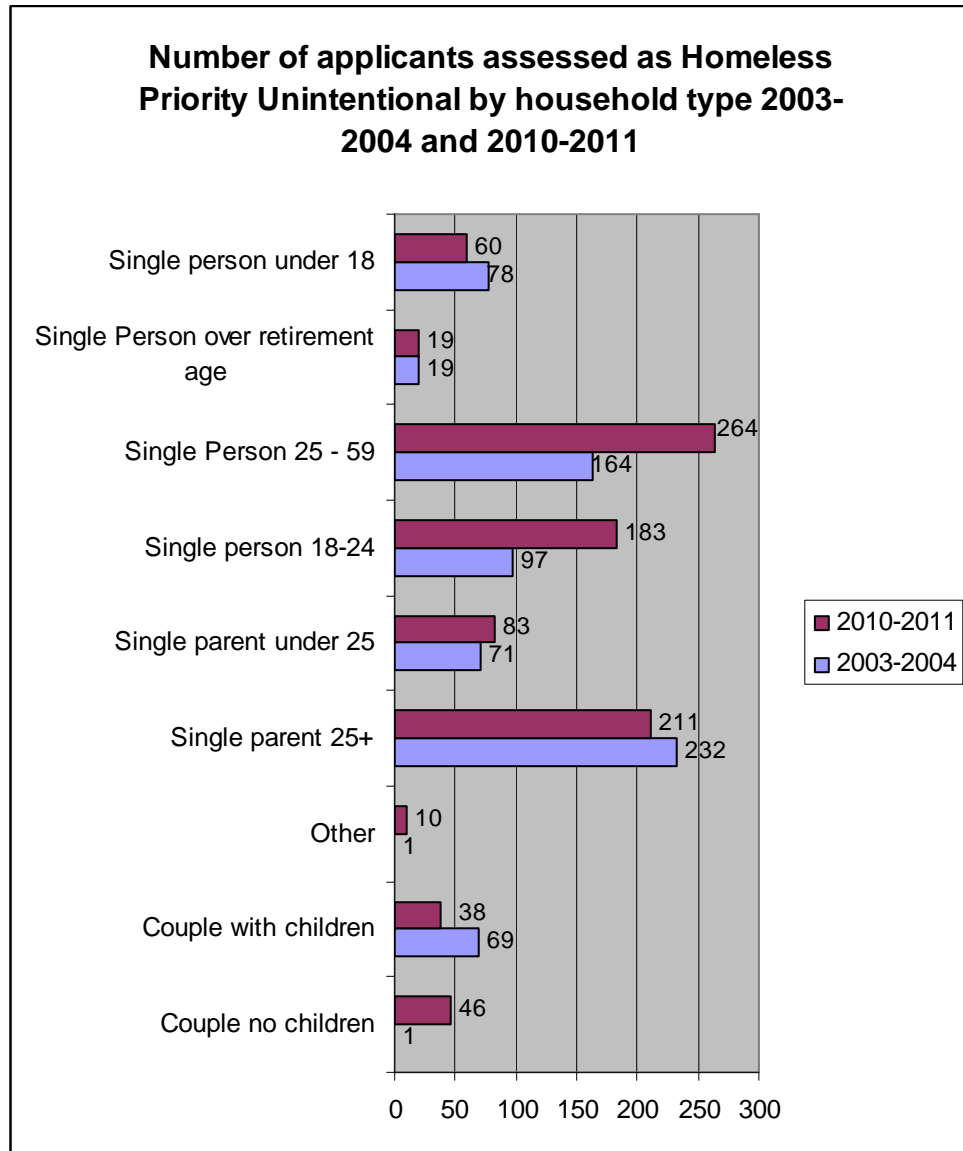
**Table 3**

Age Group	Female		Male		Total
	No	%	No	%	
16-25	33	22%	114	78%	147
26-40	3	4%	80	96%	83
41-50	7	16%	37	84%	44
51-65	1	5%	21	95%	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>296</b>

2.32 By identifying vulnerability and support needs at this stage better decisions can be made about the type of accommodation the person needs. In some cases the person will require to be accommodated in supported accommodation for an interim period

whilst they develop the skills to live independently. The facilities available locally are the Castings (for single men), Seaforth House and Garry Place projects for young people under age 25 and Inchyra Place for people with longer term support needs

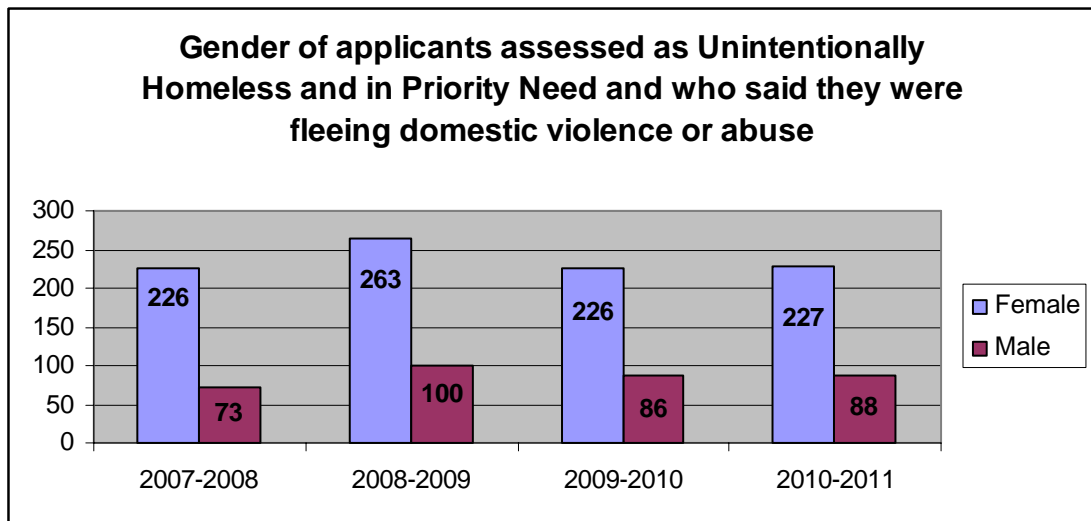
**Household Type of Priority Homeless Applicants**



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 15**

- 2.33 Figure 15 provides information about the household types of those assessed as being in priority need and unintentionally homeless and provides a comparison between the position in financial year 2003-04 and in 2010-11 (2003-04 being the baseline year against which progress on meeting the 2009 Interim Target has been assessed).
- 2.34 There has been some change in the pattern of those assessed as in priority need over the past seven years. Single people over age 25 but younger than 60 are now the largest group, with single parents over age 25 falling to the second largest group. The number of couples with children who become homeless has dropped whilst the number of couples with no children has increased. Whilst the number of people aged 18-24 has increased substantially, there has been a slight drop in the number of

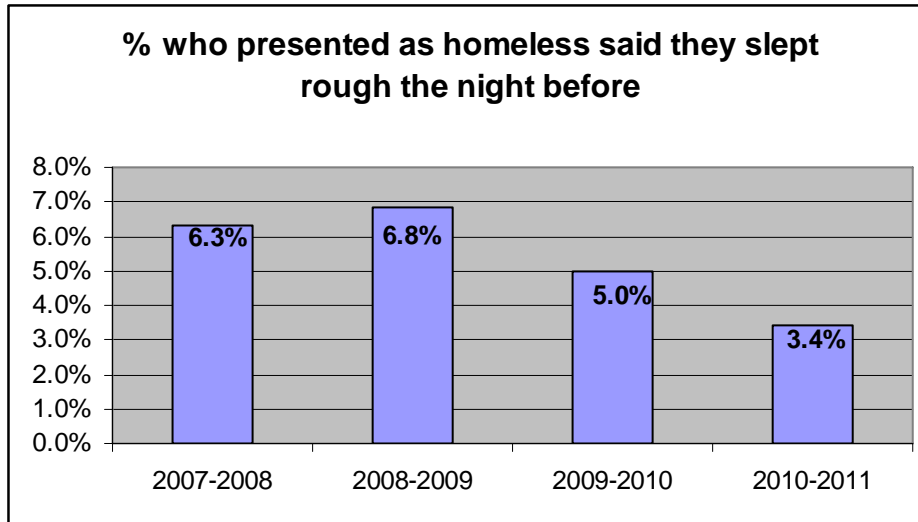
young single people aged under 18. It must be noted that the total numbers involved have increased considerably over this timeframe with consequent pressures on the Council in terms of assessments and the provision of both temporary and permanent accommodation.



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 16**

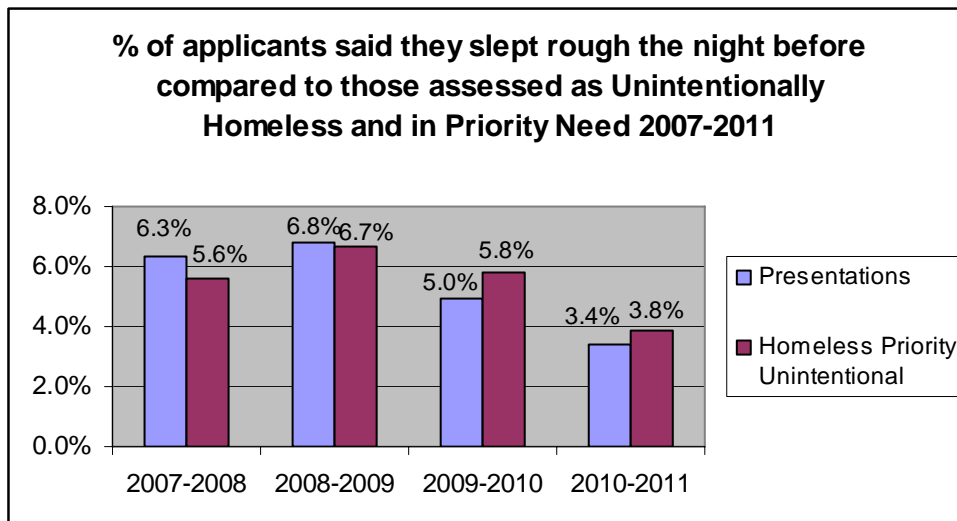
- 2.35 Figure 16 provides information about homelessness which involves domestic abuse. In the vast majority of cases (72% in 2010-11) the victim of domestic abuse was a woman and the perpetrator was a man. However, there is a significant minority of cases where a woman was the perpetrator of violence against a man. Domestic abuse is a complex issue and there is much evidence that suggests that victims leave and go back to a perpetrator several times before they make the decision to leave finally and some of this will be reflected in the number of repeat homeless applications discussed above.
- 2.36 The Council has a long-established relationship with Falkirk and District Women’s Aid (FDWA) who provide support to women and children affected by domestic abuse. Together with FDWA the decision was taken to close the shared refuge managed by them in a property owned by the Council on the basis that it was unpopular with women fleeing abuse and the building required significant upgrading in order to meet new national standards for such accommodation. Since then, all refuge accommodation provided to women fleeing abuse in the Council area has been in the form of Council-owned temporary accommodation where individual families can live independently and be supported by FDWA on an outreach basis. FDWA is currently in a process of change and work is ongoing with the Council in order to refocus the services they provide. In that context consideration is being given to whether other shared or co-located refuge provision is required.
- 2.37 Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS) is a new organisation representing the interests of men affected by domestic abuse. The organisation has made initial contact with the Council and options for men affected by domestic abuse will be explored as part of ongoing work to implement the Homelessness Strategy.

## Rough Sleeping



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 17**

- 2.38 Figure 17 shows that the percentage of people who presented as homeless saying that they had slept rough the previous night has reduced in the last two years. This is positive and suggests that (a) more people are aware of the Council's 24 hour services for homeless people and (b) ongoing work to engage with those who demonstrate a pattern of rough sleeping is bearing fruit.



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 18**

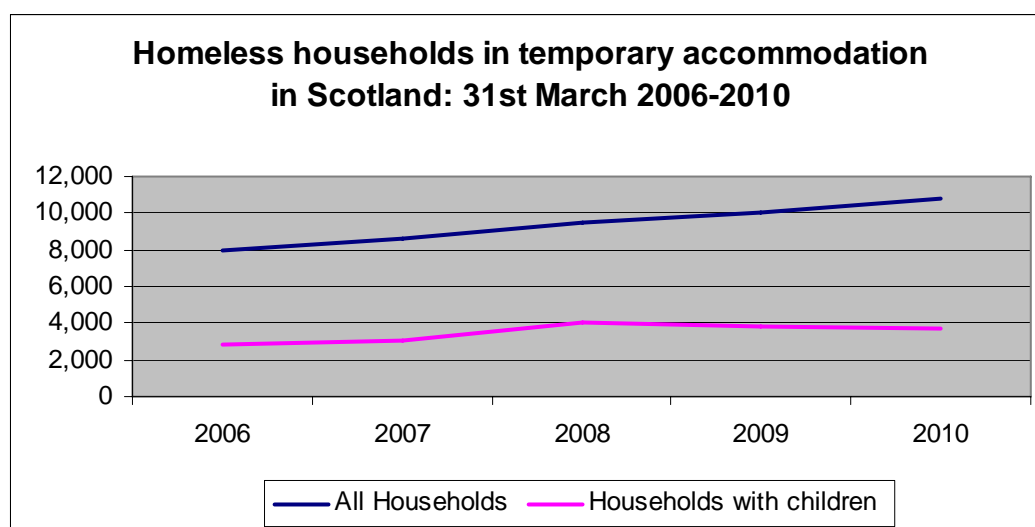
- 2.39 Figure 18 gives the percentage of those who presented as homeless saying they had slept rough the previous night compared to the percentage of those assessed as homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless who said they had slept rough the night before they presented as homeless.

