

**ANNUAL
HOMELESSNESS STATEMENT
2009-10**

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 second such Statement to be produced.
- 1.2 The 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.
- 1.3 This report addresses the issue of homelessness in the Falkirk Council area during the period 2009-10, sets out the progress that has been made and looks at the current nature and extent of homelessness in the area. The impact of the current recession and “credit crunch” on homelessness in the area are also addressed.
- 1.4 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 2010.
- 1.5 The Statement will then look at the challenges to be faced in the coming years if the vision of the Homelessness Strategy is to become a reality and will identify 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 2009-10 shows homeless trends in both the Falkirk Council area and Scotland as a whole over the period 2005-10. The principle issues to note are:

- An 8% decrease in homeless presentations compared to 2008-09,
- An increase in the number of single applicants,
- An increase in the number of applicants assessed as having a priority need for housing, in line with the requirements of the 2009 Interim Target,
- An increase in the number of applicants provided with temporary accommodation that reflects new duties in respect of the provision of such accommodation to non-priority applicants,
- The main reasons for homelessness are relationship breakdown and disputes within households,
- Households with children account for roughly 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 Figure 1 shows the trend in homeless presentations across the country since 1992-93 until 31 March 2009 (data for the last financial year will not be available until later this year). Nationally, presentations peaked in 2005-06 but have since dipped and levelled off, whereas in Falkirk the trend had continued to be in an upward direction until very recently. It is pleasing to note that there has been a decrease in homeless presentations in the Council area during 2009-10 compared to the previous year.

Homeless Presentations (Scotland) 1992 - 2009

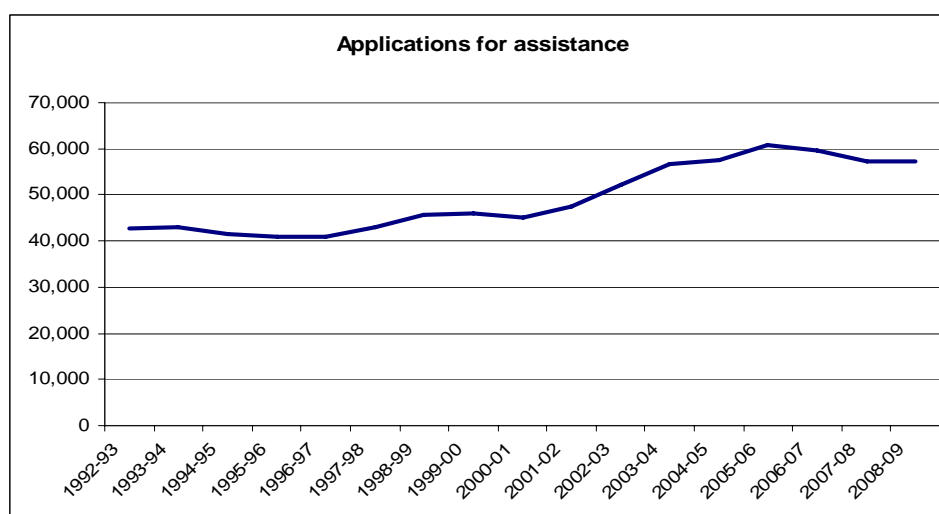


Figure 1

2.4 Figure 2 below shows how homeless presentations have increased by 30% over the five year period 2005-2010 in the Falkirk Council area. However, one reason

for this is that there was a degree of under-recording of applications in the past - homeless applicants who did not attend interview appointments made for them were not counted as homeless presentations. Since 2007 arrangements have been in place to record presentations more accurately at the point of initial contact so that fewer applicants were “lost” to the system and a “duty” system now means that 72% of applicants are interviewed within 10 minutes of arriving at the Accommodation Resource Centre.

Homeless Presentations (Falkirk Council Area) 2005-10

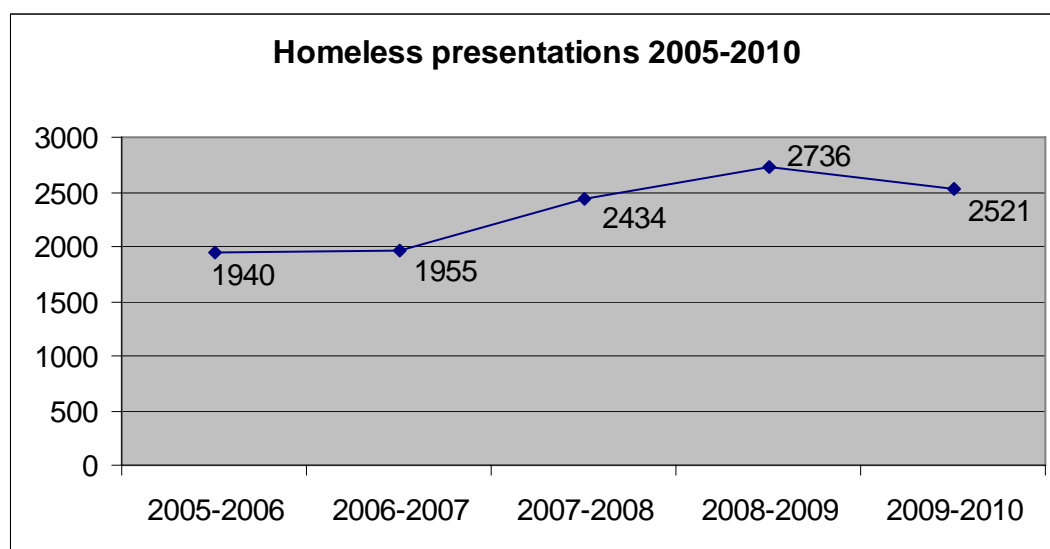


Figure 2

- 2.5 In 2009-10 there was a reduction of 215 in the number of homeless presentations compared to 2008-09. This represents an 8% decrease. It is difficult to quantify the exact reasons for this decrease using current datasets – it may be that some of the homelessness prevention initiatives that are now in place are starting to have an impact but it will be necessary to carry out specific research to prove this point. 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.

Age of homeless applicants

- 2.6 Homelessness is an issue which predominantly affects young people under the age of 25. Figure 3 below shows the age profile of homeless applicants in 2009-10. 39% of applicants are aged below 25. The next most significant age groups experiencing homelessness are people between 25 and retirement age. 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.

Homelessness Presentations by Age (Falkirk Council Area) 2009-10

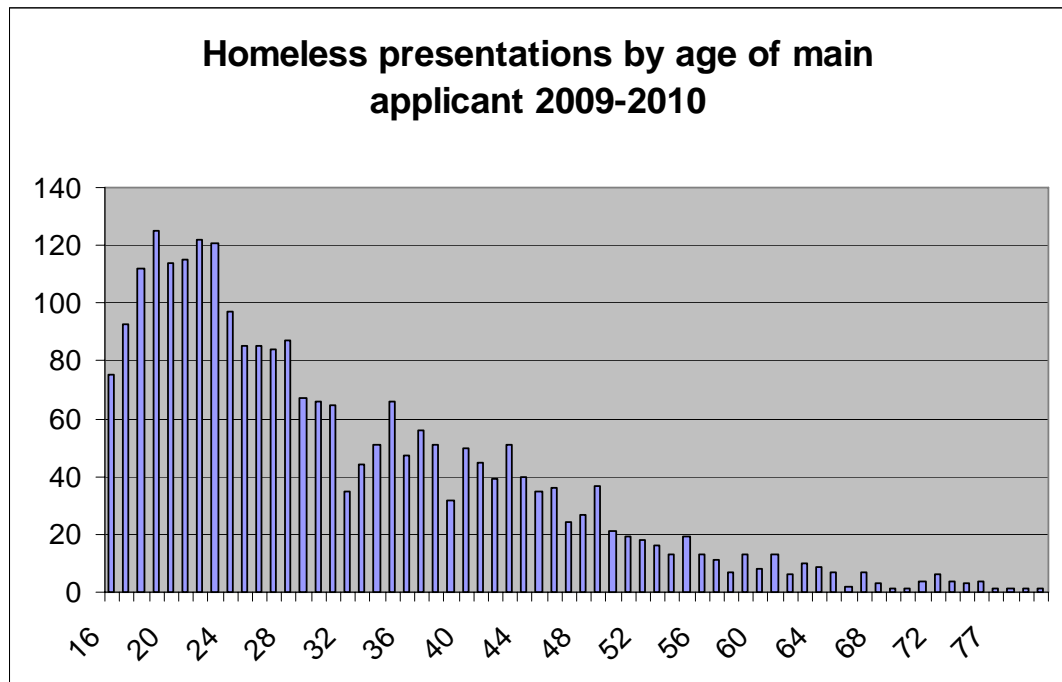


Figure 3

2.7 As noted above, the principle cause of homelessness in the Falkirk Council area is relationship breakdown (dispute within household) - see Figure 4 below. Homelessness which is a result of financial difficulties amounts to 9% of total applications in 2009-10. This figure has decreased by 2% since 2008-09 and is likely to be the result of more effective assistance given to people who are at risk of losing their homes due to financial problems. It is anticipated that this figure will continue to reduce as homelessness prevention measures become more embedded in the practices of the Council and its partner landlord organisations and as banks and other mortgage lenders are required to do more to assist people who are experiencing difficulty in managing their housing costs.

Reasons for Homelessness (Falkirk) 2009-10

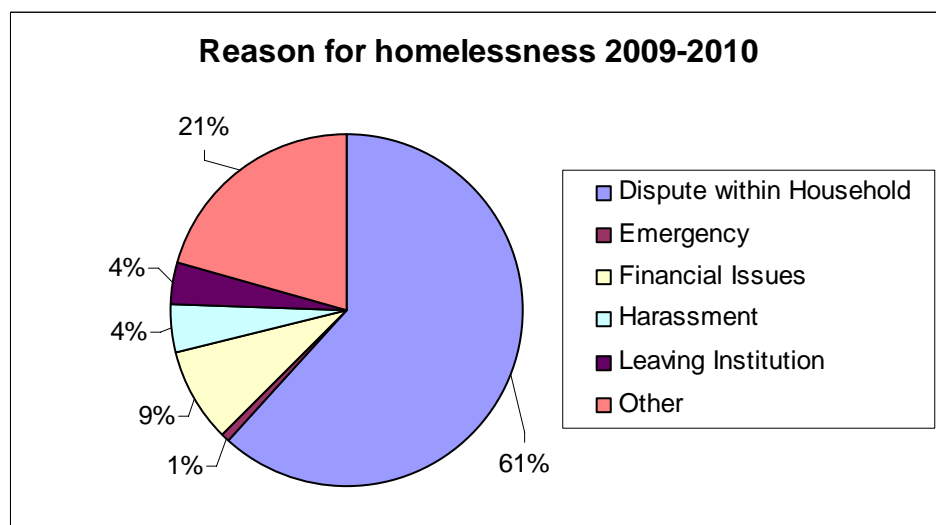


Figure 4

Homeless Presentations by Household Type 2009-10

2.8 Figure 5 shows the type of households who became homeless in the Council area in 2009-10. Families with children under the age of 17 and single people under age 60 form the largest groups. There are no significant changes from the previous year.