- 2.40 The majority of those who presented as homeless claiming that they had slept rough the previous night were male (90%) and the main cause of their homelessness was a dispute within the household (57%)
- 2.41 Given that the Council operates a 24 hour emergency service, 365 days a year, there should be no need for any homeless person to sleep rough, however, although the trend in rough sleeping presentations is very positive, there may still be a lack of awareness of the services available amongst those who have had no previous experience of homelessness (e.g. following a partner or family dispute) and this is being addressed as part of the ongoing communications plan for homelessness prevention
- 2.42 Another issue related to rough sleeping is that a very small number of people find it difficult to engage with mainstream services and, at times, prefer sleeping rough to adhering to the rules imposed by accommodation and support providers. It is estimated that at any time there are only around two to three habitual rough sleepers in the Council area. As part of the current review of accommodation and support services, an assessment will be made as to whether any alternative forms of provision are required for people whose needs are not being met within current accommodation provision.

### Provision of Temporary Accommodation

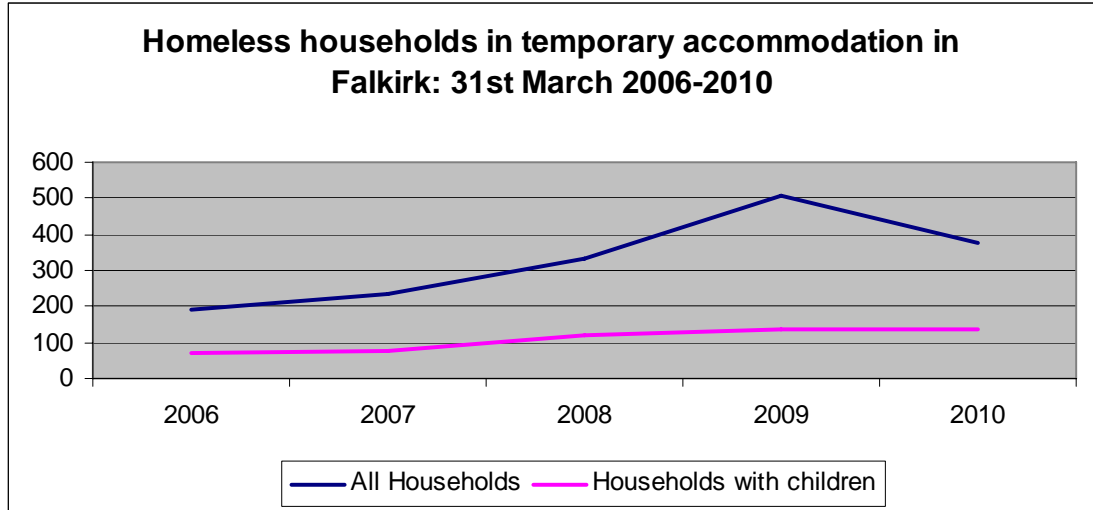
- 2.43 In 2003 new legislation was introduced which means that all homeless applicants who require it have to be provided with temporary accommodation – prior to then only applicants with a priority need for housing had to be offered temporary accommodation. The effect of this legislative change is shown at a national level in Figure 19 whilst Figure 20 shows the comparative picture for the Falkirk Council area.

#### Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation (Scotland)



Source: Operation of the homeless persons legislation in Scotland: Quarters ending 31<sup>st</sup> march  
**Figure 19**

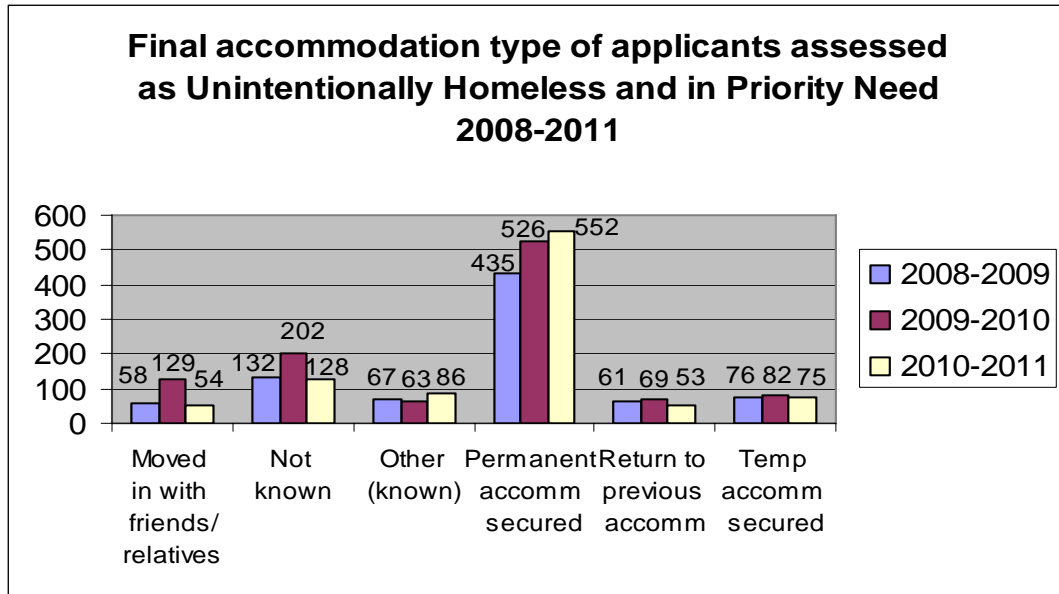
### Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation (Falkirk)



Source: Operation of the homeless persons legislation in Scotland: Quarters ending 31<sup>st</sup> march  
**Figure 20**

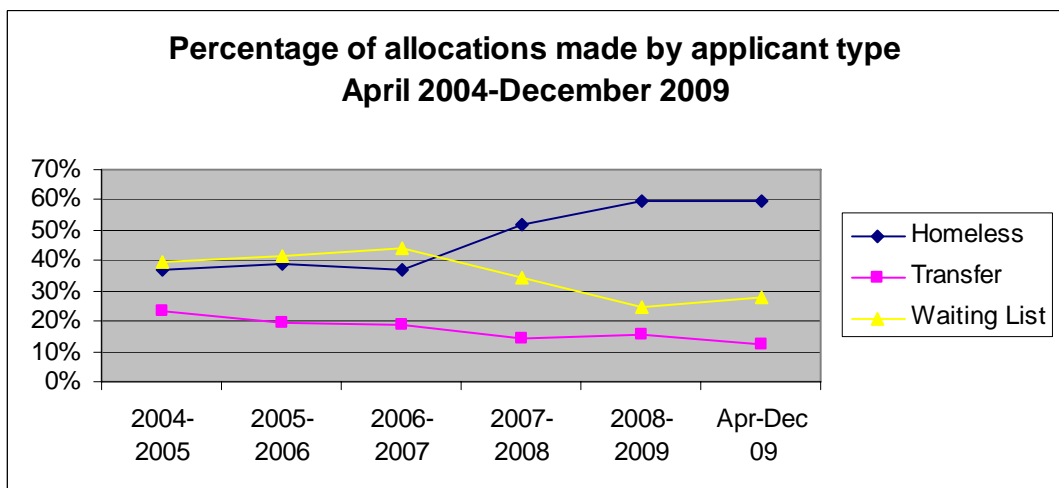
- 2.44 There is a noticeable rise in the number of people in temporary accommodation in Falkirk between March 2008 and March 2009 but the figure now appears to be decreasing to something closer to the 2008 figure. The figure for Scotland as a whole shows a much more steady increasing trend. The primary reason for the local spike in people in temporary accommodation at 31 March 2009 is directly related to the significant increase in the number of homeless applicants in 2008-09.
- 2.45 A major issue that arises from the need to provide temporary accommodation to so many people is that properties used for this purpose are not available to provide permanent housing solutions to homeless people. At the current time, 270 properties (258 Council and 12 RSL) are being used to provide temporary accommodation in the Falkirk Council area. Work is currently underway to develop a Private Sector Leasing Scheme that will use private sector properties as temporary accommodation in order to free up social rented housing for use as permanent accommodation. This initiative should, over time, reduce the length of time that homeless people have to wait for permanent housing.

## Rehousing Outcomes



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 21**

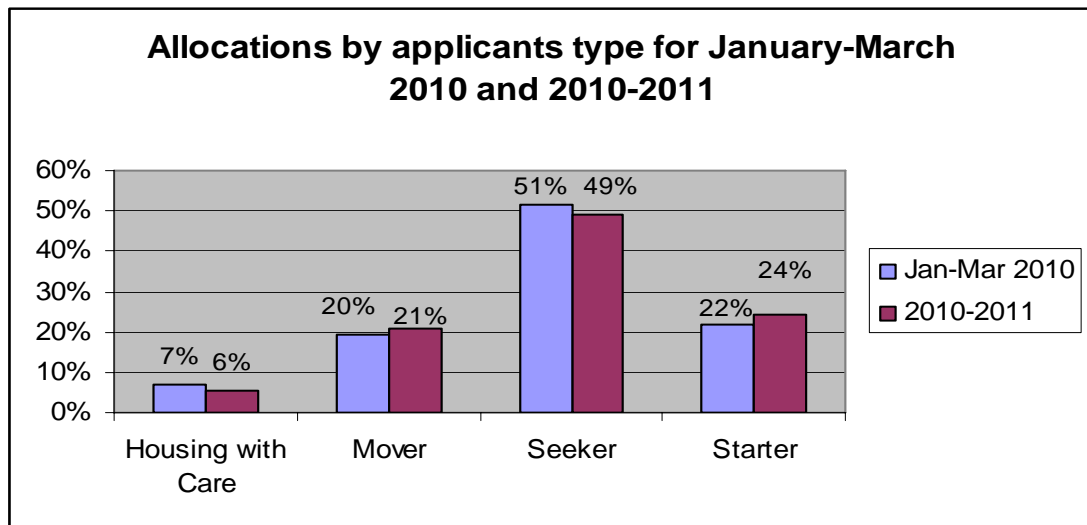
- 2.46 Figure 21 shows in significant detail the re-housing outcomes for applications closed in 2010-11. The key issue is that there is an increasing trend for priority unintentionally homeless applicants to be provided with permanent accommodation (a Council or RSL tenancy).



Source: Falkirk Council Information systems  
**Figure 22**

- 2.47 Figure 22 shows the percentage of lets to the different categories of applicant in the Falkirk Council area from April 2006 – December 2009 whereas Figure 23 shows the position since the introduction of the new allocations policy. It is difficult to draw direct comparisons between the charts as the two allocations schemes use different definitions – under the old policy, non-priority homeless applicants were recorded as

waiting list applicants whereas now they are categorised as Home Seekers, albeit with a lower band than priority homeless applicants. In addition, RSL tenants are now categorised under the Home Mover category along with Council transfer applicants, whereas previously they were categorised as waiting list applicants.



Source: Falkirk Council Information systems  
**Figure 23**

2.48 In general, a high proportion of lets now goes to homeless applicants in accordance with the quotas set out in the new allocations policy. However, given the supply of vacant accommodation, homeless applicants still often have to wait longer than six months to be housed – indeed some still have to wait for between one and two years depending on the type of house they need and the areas they bid for. A key factor in the length of time taken to house homeless applicants is that turnover in the stock has reduced in recent years and so fewer properties are available for letting. This reflects a trend that applies across Scotland.

### Appeals Against Assessment Decisions

2.49 The percentage of appeals received in 2010-11 relative to the total number of assessment decisions made is very low at 6.5%. This reflects a total of 128 appeals in the context of 1956 assessment decisions. Appeals are considered by two senior officers who have not been involved in the decision-making process. Beyond this, applicants have the right to request a Judicial Review of their case. No applicants asked for a Judicial Review in 2010-11. 18 (14%) of the appeals received concerned the assessment that the applicant required housing support or supported accommodation whilst the remainder related to the homelessness assessment itself.

2.50 17 appeals (15% of the total) were against the decision that the applicant had been found to be not homeless. Of these 17 appeals, 3 were upheld whilst the remainder were rejected.

2.51 38 appeals (35% of the total) were received about the decision that the applicant did not demonstrate a priority need in respect of the homelessness legislation. Of these 38 appeals, only 1 was upheld whilst 2 were deferred for further information to be provided.

2.52 51 (46%) of the appeals received were against the decision that the applicant had made him/herself intentionally homeless. Following review, 9 (18%) of these appeals

- were upheld whilst 40 (78%) were rejected. The remaining appeals were withdrawn prior to review.
- 2.53 3 appeals received were against the decision that the applicant had no local connection with the area. All of these were rejected.
  - 2.54 18 (14%) of the total number of appeals received related to the decision that the applicant required housing support or supported accommodation. After reviewing the case files, 4 (22%) of these appeals were upheld, 12 (66%) were rejected and the remaining two were cancelled or withdrawn prior to review.
  - 2.55 No appeals were received about the condition of the temporary accommodation provided.
  - 2.56 Further analysis of the appeals received has been undertaken in respect of four equalities strands – gender, age, ethnicity and disability – and is provided in Section 4 of this report.



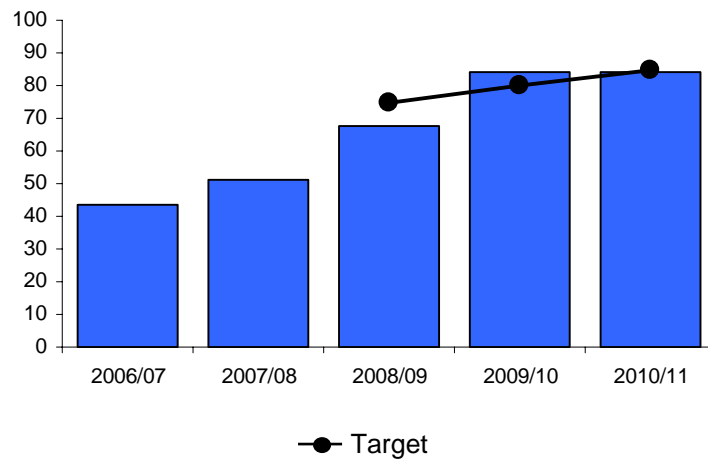
### 3. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

3.1 Significant progress has been made in the past year in implementing the performance management framework outlined in the chart below. Performance in relation to services for homeless people is now regularly monitored and improved services are now being delivered. This section of the Annual Homelessness Statement provides performance information for 2010-11 in respect of Level 1 as described below. This involves national Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Local Performance Indicators (LPIs).

Level	Audience	Frequency
<b>One</b>	Report to Housing and Social Care Committee (Annual Homelessness Statement)	Annually
	Best Value Forum (Council Members) (Corporate and Neighbourhood Services Performance Statement)	Quarterly
	Homelessness Strategy Executive Group (multi-agency)	Quarterly
	Corporate and Neighbourhood Services Departmental Management Team (Director/Heads of Service)	Monthly
<b>Two</b>	Neighbourhood Services Senior Management Team (Heads of Service/4 <sup>th</sup> tier Service Managers)	Monthly
<b>Three</b>	Homelessness Implementation Group (internal: 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> tier managers)	Monthly
<b>Four</b>	Operational Management and Staff Teams (5 <sup>th</sup> tier managers/frontline staff)	Weekly

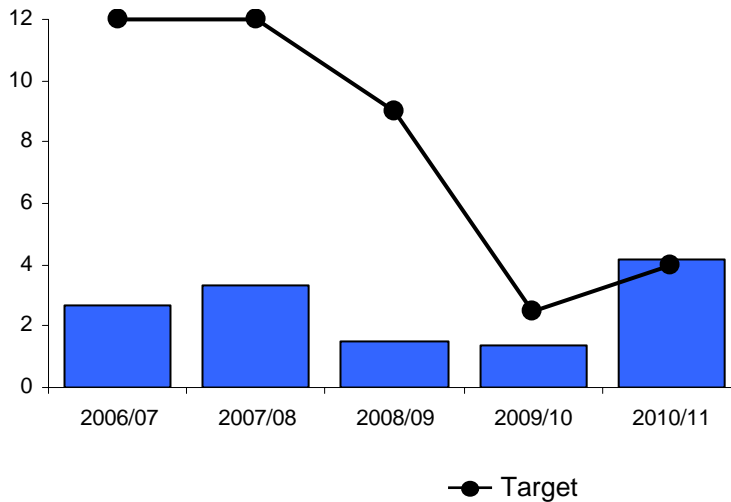
3.2 Whereas the information in Section 2 of this report notes trends in homelessness in the Council area, this section looks at how effectively and efficiently the Council has responded to those trends and covers the performance information in Level 1. The four indicators shown below are high level indicators that are reported on a quarterly basis to the Council's Best Value Forum. The following four charts compare performance in 2010-11 with performance in the three previous years.

**A.% of homeless decision notifications issued within 28 days**



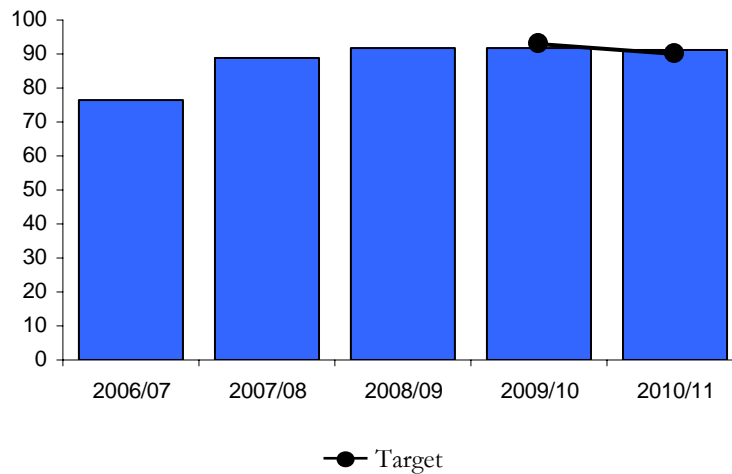
3.3 The percentage of homeless decision notifications issued within 28 days for 2010-11 was 84.3%, just under the target of 85%.

**B.% of households reassessed as homeless or potentially homeless**



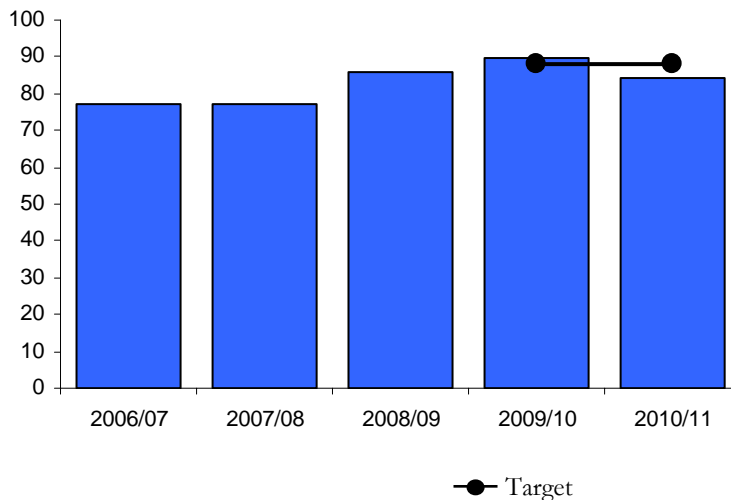
3.4 The number of cases re-assessed as homeless, or potentially homeless, within 12 months of the previous case being completed, as a proportion of all cases assessed as homeless or potentially homeless, was 4.2% for 2010-11 and was on target.

**C. % new tenancies sustained for 12 months**



3.5 The percentage of new tenancies sustained for at least 12 months was 91.3% and was above the target of 86%. Work is continuing with other agencies and services to identify targeted support and assistance to help new tenants sustain their tenancy. A revised target of 90% will be introduced in 2011-12 in relation to this indicator.

**D.% of Homeless Applicants assessed as in priority need**

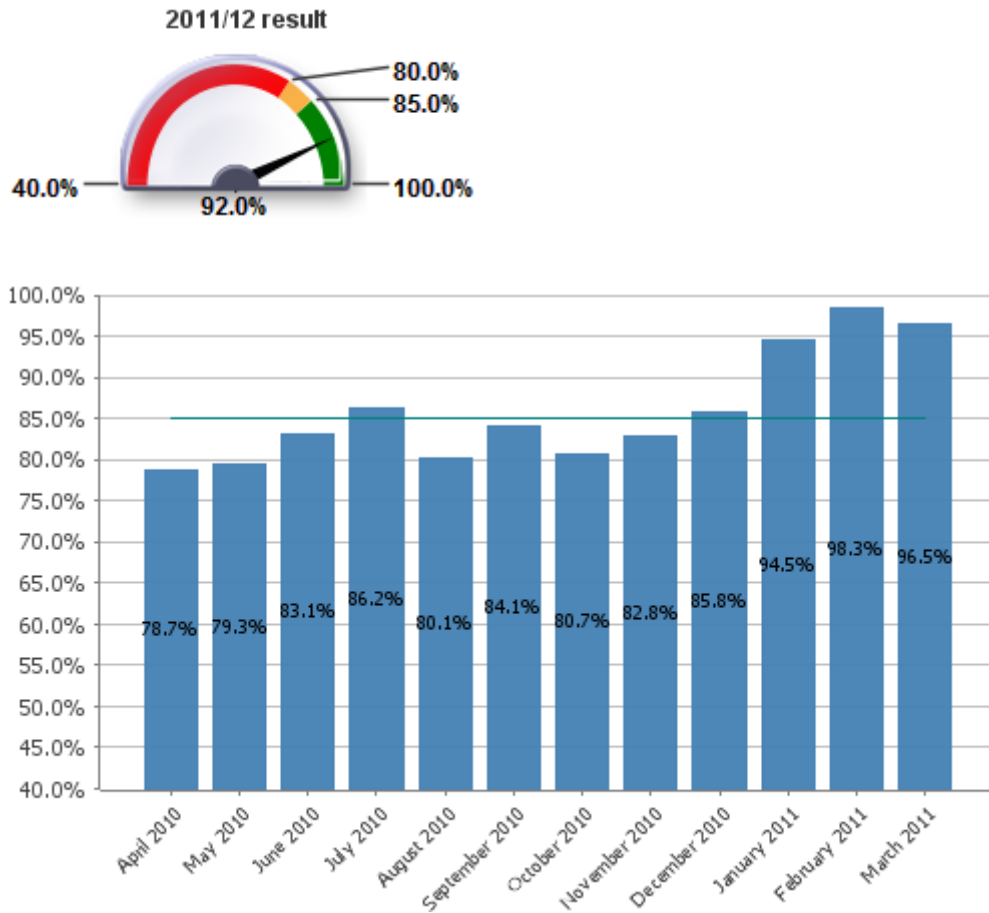


3.6 This indicator demonstrates progress towards the target of abolishing the priority need test by end of 2012. Following the introduction of the Housing Support Needs Matrix, the proportion of applicants assessed as being in priority need steadily increased since 2007-08 although performance in the past year (84%) was slightly below target (88%). It is anticipated that new arrangements in terms of housing options interviews will redress the balance in the coming year.

3.7 The following indicators provide a detailed analysis of performance on a month by month basis for 2010-11.

1. % of Homelessness Assessments Completed Within 28 Days

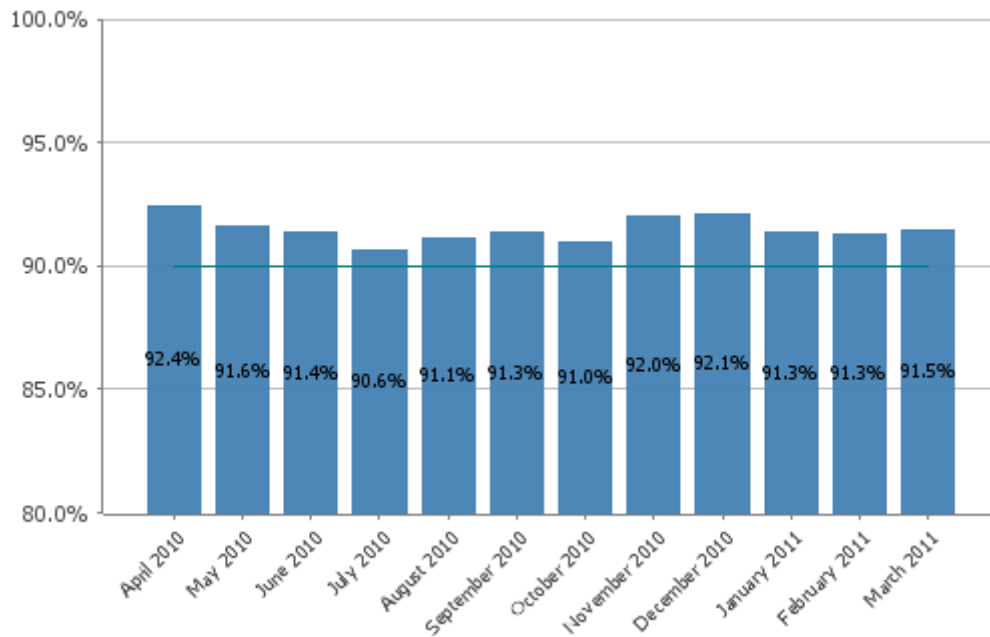
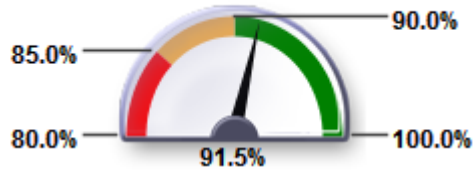
3.8 Chart 1 shows that the timescale taken to assess homeless applications has improved over 2010-11, albeit performance dipped below the 85% target in some months. Over the whole year, at 92%, performance was above the 85% target.



## 2. % of New Tenancies Sustained for 12 Months

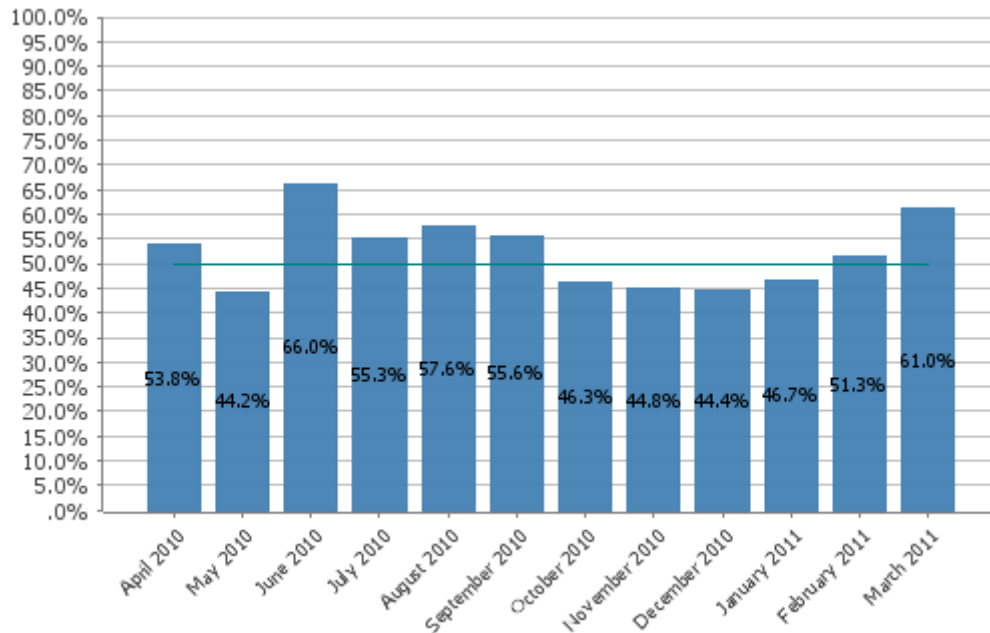
3.9 Chart 2 shows a continued high level of performance as far as tenancy sustainment is concerned with performance at 91.5% being above the 90% target.