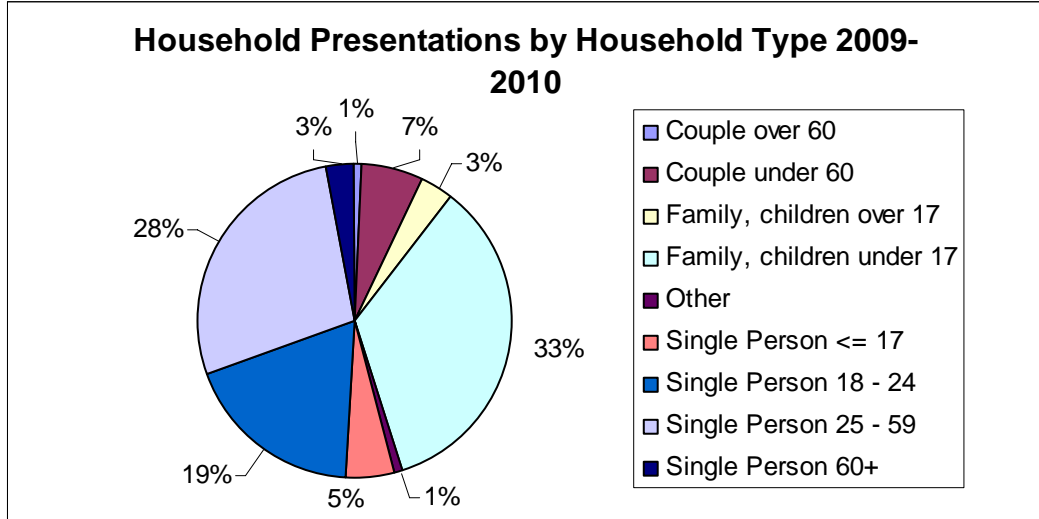


Figure 5

Homeless Applications by Ethnic Group of Main Applicant

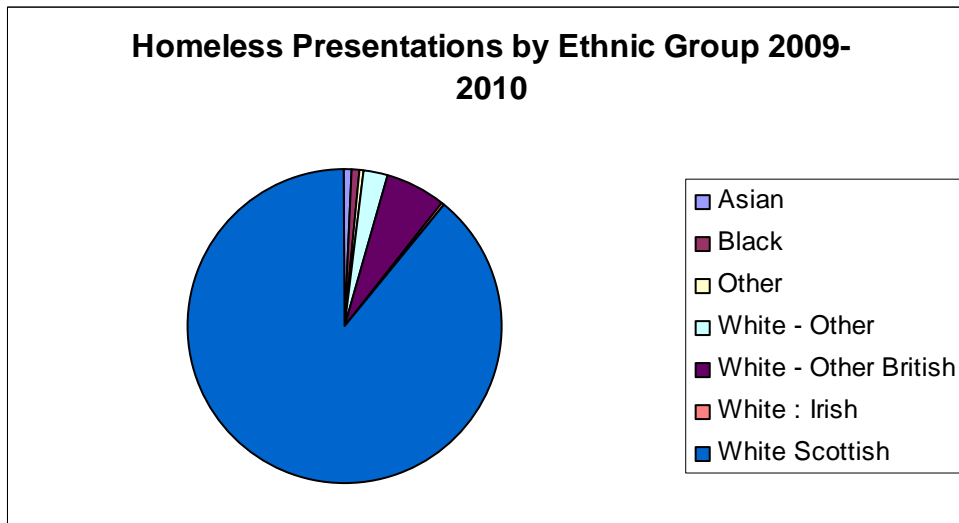


Figure 6

2.9 Figure 6 shows the ethnic origin of people applying as homeless in the Falkirk Council area - 98% of local applicants are White – this figure has not changed in the past year.

Homelessness Assessments

2.10 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 7, 8 and 9 below.

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

Test: Is the Applicant Homeless?