Latest result for 2010/11 as of March 2011



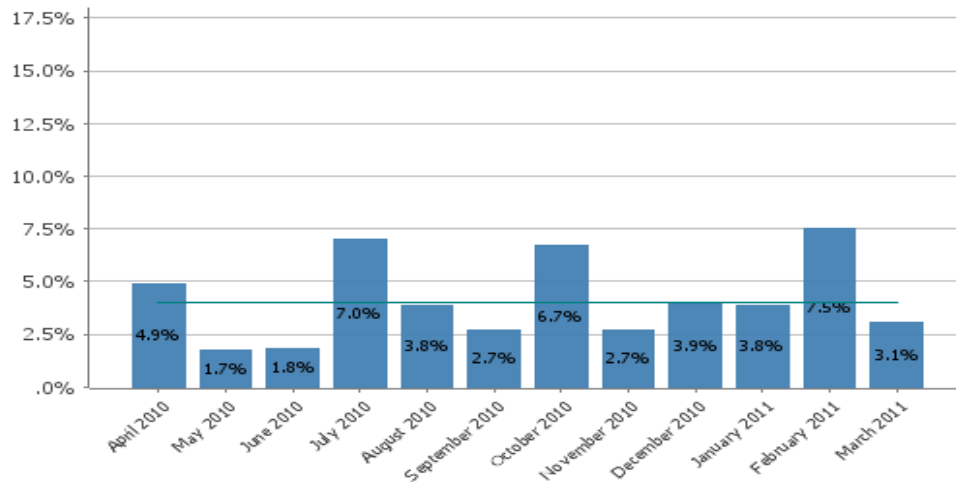
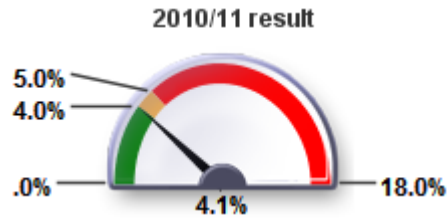
### 3. % of Council Lets to Home Seeker Category

3.10 In respect of Council lets to Home Seeker applicants, Chart 3 shows that performance has varied from month to month but, overall, 52.5% of lets in 2010-11 went to Home Seekers. This is above the 50% target for the year and is a result of (a) direct matching properties that have been refused three times to Home Seekers who have not been bidding for properties and (b) letting properties to Home Seekers who bid for them that were advertised to the Home Starter and Home Mover groups but no bids were received from people in those groups.



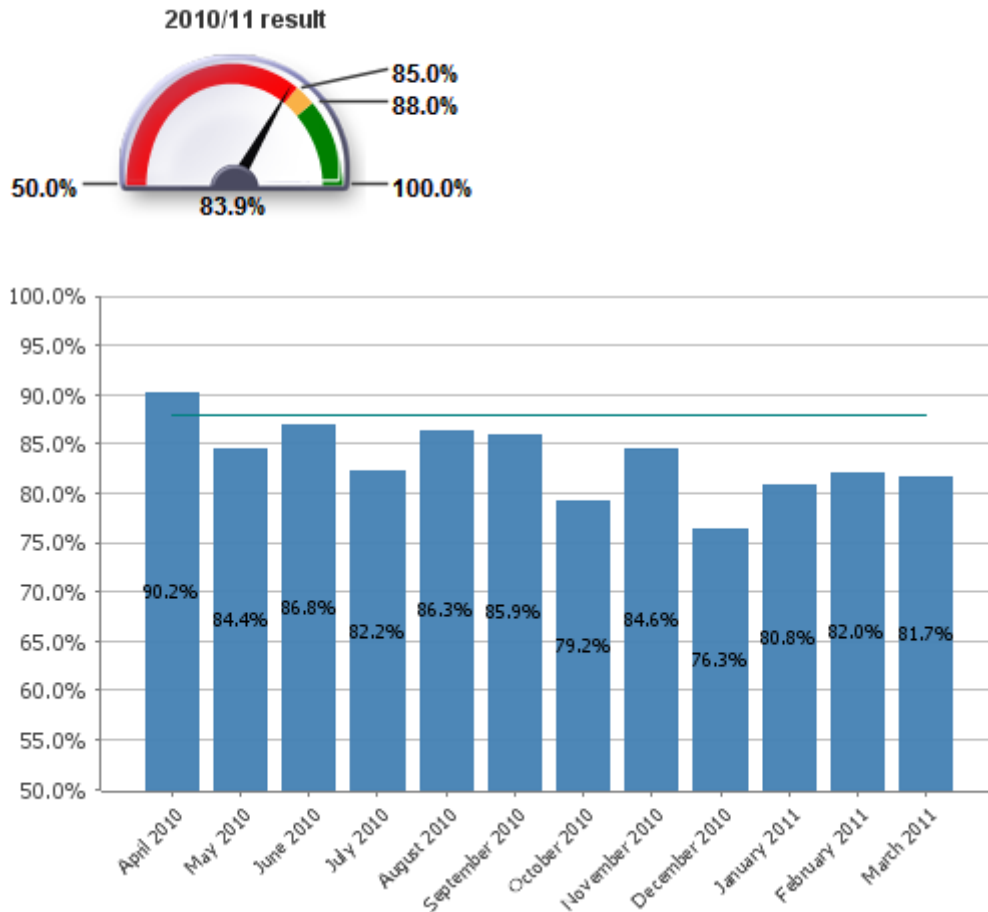
4. % of Households Reassessed As Homeless / Potentially Homeless

3.11 Performance on this indicator is almost on target with current value being 4.1% against a target of 4%



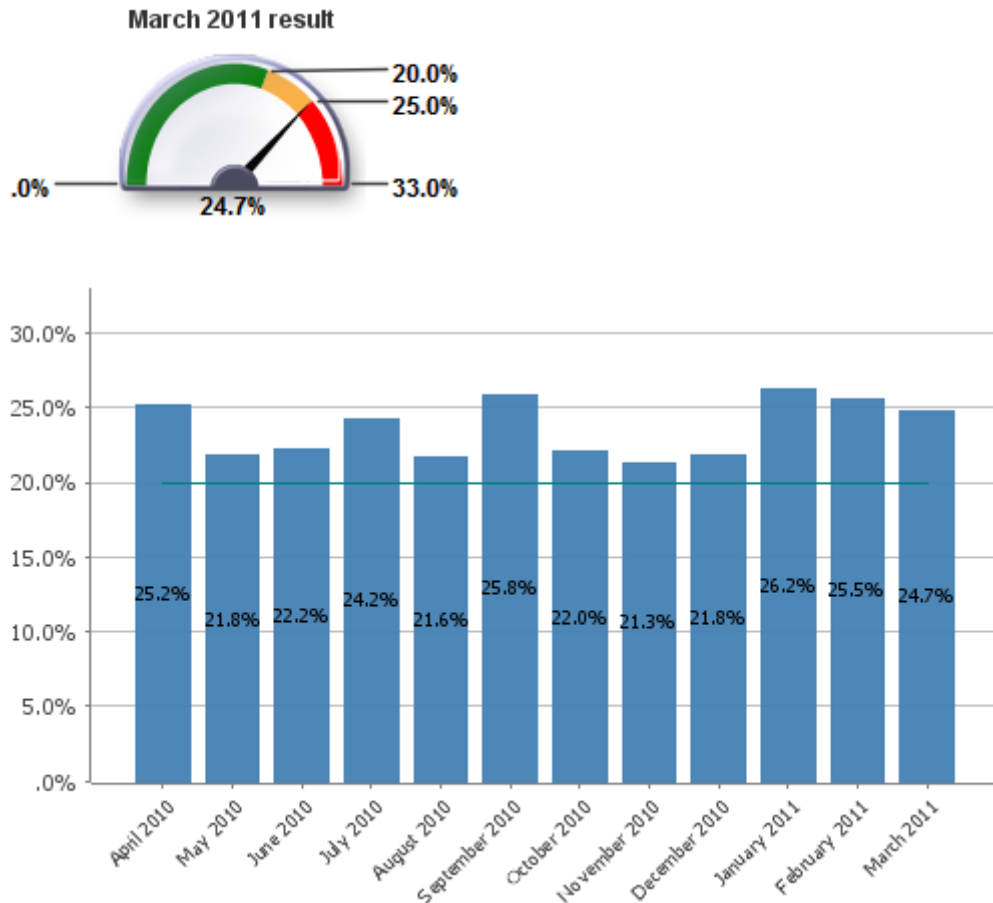
## 5. % of Homeless Applicants Assessed as in Priority Need

3.12 Chart 5 shows that the percentage of homeless applicants assessed as being in priority need over the year has, apart from April 2010, been below the target of 88%. The Scottish Government has set a national target that by the end of 2012, 100% of priority homeless applicants who are not intentionally homeless will have a right to settled accommodation. Whilst the 2009 Interim Target of 82% of homeless cases assessed as having a priority need was reached, performance is down from that in 2009-10 and this indicator requires focused attention in 2011-12.



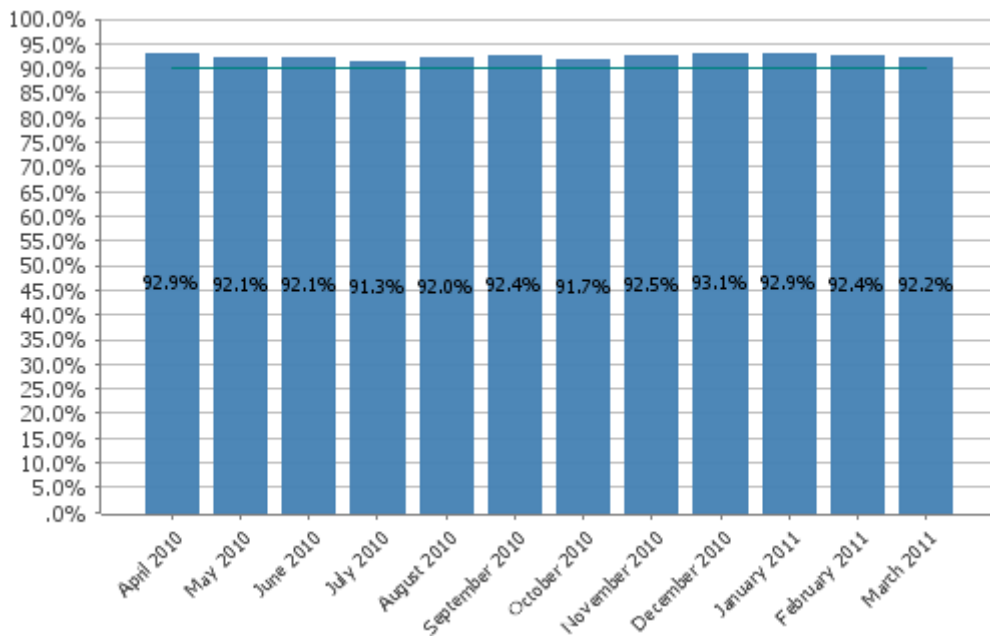
6. % of homeless applicants in temporary accommodation who are in B&B accommodation

3.13 Chart 6 shows that the percentage of homeless applicants who were provided with temporary accommodation in bed and breakfast establishments during 2010-11 was, at 24.7%, above the 20% target. Given the cost of using bed and breakfast accommodation, every effort is being made to reduce such placements and the commencement of the Private Sector Leasing scheme should assist with this.



**7. % of Homeless Tenancies sustained for 12 months**

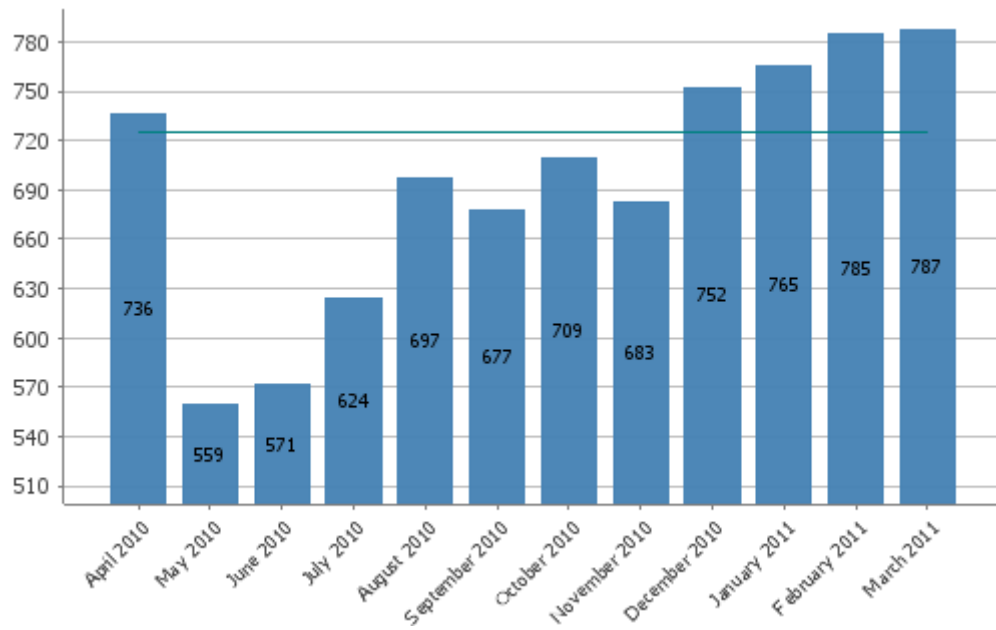
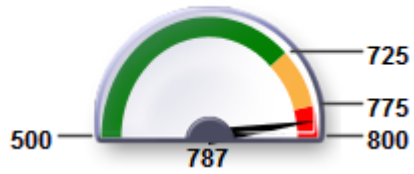
3.14 Performance on this indicator is, at 91.1%, above the target of 90% for the year.



### 8. Total Applicants with Homeless Band 1 Priority for Longer than 6 Months

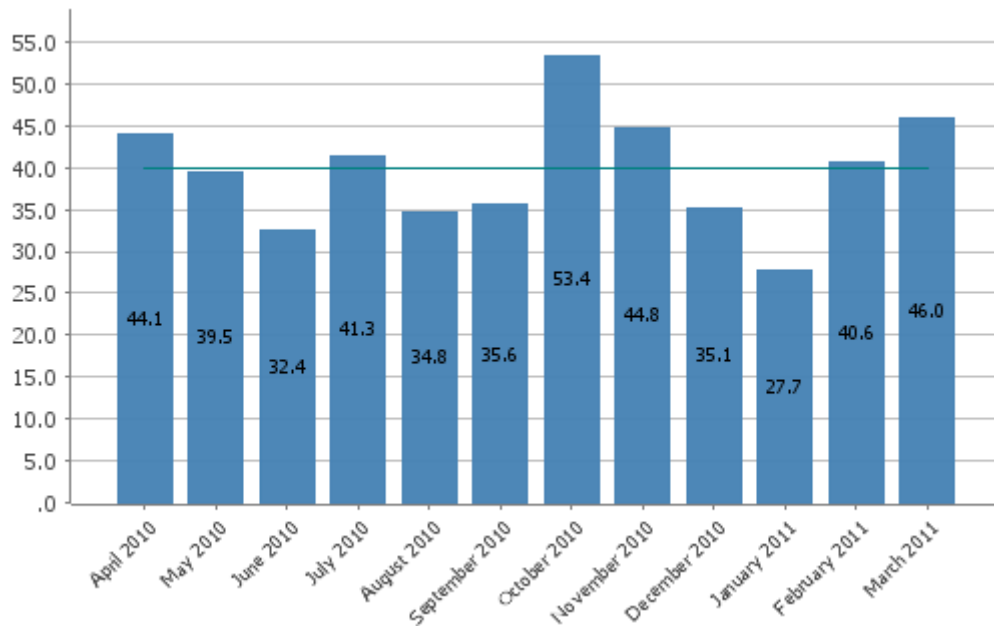
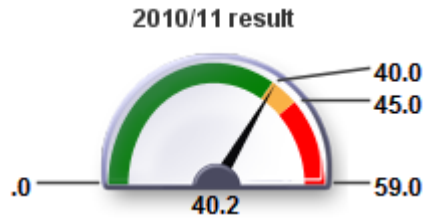
3.15 Chart 8 shows that the length of time that Home Seekers with Band 1 priority wait for housing has worsened across the year. This is closely related to the issues noted in respect of Chart 3 above.

Latest result for 2010/11 as of March 2011



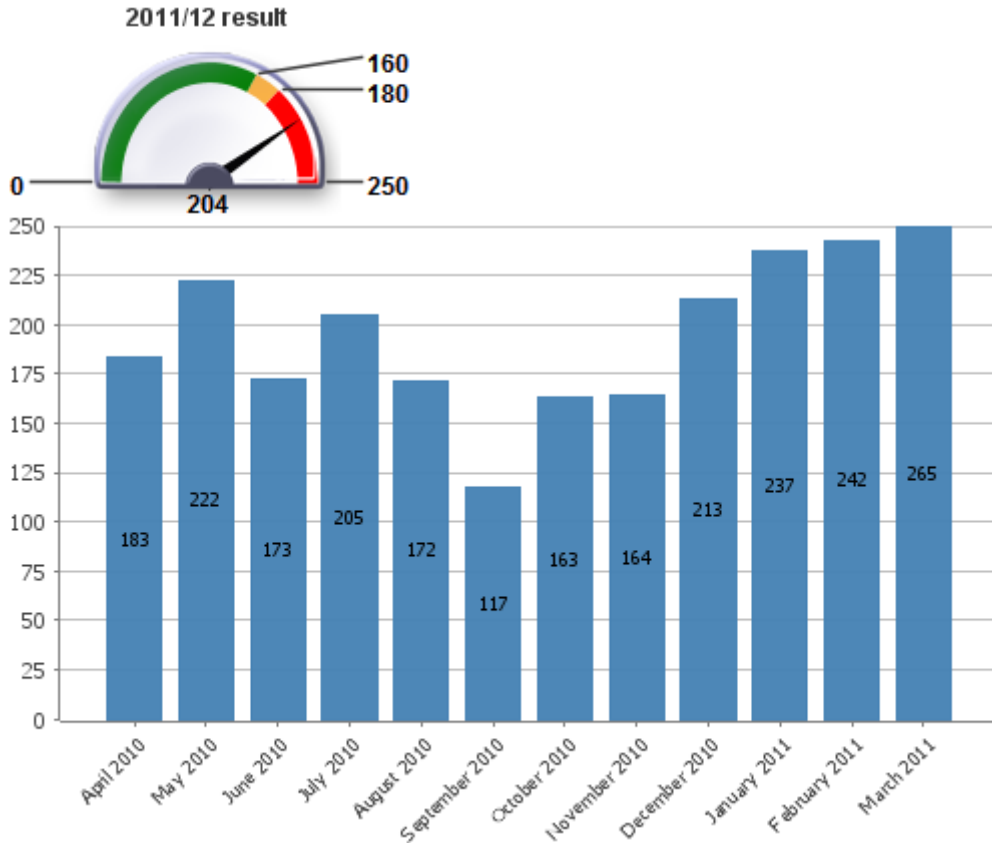
9. Average days spent in B&B before leaving

3.16 Chart 9 shows that performance in relation to the time people spend in bed and breakfast accommodation varies across the year but the average for the year as a whole was, at 40.9 days, only slightly above the 40 day target.



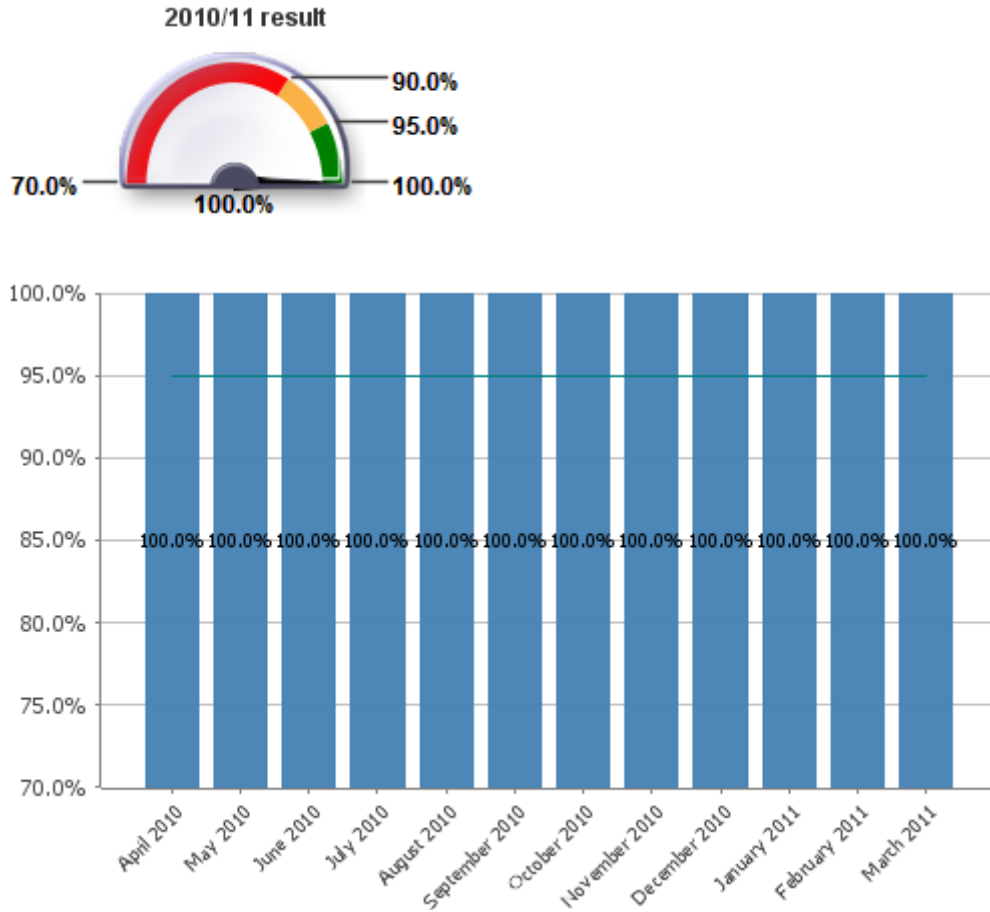
10. Average days spent in temporary accommodation before leaving

3.17 Chart 10 shows that homeless people continue to spend longer in temporary accommodation than is desirable. This is an issue for targeted attention in 2011-12.



11. % of interviews commenced within the same day

3.18 Chart 11 shows excellent performance in terms of the percentage of interviews that take place on the day the initial presentation is made. The Council operates a duty system at the ARC which is successful in ensuring that applicants do not have to wait for appointments.



12. Satisfaction with reception service

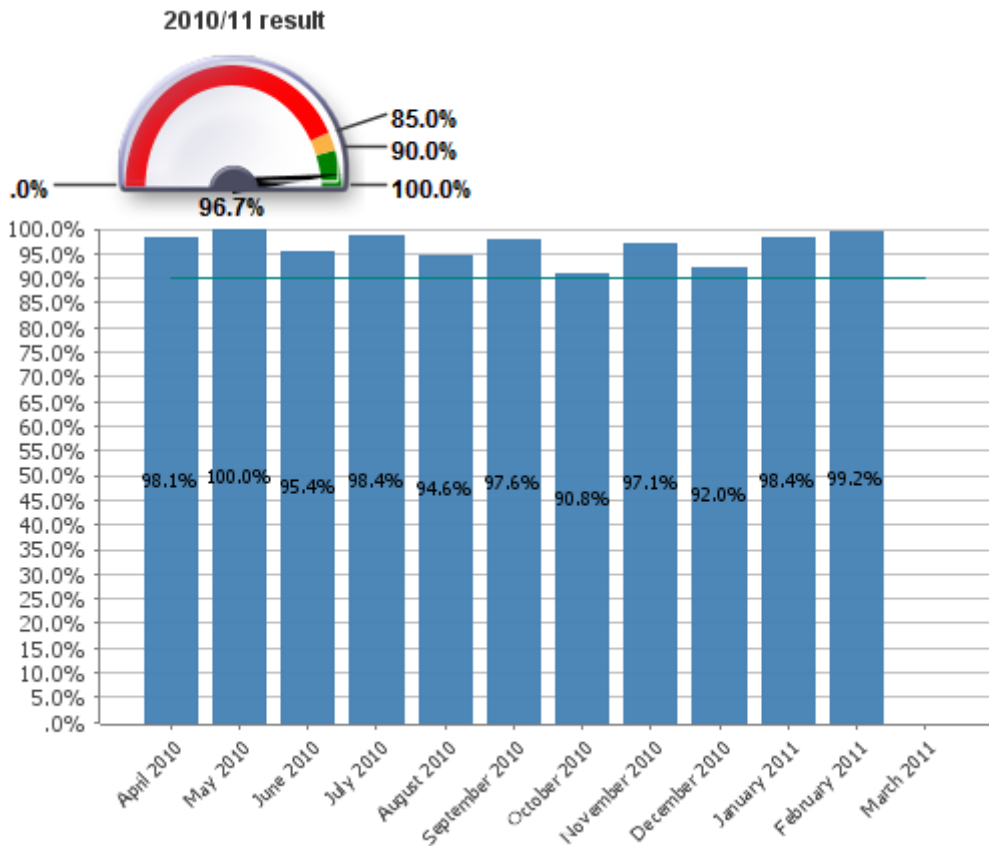
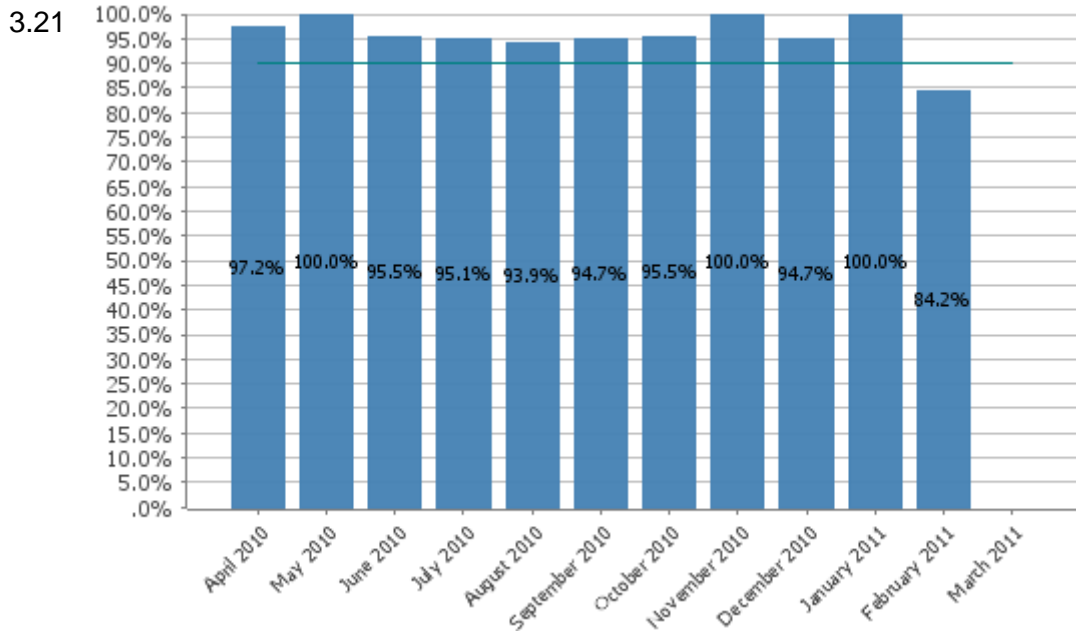


Chart 12 shows levels of satisfaction with the reception service in the ARC from April 2010-February 2011 at which point the customer feedback process was changed. Since March 2011, questions about the reception services provided have been included in the customer feedback process for assessment services and temporary accommodation services.