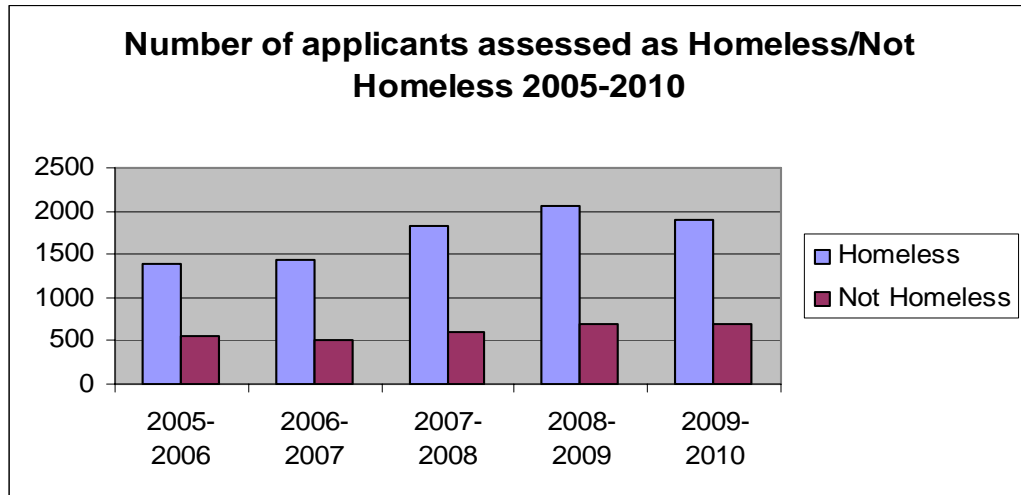


Figure 7

- 2.12 Figure 7 shows that the proportion of applicants in Falkirk found to be homeless has increased by 37% over the last 5 years. This is a result of both the increase in homeless presentations over the period (there has been a 30% increase) and improved recording systems. 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

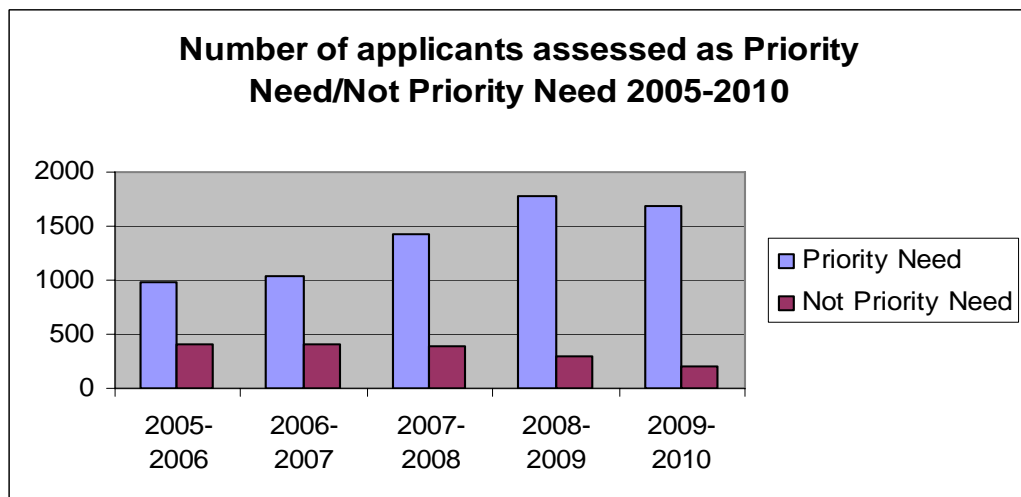


Figure 8

- 2.13 Figure 8 shows that the number of applicants assessed as *not* having a priority need has fallen. The 2009 Interim Target for priority need assessments for the Falkirk Council area was 82% and this was achieved in 2008-09. In 2009-10 the figure was just under 90%. This is a key indicator in progress towards meeting the

2012 national homelessness target which will require all homeless applicants who are *not* found to be *intentionally* homeless to be provided with settled accommodation.

Reasons for Priority Assessment

2.14 Analysis of the reasons why applicants have been considered to have a priority need over the last two years is shown in Figures 9 and 10 below for the purpose of comparison.

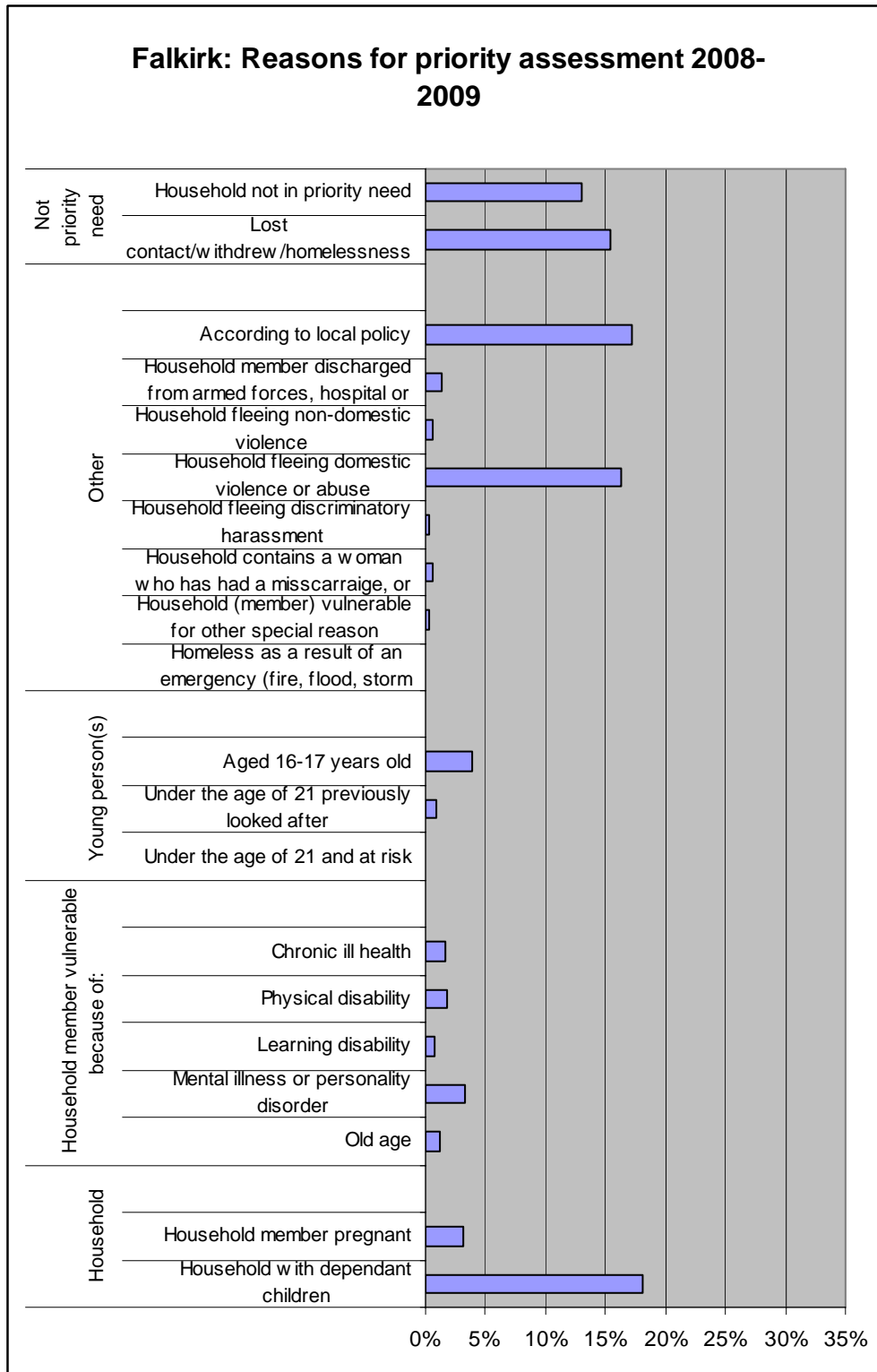


Figure 9

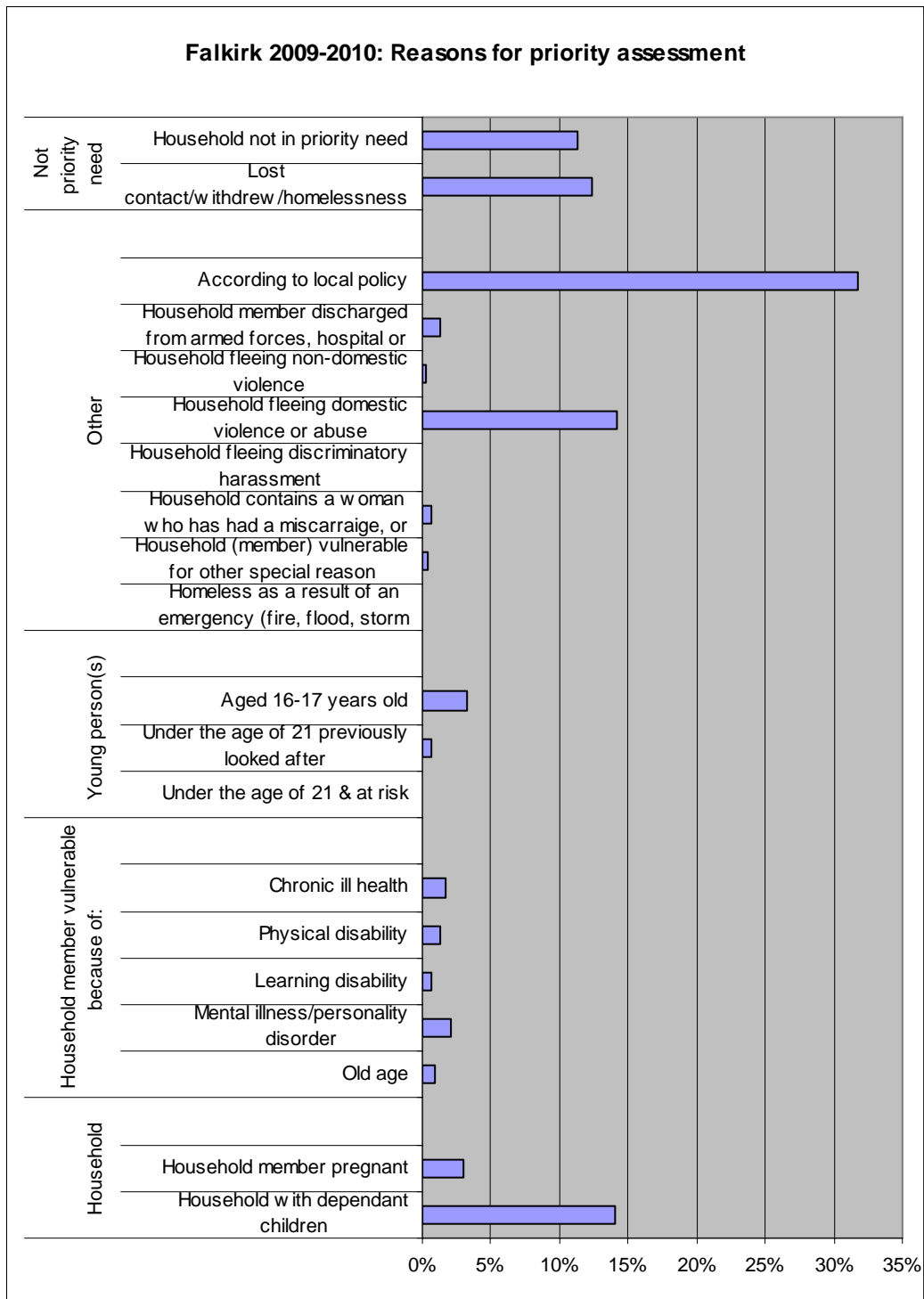


Figure 10

2.15 The three main reasons why homeless people are awarded priority status are:

- there are dependant children in the household,
- the applicant or a member of his/her household is fleeing domestic abuse,
- the support needs assessment indicates that the applicant or a member of his/her household is vulnerable.