Customer feedback with reception services was excellent with satisfaction levels being just under 97% against a target of 90%.

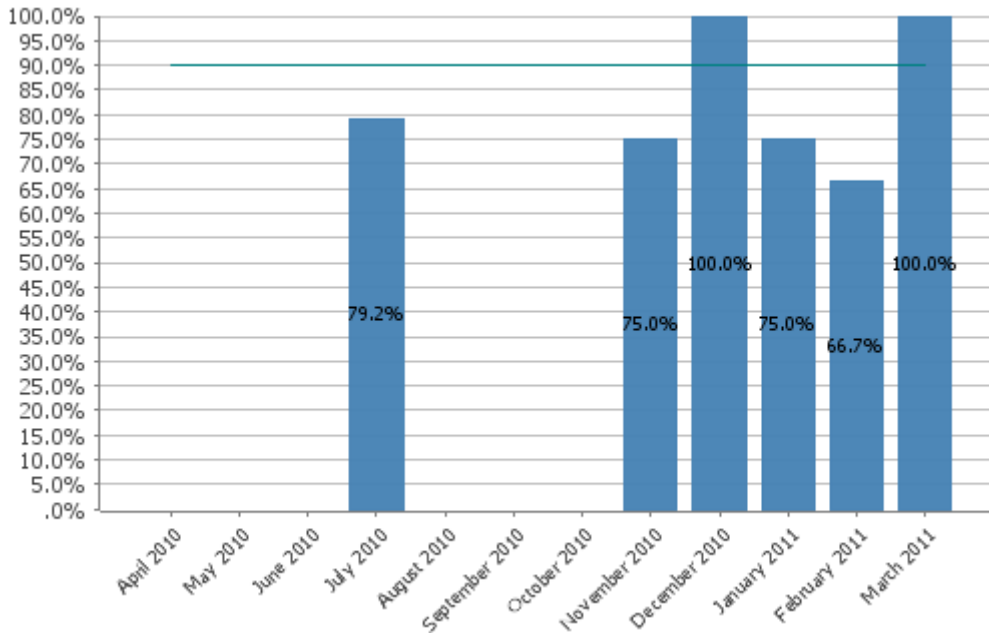
13. satisfaction with assessment service



3.22 Chart 13 shows levels of satisfaction with the assessment services provided at the ARC from April 2010 to February 2011. Data is not available for March 2011 because the data capture process was being redesigned to increase the number of service-users contacted and to include questions about customers' experiences with reception services. Since November 2011 homeless service users have been contacted by means of a telephone survey carried out by staff in the Council's Contact Centre who are independent of the assessment process itself.

3.23 Customer satisfaction with the assessment process is high and exceeds the target set by 10%

**14. satisfaction with temporary accommodation service**



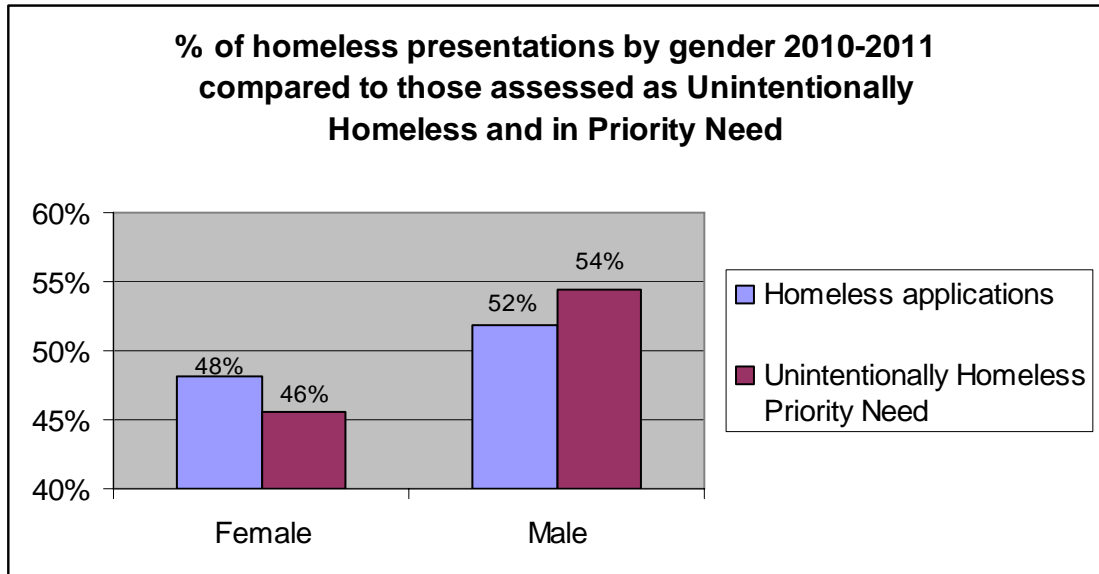
3.24 Chart 14 shows that for much of 2010-11 the customer response rate to the temporary accommodation questionnaire was low. Prior to November 2010, people living in temporary accommodation were requested to complete a questionnaire but few people returned this. Since November 2010 the Council's Customer Contact Centre has contacted service users by telephone and the response rate is now much higher.

3.25 Satisfaction with temporary accommodation has varied since the new arrangements were introduced from 66.7% in February to 100% in December and March. This issue will be kept under close scrutiny in 2011-12 as the Council redesigns its management arrangements in respect of temporary accommodation.

#### 4. HOMELESSNESS AND EQUALITIES

4.1 This section looks at whether all groups of homeless people have been treated fairly in terms of the homelessness assessment process. 2323 people presented as homeless in 2010-11 and a total of 2379 cases were dealt with in that year. The data for 2010-11 has been considered in respect of the four equalities strands – gender, age, ethnicity and disability.

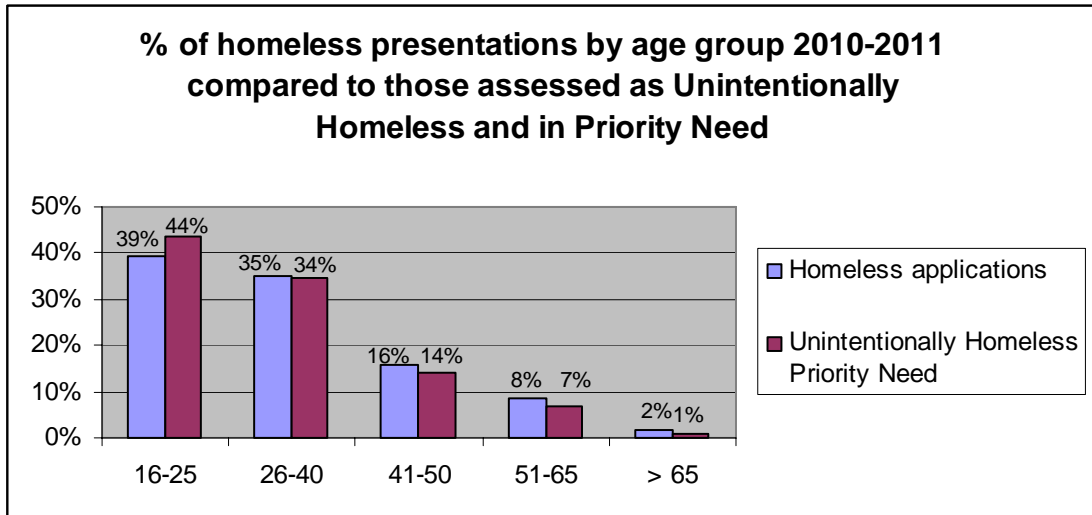
##### Gender



4.2 Source: Falkirk Council homeless system  
**Figure 24**

Figure 24 shows that men and women presented as homeless in roughly equal proportions (women represent 48% and men 52% of total applicants) but men have been more likely to be found to have a priority need compared to women – 54% compared to 46%. This is perhaps surprising as female applicants are more likely to have custody of children when there is a relationship breakdown. It seems that male vulnerability is being picked up as a result of the support needs assessment process. This issue will be the subject of more detailed analysis in the coming months and considered in detail in the 2011-12 Homelessness Statement.

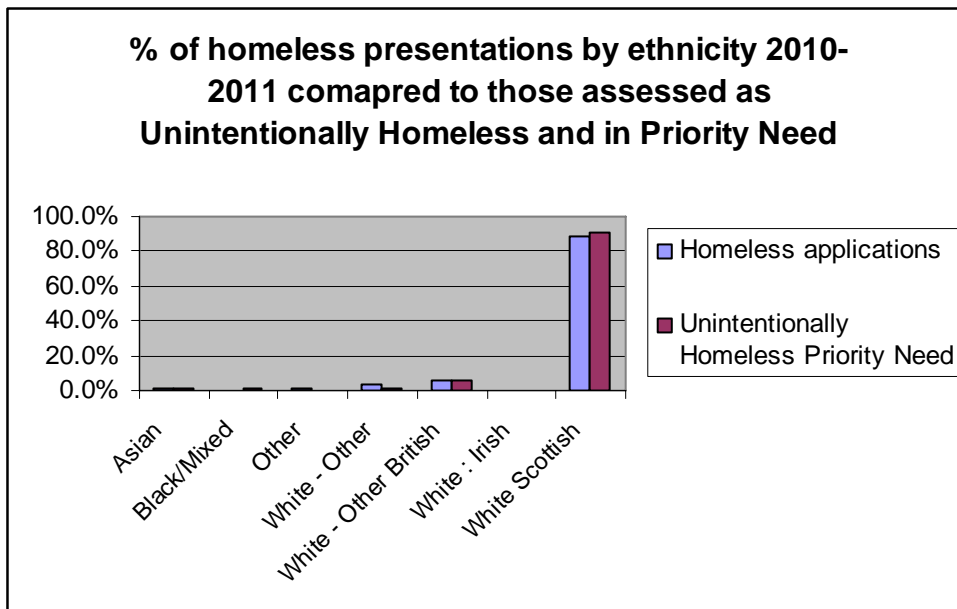
**Age**



Source: Falkirk Council homeless system  
**Figure 25**

4.3 Figure 25 shows clearly that the bulk of homeless applicants are in the younger age groups and that, generally speaking, the percentage of people assessed as having a priority need is commensurate with the percentage of total applicants in that age group although people under age 25 are more likely to be found to have a priority need than those in the older age groups. This is not surprising – many younger people are assessed as being vulnerable in terms of the statutory assessment criteria or as a result of the support needs assessment which is carried out at the same time. It is reasonable to conclude that the homelessness assessment process treats applicants fairly regardless of age.

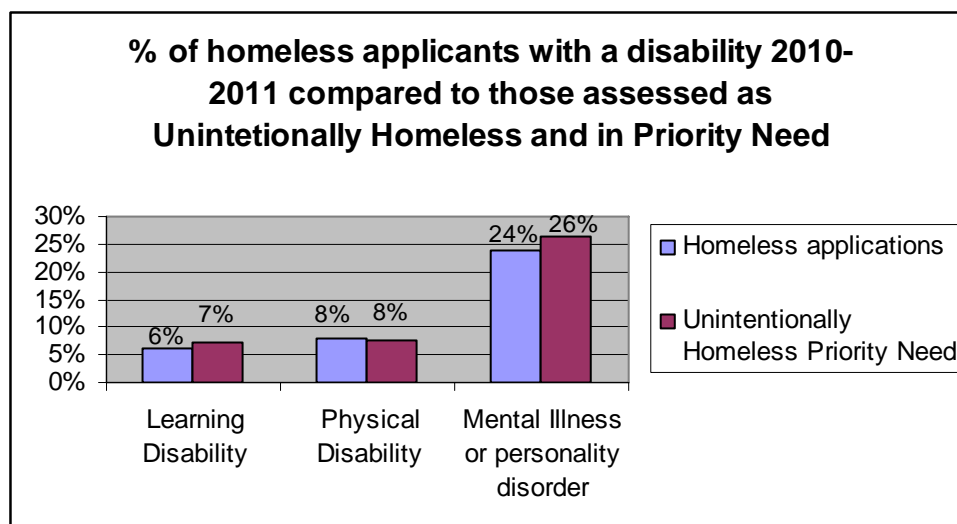
**Ethnicity**



Source: Falkirk Council homeless system  
**Figure 26**

- 4.4 Figure 26 shows that most homeless applicants (98%) were White Scottish, Irish or British whereas just 2% of applicants were from a minority ethnic group. The figures in terms of priority needs assessment were consistent with this although slightly more White Scottish applicants were found to have priority relative to their total numbers. However, the number of applicants which are not White Scottish is so small that it is difficult to draw definite conclusions and this issue may warrant more in depth consideration at a later stage.

### **Disability**



Source: Falkirk Council Homeless System  
**Figure 27**

- 4.5 Figure 27 compares the percentage of applicants who stated that they or a member of their household had some form of disability to the percentage of those who were assessed as having a priority need and said they had a disability. The data suggests that these groups are not being discriminated against in terms of the assessment process with a slightly higher percentage of people with a disability being found to be in priority need than other people. This issue will be the subject of a more focussed report in the coming months and will be explored as part of the 2011-12 Annual Homelessness Statement.

### **Homeless Appeals**

- 4.9 If applicants are unhappy with the decision made on their application, they have a right to appeal against that decision. In 2010-11, 128 homeless applicants appealed the decision made, 17 appeals were upheld, 105 were rejected, 4 were cancelled or withdrawn prior to the appeal being considered and decisions on 2 were deferred pending further information.

### **Gender**

- 4.10 70% of appeals were made by males and 30% by females. Given the information provided above in respect of homelessness assessment decisions by gender, this is interesting. 89 men made appeals of which 72 were about the homelessness assessment decision whilst the remaining 17 were concerned with the provision of accommodation and support.

4.11 In respect of the 72 appeals on the assessment decision the grounds of appeal were as follows:

- Not homeless – 11%
- Non-priority - 44%
- Intentionally homeless – 40%
- No local connection – 4%

4.12 The result of these appeals was as follows:

- of those appeals about the decision that the applicant was not homeless, 7 of the 8 appeals were rejected after review,
- of those appeals against the priority needs assessment, 91% were rejected,
- of those appeals against the decision that they were intentionally homeless, 79% were rejected whilst 17% were upheld,
- of those appeals about local connection, all were rejected.

4.13 39 appeals were submitted by female applicants. 1 was resolved prior to the appeal being considered, 1 was about the accommodation/support being recommended following assessment and the remaining 37 were about the various elements of the assessment process as set out below:

- Not homeless – 24%
- Non-priority – 16%
- Intentionally homeless – 59%

4.14 The result of these appeals was as follows:

- of those appeals about the decision that the applicant was not homeless, 78% of the 9 appeals were rejected after review,
- of those appeals against the priority needs assessment, all were rejected,
- of those appeals against the decision that they were intentionally homeless, 77% were rejected whilst 18% were upheld.

4.15 The data shows that men are more likely to appeal on the grounds that they were found to be not homeless, or did not demonstrate a priority need, whilst women were more likely to appeal on the grounds that they had been found to be intentionally homeless.

4.16 In terms of the appeal process, the evidence suggests that a consistent approach is being taken but this will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that any issues which arise can be dealt with promptly.

### **Age**

4.17 The age profile of those who submitted homeless appeals is as follows:

- 16-25 – 38%
- 26-40 – 27%
- 41-60 – 34%
- Over 60 – 1%

- 4.18 For all groups under the age of 60, the main reasons for an appeal were that the applicant did not demonstrate a priority need or was intentionally homeless and there were no significant differences between the groups. However, only 2 appeals were received from people aged over 60 and these were both on the grounds that the applicant was not found to be homeless and so the percentage for this reason for this age group is significantly higher than for other age groups. However, the number of cases is so small that it is difficult to draw too many conclusions from this.
- 4.19 A total of 18 appeals were on the grounds of the accommodation/support requirement with 72% of these appeals being from younger people. Whilst none of these appeals on this ground were upheld for the older age groups, 4 appeals on the grounds of accommodation/support were upheld for the 16-25 age group.

### ***Ethnicity***

- 4.20 In terms of ethnicity, only White applicants submitted appeals – there were no appeals from applicants in the minority ethnic groups. This could be because the number of minority ethnic applicants is such a small proportion of the total number of applicants that the probability of their making an appeal is low or it could be that there are barriers to applicants from the minority ethnic communities making an appeal – they may be unaware that there is an appeals procedure or find it difficult to understand the process because of language barriers. These issues will be considered in more detail prior to the publication of the next Annual Homelessness Statement in 2012.

### ***Disability***

- 4.21 A total of 69 people who made appeals said they had a disability – this is a relatively high proportion of the total number of people who submitted appeals (54%). In terms of the type of disability of those who made appeals, a breakdown is provided below:
- 11 (16%) of appeals were from people with a learning disability,
  - 41 (59%) were from people with a mental illness or personality disorder whilst
  - 17 (25%) were from people with a physical disability.
- 4.22 Of the 69 appeals, 60 concerned the assessment process whilst the remaining 9 were about the accommodation/support required by the individual. The 60 appeals about the assessment process were broken down as follows;
- Not homeless – 15%
  - Non-priority – 10%
  - Intentionally homeless – 70%
  - No local connection – 4%
  - Case resolved prior to appeal – 1%

4.23 In terms of the decisions about the appeals, the results are set out below:

- Not homeless – 67% rejected
- Priority need – 83% rejected
- Intentionally homeless – 74% rejected
- Local connection - 100% rejected.

4.24 The numbers of people with disabilities relative to the total number of homeless applicants is low, however, people with disabilities are likely to be particularly vulnerable if they become homeless and therefore the assessment process requires to be robust enough to pick up any element of vulnerability.

4.25 In relation to those people with a disability who appealed against the recommendation that they required housing support/supported accommodation, 78% of the appeals were rejected.

4.26 It is proposed to do more work in the coming year on the housing outcomes of people with disabilities and to compare these for the different groups within the generic term of disability to ensure that no groups are being discriminated against.

## 5. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

- 5.1 The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan set out a total of 60 initiatives (with 119 specific outputs) to deliver the Vision of the Strategy which is that by 2012, no one in the Falkirk Council area need be homeless. This section of the Annual Homelessness Statement shows that good progress has been achieved thus far in respect of those actions which had target dates before 31 March 2011.
- 5.2 A position statement on particular initiatives/issues is provided below in terms of the three priorities set out in the Homelessness Strategy: Prevention, Accommodation and Support.

### **Prevention – We will prevent homelessness by raising awareness of the help that is available in the area and by developing new services to meet local needs**

- 5.3 Four key objectives were identified in relation to homelessness prevention for the period of the Homelessness Strategy:

A - Gain a better understanding of the views of homeless people about the services needed to prevent homelessness

B - Raise awareness about the extent and nature of homelessness in the Council area and the services available to prevent homelessness or help those who do become homeless

C - Implement a range of measures that will prevent homelessness in the Council area

D - Ensure that we have effective mechanisms in place by 2013 to assist in the prevention of homelessness

Progress made in 2010-11 against each of these objectives is outlined below.

### ***Gain a better understanding of the views of homeless people about the services needed to prevent homelessness***

- 5.4 In respect of Objective A, a review of customer feedback questionnaires has been undertaken in order to improve the understanding of what homeless people feel about homelessness services in the area. Since November 2010 telephone surveys with people in receipt of homelessness services are now routinely completed by staff in the Council's Customer Contact Centre in respect of the assessment and advice/ information services and temporary accommodation services provided. In February 2011 the use of the Customer Satisfaction Measurement Tool was introduced. It is currently too soon to draw any firm conclusions from the new information received but an initial analysis suggests that clients are satisfied with the services they are receiving, particularly in relation to staff taking responsibility for their enquiries, being able to deal directly with a named individual and with the fact that the services are easy to access.
- 5.5 In addition to the above, as part of the review of floating support services and supported accommodation provision, a series of focus groups have been held and questionnaires issued to obtain service-user feedback about the quality of the services they receive. Three focus groups and 33 face to face interviews have been held and 40 questionnaires have been completed. The information obtained

will influence the outcome of the reviews.

***Raise awareness about the extent and nature of homelessness in the Council area and the services available to prevent homelessness or help those who do become homeless***

- 5.6 As far as Objective B is concerned, quarterly meetings of the multi-agency Falkirk Homelessness Forum are held and members are provided with detailed information in quarterly reports on homelessness trends and performance. An annual report is also published (this is the third such report) and is available on the Council's website for anyone who wishes to access it. Performance information is also publicised on the plasma screens in the Council's One Stop Shops and Neighbourhood Housing Offices.
- 5.7 In recent months, a multi-agency Training Needs Assessment has been completed in partnership with Forth Valley NHS's Public Health Practitioner. Work is now underway to develop a robust training plan covering the remainder of the Homelessness Strategy period. This will be available for staff from a range of agencies that provide services for homeless people.
- 5.8 Over the past year there has been a comprehensive review of performance indicators used to measure the effectiveness of services for homeless people in the area. The information in Section 2 of this report about homeless trends and the performance information in Section 3 demonstrate the extent of work that has been done in this regard.
- 5.9 Since last year, the posters used to publicise the local services that can assist homeless people or people in housing need have been reviewed. The new posters signpost people to how they can get help in a crisis situation and, more generally, how they can get advice and information on how to find a home. The profile of homelessness has also been raised by articles in the local press and in the Falkirk Council News which is delivered to every home in the area. These articles have highlighted developments or policy changes likely to impact on the nature and extent of homelessness in the area or on service provision.

***Implement a range of measures that will prevent homelessness in the Council area***

- 5.10 In relation to Objective C, considerable progress has been made during the past year in terms of implementing the housing options approach to preventing homelessness although it has not been possible to fully implement the new arrangements for two key reasons: the implementation of a new Integrated Housing Management System and a review of the Council's staffing structure. New arrangements are currently being piloted at the ARC and it is aimed that these will be rolled out to other locations as soon as the appropriate IT infrastructure and staffing structure is in place.
- 5.11 Despite the above, the Homelessness Assessment leaflet has been revised to give homeless applicants more information about the homelessness process and a new leaflet on the range of housing options available in the Council area has recently been published. This leaflet is available in a variety of locations and is now routinely given to new housing applicants. This information in hard copy format supplements the online Falkirk Housing Options Guide.

- 5.12 Progress continues to be made in terms of improving the Council's in-house debt and welfare benefits advice service at the ARC. Two posts – an Income Maximiser and an additional Debt Adviser - are now funded from previously ring-fenced resources from the Fairer Scotland Fund. The Council has recently published a Poverty Strategy - *Towards a Fairer Falkirk* and is now working with the local Citizens Advice Bureaux to consider how information and advice services in the area – currently provided both directly by the Council and by the CABx - can be better integrated. The aim is to clarify roles and remit so that members of the public are clear about where they can obtain the kind of housing, debt and welfare benefits information and advice they need.
- 5.13 In relation to the prevention of rent arrears within the Council's own stock, joint working between housing management and revenue services staff has focused on targeting arrears at an early stage. This is an area that will continue to be addressed in order to minimise the number of Council tenants who become homeless as a result of rent arrears. Work is still required with RSLs to minimise evictions from their stock as a result of rent arrears and this will be a priority for the coming year.
- 5.14 The Council continues to participate in the national Mortgage to Rent Scheme and during 2010-11, 13 households were able to become Council tenants after falling into mortgage arrears. RSLs with stock in the area acquired a further 9 properties thus preventing the occupants from becoming homeless.
- 5.15 A major cause of homelessness is disputes within the family (61%). Whilst it is difficult for the Council's homelessness services to address disputes between couples, there is more scope to intervene when disputes arise between parents and their children, particularly when the young people involved are at the lower end of the age spectrum. With this in mind, links were established with Central Scotland Family Mediation and, over the last year, 31 cases were identified that might have been able to benefit from the services on offer. Before clients can access mediation, they have to have an individual intake appointment. Of the 31 individuals offered an intake appointment only one person agreed to participate but then cancelled the appointment in advance of the meeting. This is an issue that requires more work locally and efforts will be made in 2011-12 to learn from best practice in other Council areas, both in Scotland and the rest of the UK.
- 5.16 For a number of years the Council has been using an education resource pack - *House About Me?* – to work with young people in local secondary schools to raise their awareness of homelessness and the issues that young people can face in leaving home. The pack was delivered jointly by teachers and by young peer educators from SmartLiving. The programme has recently been reviewed and will now include the use of more innovative and interactive methods of engaging the young people concerned, such as the use of quizzes and board games. The new arrangements will link into the wider Curriculum for Excellence agenda.
- 5.17 In relation to offenders, there has been a significant amount of work undertaken in the past year as part of the Fife and Forth Valley Criminal Justice Authority and a new post of Accommodation Support Worker has been created to provide housing advice and information for prisoners (from across Scotland) who are placed in Polmont Young Offenders Institute.
- 5.18 As far as armed forces personnel are concerned, over the past year the Council has made the Housing Options in Scotland leaflet prepared by the Scottish

Government for people leaving the armed forces available in local offices and has updated the online Falkirk Housing Options guide.

- 5.19 The homeless trends information provided in Section 2 above shows that rough sleeping in the area has reduced over the last five years. The Homelessness Outreach Worker continues to work with people who are at risk of sleeping rough and works closely with the Salvation Army who provide a soup kitchen in the area to ensure that people are able to access mainstream housing and support services if they want them. The number of habitual rough sleepers in the area is small – around two to three at any given time.
- 5.20 In respect of EU nationals, new procedures have been developed to ensure that staff have ready access to the most up to date information on this complex issue.

***Ensure that we have effective mechanisms in place by 2013 to assist in the prevention of homelessness***

- 5.21 In relation to Objective D, an area of outstanding work relates to ensuring that the advice given by Council staff in relation to homelessness is compliant with the National Standards for Information and Advice Providers. This issue will be addressed in the coming year as the Council's approach to the provision of housing options information and advice is implemented across the Service.

**Accommodation – We will make the best use of the available accommodation by assisting people to explore the full range of housing options in the area**

Two key objectives were identified in relation to the above priority:

E – Ensure that there is a sufficient supply of suitable housing to meet the needs of homeless people

F – Ensure that the accommodation provided for homeless people meets their needs.

Progress made in 2010-11 against each of these objectives is noted below.