2.16 In respect of the latter category, these applications are recorded in Figures 9 and 10 as priority need decisions made “in accordance with the local policy”. These are applicants who are considered to be vulnerable following the support needs assessment which is undertaken at the same time as the homelessness assessment. The support needs assessment uses a “matrix” to assist in identifying underlying issues that may mean that an applicant is more vulnerable than others in a similar situation. The matrix takes account of the following issues:

- Self-esteem,
- Self-care and living skills,
- Physical health,
- Emotional and mental health,
- Sexual health/Substance /alcohol abuse,
- Personal safety/risk,
- Managing money and personal administration/Employment issues,
- Legal/offending issues,
- Degree of engagement with services/supports,
- Social interactions/networks and relationships.

Household Type of Priority Homeless Applicants

2.17 Figure 11 provides information about the household types of those assessed as being in priority need and provides a comparison between the position in financial year 2003-04 and in 2009-10, 2003-04 being the baseline year against which progress on meeting the 2009 Interim Target has been assessed.

2.18 There has been some change in the pattern of presentations over the past seven years. Single people over age 25 but younger than 60 are now the largest group presenting as homeless 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 actual numbers involved have increased substantially over this timeframe with consequent pressures on the Council both in terms of assessments and the provision of accommodation.

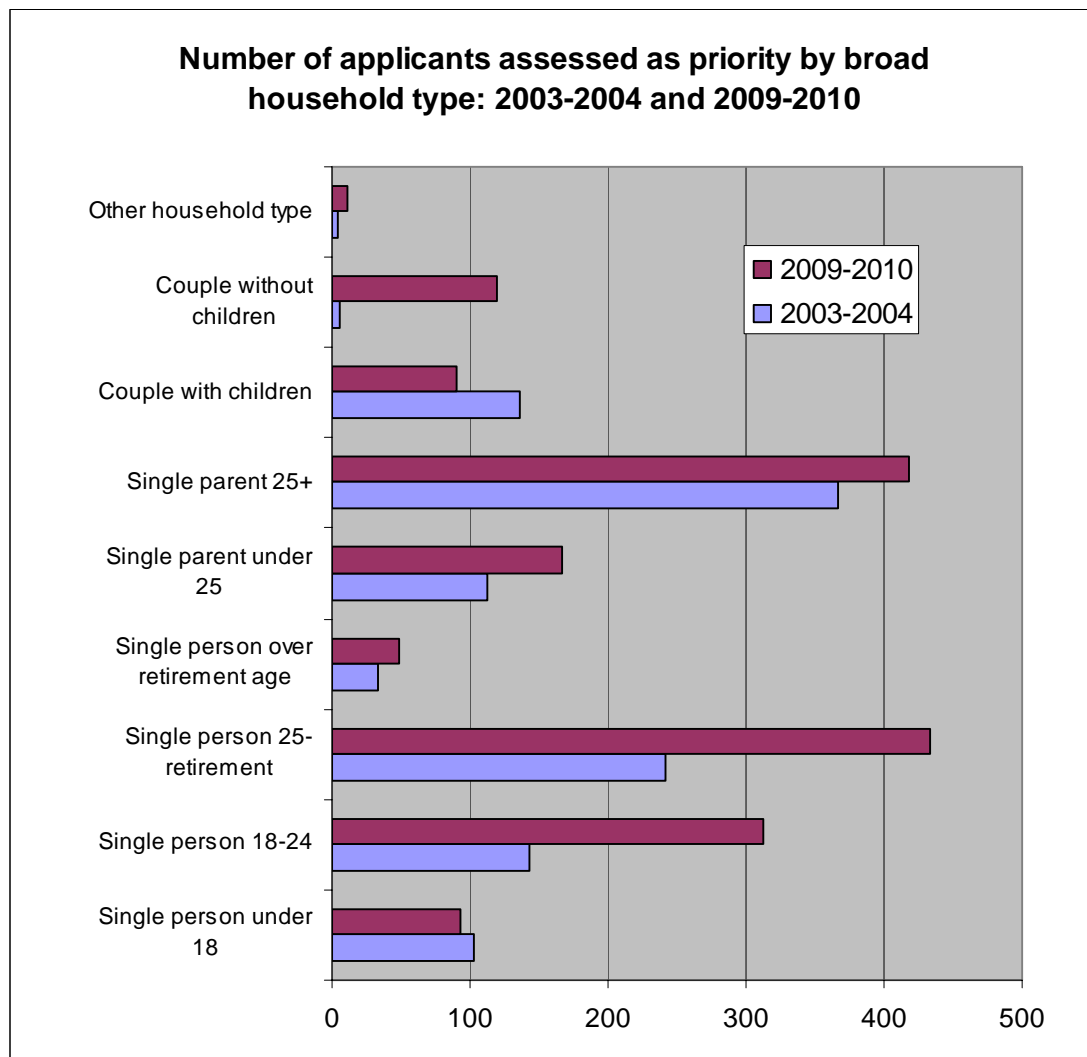


Figure 11

Test: Is the Applicant Intentionally Homeless?

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

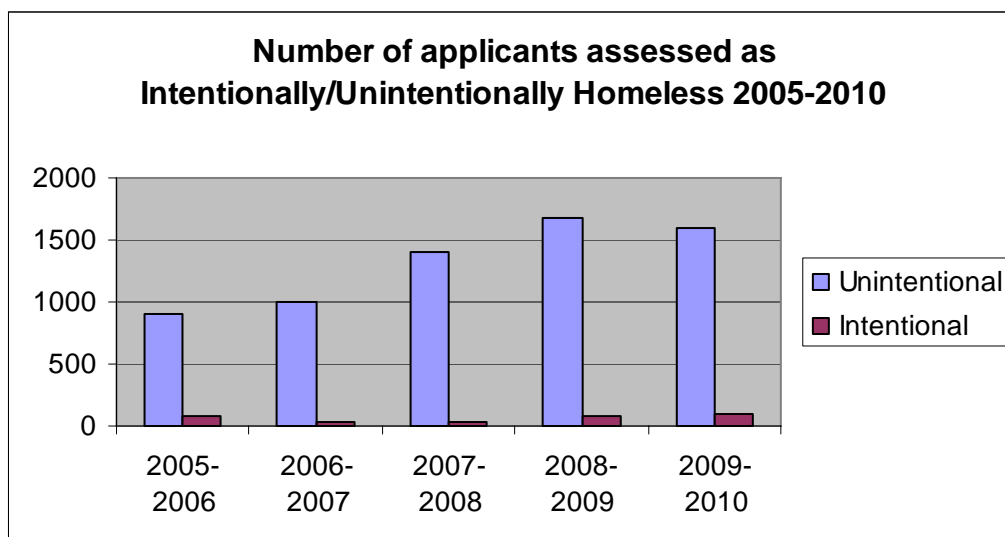


Figure 12

- 2.20 Figure 12 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 2009-10 only 99 people (5.2%) of those assessed as homeless were found to be intentionally homeless.

Local Connection

- 2.21 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 applicants requires it but 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 2009-10 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 close family relationship in the area.

Impact of the Recession

- 2.22 There has been significant concern that homelessness presentations would rise as a result of the economic recession and the “credit crunch” but, locally, there has been a 28% decrease in presentations which are a result of financial difficulty during the past This may well be the result of 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 done. 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 homeless situations developing. Figure 16 below 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.