***Ensure that the accommodation provided for homeless people meets their needs***

- 5.22 As far as Objective E is concerned, a comprehensive Housing Needs and Demand Assessment has recently been completed as an integral part of the development of a new Local Housing Strategy which will cover the year 2011-16. In summary, this assessment indicates that there is an annual shortfall of around 230 affordable homes in the area over the ten year planning period. The LHS will set out a range of measures to address this shortfall, including the building of new homes for both rent and low cost home ownership by the Council and RSL partners. The programme for the next five years will be set out in the 2011-16 Strategic Housing Investment Plan.
- 5.23 However, it has always been clear that building new homes will not be the sole solution to the shortfall in affordable housing and that a fundamental element of making best use of the available accommodation involves providing better information and advice to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. As noted above, there has been a delay in implementing this element of the Strategy but good progress is now being made. Since the

introduction of housing options interviews in March 2010, around a third of those who have presented at the ARC have not gone on to make a homeless application and have been provided with practical advice and assistance to address their housing needs. Over the coming year, this issue will be monitored on a monthly basis to ascertain whether the recent reduction in homeless applications continues and to highlight any further measures that need to be developed.

- 5.24 A Temporary Accommodation Plan was developed as part of the original 2008-13 Homelessness Strategy but it will be necessary to review this to take account of the introduction of the approved Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSLS). A number of landlords have submitted properties for consideration and these are currently being assessed for their suitability. The Council is currently reviewing its own and RSL stock used to provide temporary accommodation and the detailed processes for managing this stock.

***Ensure that the accommodation provided for homeless people meets their needs.***

- 5.25 In relation to Objective F, during the past year arrangements for the storage of homeless people's furniture have been comprehensively reviewed and a significant saving has been made on storage costs. The Council is about to commence using its own in-house storage facility and it is anticipated that this will result in a number of efficiencies being achieved in the coming year.

**Support – We will help vulnerable people to access the support they need so that they do not become homeless again**

Two key objectives were identified in relation to this priority:

G – Provide a range of support services for homeless/vulnerable people

H – Ensure that the health needs of homeless people are addressed over the next five years

- 5.26 In respect of objective G, the use of a Support Needs Assessment Tool to assist in the assessment of applicants' vulnerability was introduced in 2007 as part of preparations to meet the 2012 national homelessness target. This has been reviewed several times to ensure that it remains effective and responsive to changing circumstances. For example, young people aged under 25 are not able, unless they have dependents, to obtain Local Housing Allowance (LHA) for a let in the private rented sector; instead they are only entitled to LHA on the basis of a bedroom for themselves but sharing other facilities (kitchen, bathroom) with other people. This means that young people with no dependents are more vulnerable to homelessness than older single people and this is reflected in the scoring in the assessment tool. It is recognised that this tool will need to be reviewed regularly if it is to remain fit for purpose in the changing welfare reform environment.
- 5.27 A significant amount of work has been undertaken in the past year to review and redesign floating tenancy support services for homeless people and those who are having difficulty in sustaining a tenancy. The Council and the main providers of floating support services in the area, LinkLiving and Loretto Care, have worked under the framework of a Public Social Partnership. A number of changes have resulted and services are now delivered through more targeted support packages that are task orientated and time limited.

5.28 Tenancy support is now available to people who have experienced homelessness, those who have problems with tenancy management and those who have no experience of having independent accommodation and require support to maintain (or establish) their independence. Support is not tied to any particular tenancy or accommodation but the service user must reside within the Falkirk Council area. Support is provided on a modular basis reflecting key support needs, with the aim of meeting clearly identified outcomes. A co-ordinated referral process is now an important element of how housing support services are now accessed. The process:

- Ensures one clear pathway for people moving into and out of support services,
- Offers more choice and control for people requiring services and clear information about these services,
- Prioritises referrals and matches need to placements through screening by officers,
- Ensures more efficient use of Support Worker and Provider time by reducing inappropriate referrals,
- Makes the experience positive from a service user's perspective,
- Ensures that resources are used to support the people who need them most,
- Helps people who are assessed as ready to move on to do so in a timely way.

5.29 Housing support now clearly focuses on developing a service user's capacity to live independently following the completion of a time-limited programme of support, with access to a wider package of welfare services where required. There are five different support packages available:

- Gaining a Home – this assists non-priority or intentionally homeless applicants to address their housing need.
- Moving on from Supported Accommodation – this assists people who have been in supported interim accommodation to settle into permanent accommodation. This service is also sometimes used to assist people who are moving into independent temporary tenancies as a staging post on their journey towards a permanent independent tenancy.
- Tenancy Establishment – this package helps people who are setting up a home for the first time who have no previous experience of managing a tenancy to furnish and equip the property, establish utility connections, understand both their rights and responsibilities, develop budgeting skills, and learn about the need to eat healthy food and so on.
- Tenancy Sustainment – this package assists with homelessness prevention by working with people who are at risk of losing their current accommodation. The package reinforces the tenant's rights and responsibilities in relation to their tenancy and provides practical assistance to address specific issues where this is required.
- Social Development – this package helps people to develop the wider skills that they will need to be able to live independently and positively in their local community. It covers help to access education, employment and training opportunities, the scope for volunteering in the local area and to

establish (or re-establish) positive social networks.

- A review is also being progressed in respect of the supported accommodation provided in the area to ensure it meets service user requirements. This will be completed later this year.

5.30 In respect of inter-service and inter-agency protocols to ensure that there are arrangements in place to facilitate the best possible outcomes for homeless people with complex needs, a range of formal liaison mechanisms have now either been established or are being developed. A summary of this is provided below:

- Young people who have been looked after and accommodated - the Council is currently carrying out a review of its Corporate Parenting Strategy. This aims to deliver improved pathways for a particularly vulnerable group.
- Women who are the victims of domestic abuse – the Council signed a three year Joint Working Agreement with Falkirk and District Women’s Aid (FDWA) covering the calendar years 1 January 2010-31 December 2012. FDWA provide monthly reports against agreed performance indicators and there are regular liaison meetings with FDWA staff on both strategic and operational issues. The Council and other agencies involved in services for women affected by domestic abuse recently participated in a visioning exercise which considered FDWA’s strengths and weaknesses and developed a plan to inform service redesign within FDWA. Work with women and children affected by domestic abuse is co-ordinated through a multi-agency domestic abuse forum.
- People with mental health problems – to reflect concerns about the fact that people with mental health problems are more vulnerable to becoming homeless, the Council wished to develop a protocol with Health to ensure an appropriate response from all agencies in respect of this vulnerable group. However, NHS Forth Valley wished to pursue a generic hospital discharge protocol and this is now in place but with agreement that it will be reviewed in October 2011. Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils share Falkirk Council’s view that there should be a specific protocol in relation to people with mental health problems and the three local authorities will continue jointly to make representations to this effect.
- People with addictions - as far as people with addictions are concerned, formal liaison and referral arrangements are in place under the supervision of the Forth Valley Substance Action Team. There is a tiered approach to the management of addictions in the Forth Valley NHS area with four separate, well-defined tiers of services. This appears to be working well.
- Good work continues to be done in relation to employment and training opportunities for homeless and other vulnerable people and two levels of service are provided. Firstly, in partnership with the Council, the Cyrenians have developed a *People with Potential* project which assists people who are currently excluded from work, training or education to develop the basic skills they need to gain access to such opportunities. The help provided is client-centred and can include such issues as confidence building and personal presentation skills and acts as stepping stone to the second level of service which offers more structured work and training placements

overseen by the Council's Employment and Training Unit.

- The Council continues to work with the Cyrenians to assist non-priority or intentionally homeless people to access accommodation in the private rented sector with the aim of achieving 85 private sector tenancies a year. Work is ongoing with the Cyrenians to discharge the Council's duty to permanently house homeless people in accordance with Section 32a of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and it is anticipated that several cases could be concluded in the near future. The Council has also developed a Private Sector Leasing Scheme for the provision of temporary accommodation and is currently evaluating responses to a recent tendering exercise.
- The Council engaged Scottish Churches Housing Action to report on the potential for the development of a befriending scheme for isolated or vulnerable homeless people in the Falkirk area and is now working with the Bethany Christian Trust to explore an opportunity for using a model of service developed by Bethany elsewhere. Several churches have indicated a willingness to be involved in such a scheme and it is hoped that this can be progressed during 2011-12.
- A furniture scheme has been established in partnership with Grangemouth Enterprises and Falkirk Homeless Project to provide furniture packages to homeless people who are taking up new tenancies. To date, 1157 furniture packages have been provided.
- In respect of Objective H, the services provided by the previous Senior Social Worker (Homelessness) and Community Psychiatric Nurse based at the ARC were reviewed jointly by Housing, Social Work and Health in 2008. As a result, it was agreed to merge the remits of the two posts into a new post, Senior Worker (Homelessness Support). A review of the current arrangements will be carried out in 2011-12 to ensure that there is adequate cover for the issues experienced by vulnerable homeless people.
- Over the past year a significant amount of positive work has been done in partnership with Forth Valley NHS to increase awareness of the various services available to help people who are homeless. This will culminate in a multi-agency event in October 2011 involving both service users and providers which aims to improve access to health services where needed and to raise health practitioners' awareness of the kind of barriers to access that homeless people can face.
- Another area of joint work in the past year has been the completion of a Training Needs Analysis covering staff in a wide range of agencies that deal with homeless people. A targeted training plan is currently being developed for implementation in the current year and rolling on beyond then.
- A cross-boundary protocol has been developed in respect of placing vulnerable people in accommodation in other parts of the Forth Valley area. This is awaiting sign-off by neighbouring local authorities.
- In respect of ensuring that homeless people have access to appropriate health services, notification arrangements are in place for families living in temporary accommodation. The Council's Temporary Accommodation

Officers notify the local Health Visitor of any families placed in temporary accommodation who have children under the age of five to ensure that they are registered with the local GP practice and can access the full range of primary health care services.

- Young people and single men living in supported accommodation have been able to benefit from advice and practical assistance from a Community Food Worker from Forth Valley NHS who has promoted healthy eating as a means of improving overall health.

## 6. CHALLENGES FOR 2011-12

6.1 Whilst the number of people presenting as homeless has gone down over the last two years, the length of time it takes to provide permanent housing solutions for some homeless people continues to be too long. This impacts on the time people have to spend in temporary or unsatisfactory housing situations. It is increasingly clear that every effort must be made to prevent homelessness from occurring and this will require positive joint working and a shared sense of ownership from all agencies involved with homeless people in the coming years.

6.2 Over the coming year the following key challenges have been identified:

- monitoring progress towards achieving the national 2012 homelessness target whereby all applicants who are not intentionally homeless will have a right to settled accommodation. As 31 December 2012 moves closer, there may be a need to consider additional policy responses to how housing applicants can be accommodated,
- analysing information about rehousing outcomes to identify areas where new services could be developed or existing services could be improved in order to achieve better outcomes for the individuals and families concerned and better use of the available housing stock,
- redesigning housing information and advice services to provide expert assistance on the full range of housing options available to applicants in the context of a finite supply of social rented housing. This will involve both the services provided at the ARC and at the Council's network of One Stop Shops and Neighbourhood Housing Offices,
- redesigning the way that temporary accommodation is managed to ensure that high standards can be maintained at all times, void turnaround time is minimised, tenants are better supported and tenant satisfaction with the accommodation and support provided is improved. Implementing the Private Sector Leasing Scheme and reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation will be key elements of this,
- increasing the range of affordable housing options in the Council area by (a) maximising the use of resources to develop new affordable homes built either by the Council itself or through partnership work with RSLs, (b) participating in the National Housing Trust Initiative to deliver new homes at mid-market rents and (c) the application of the Affordable Housing Policy in appropriate circumstances. This will also include facilitating access to accommodation in the private rented sector which has the potential to play a more significant role in meeting local housing needs,
- completing the review of housing support services to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of people who are struggling to maintain their existing accommodation, are setting up home for the first time or who need interim accommodation to prepare them to live more independently in the community,
- finalising the review of both the Council's and RSL's processes for evicting tenants who do not pay their rent or who are perpetrators of anti-social behaviour to ensure that all reasonable measures have been taken to engage with the households concerned and appropriate housing support and specialist debt /welfare benefits advice have been made available,

- developing customer feedback mechanisms to build on recent improvements to customer engagement processes so that services become increasingly person-centred and address the core issues that concern service users,
- developing a befriending scheme in partnership with local churches to support homeless people who are socially isolated and need help to establish or re-establish positive social networks which will make them more resilient to homelessness in the future,
- continuing to work with Health to ensure that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are able to access primary care services that will improve their health and help to prevent them from becoming homeless in the future,
- continuing to analyse information about homeless people and the wider population to ensure that all groups have equal access to the services they need and developing ways of engaging with harder to reach groups,
- identifying why single men, particularly young single men, are over-represented in the population of homeless people and seeking solutions that address their needs. This work will need to be done in the context of the wider Community Planning Partnership's responsibilities as it is clear that young single men are a group that need focused attention in respect of a number of issues including educational attainment, unemployment, criminal behaviour and alcohol/substance misuse.

6.3 In taking this challenging agenda forward, partnership working will continue to be necessary, particularly in relation to supporting people who are particularly vulnerable. Initiatives with Social Work and Health will continue to need to be developed in an effort to prevent homelessness from occurring by providing people with the support they need to manage their lives better. Where it is not possible to prevent homelessness, more work will require to be done with those affected to help them sustain their new accommodation arrangements and to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

6.4 At the same time, focussed work will continue to be required by the Council and its local partners in terms of achieving the maximum effectiveness from their processes so that, for example, properties do not lie empty for unacceptable periods of time and can play a more active use in meeting local housing needs. Continued attention to the Performance Management Framework will help ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of services for homeless people.

6.5 Finally, whilst there is clearly a link between homelessness and the overall supply of affordable housing which will be explored in the new Local Housing Strategy, it is evident that a shortfall of affordable housing is not the only cause of homelessness. The LHS will consider housing support issues and how people can be helped to become more resilient to the factors that can lead to them becoming homeless but commitment from other agencies who deliver services to homeless people is vital if homelessness is to be prevented and people are to be sustained in accommodation as part of sustainable and inclusive communities.