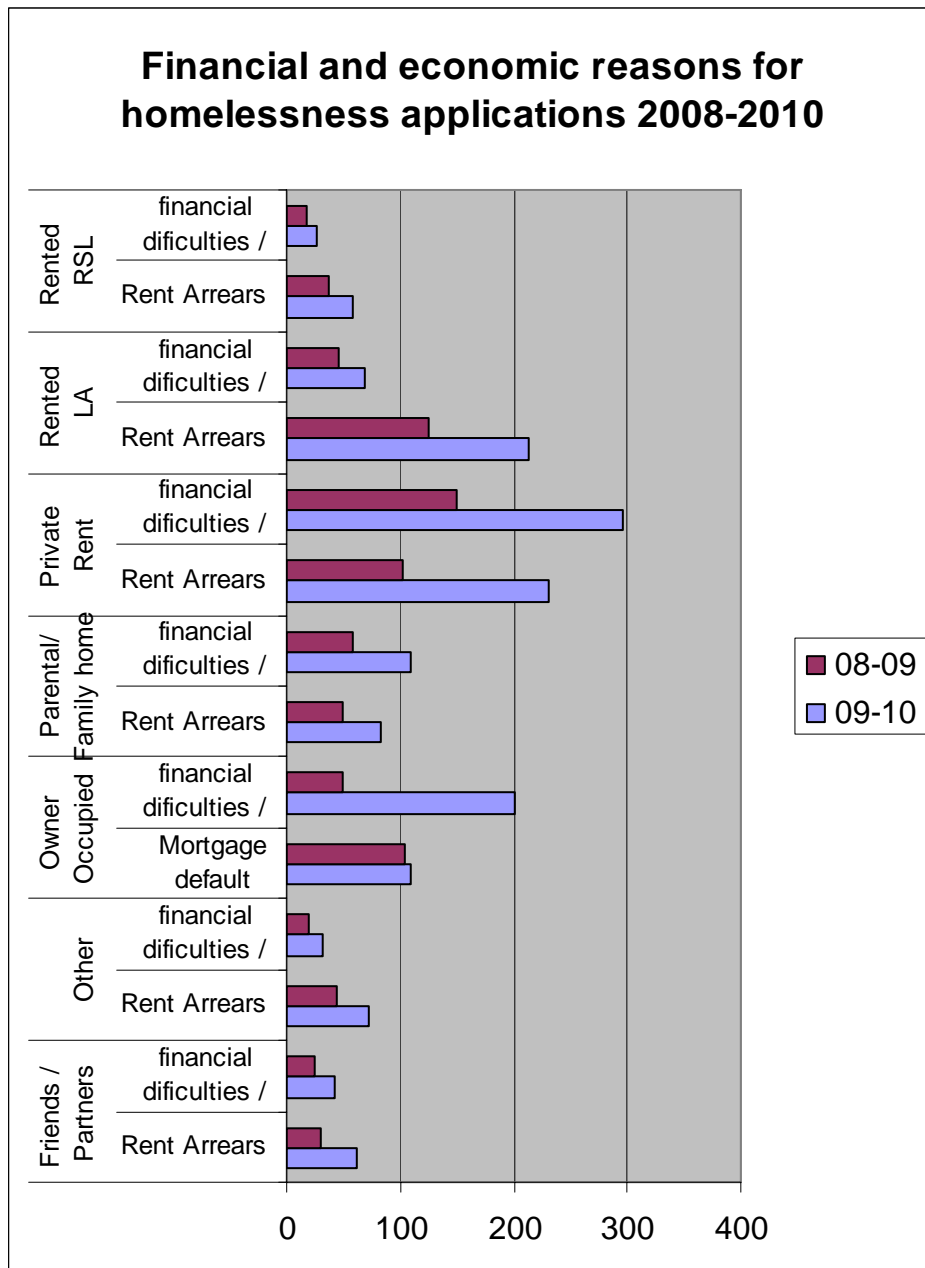


Figure 13

Provision of Temporary Accommodation

2.23 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 14 below.

Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation (Scotland)

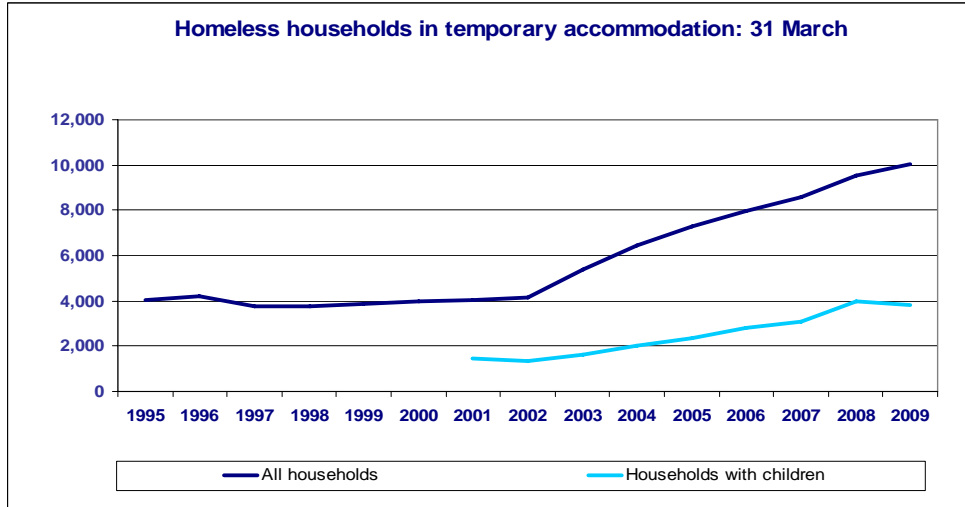


Figure 14

2.24 Figure 15 below shows the comparative figures for the Falkirk Council area.

Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation (Falkirk)

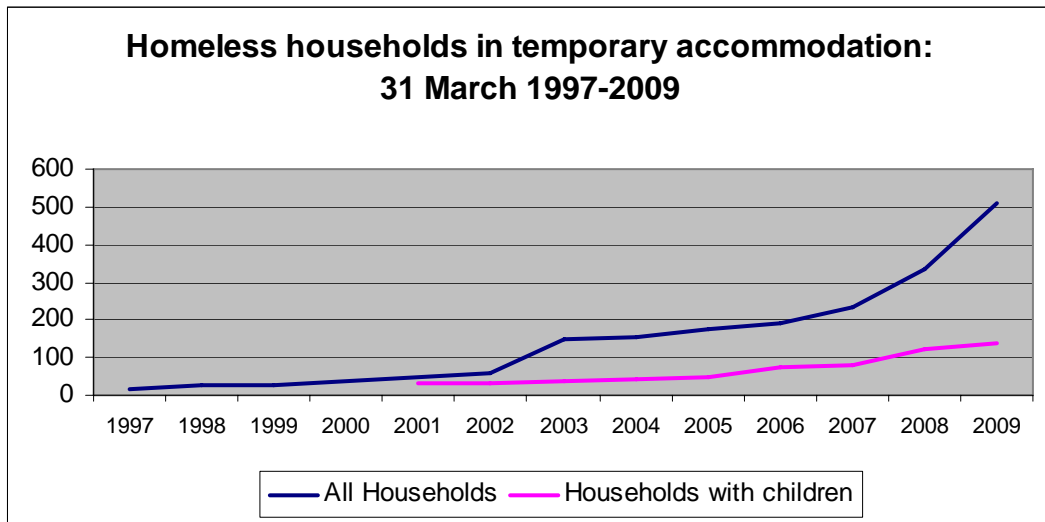


Figure 15

2.25 A major issue that arises from this change in legislation is that properties that are used to provide temporary accommodation are not available to provide permanent housing solutions to homeless people. At the current time, 284 properties (271 Council and 13 RSL) are being used to provide temporary accommodation. 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

2.26 Figure 16 shows in significant detail the re-housing outcome for applications closed in 2009-10. The key issues are that those who had been assessed as being homeless and in priority need were typically provided with permanent accommodation (a Council or RSL tenancy) whereas those who were not found to be homeless most often returned to their previous accommodation. Applicants who were found to be homeless but not in priority need showed a mixed pattern of behaviours with some returning to their previous accommodation whilst others chose to move in with friends/relatives. This situation may change in the future as the housing options approach is introduced.

Rehousing Outcome of Homeless Applicants (Falkirk) 2002-2010

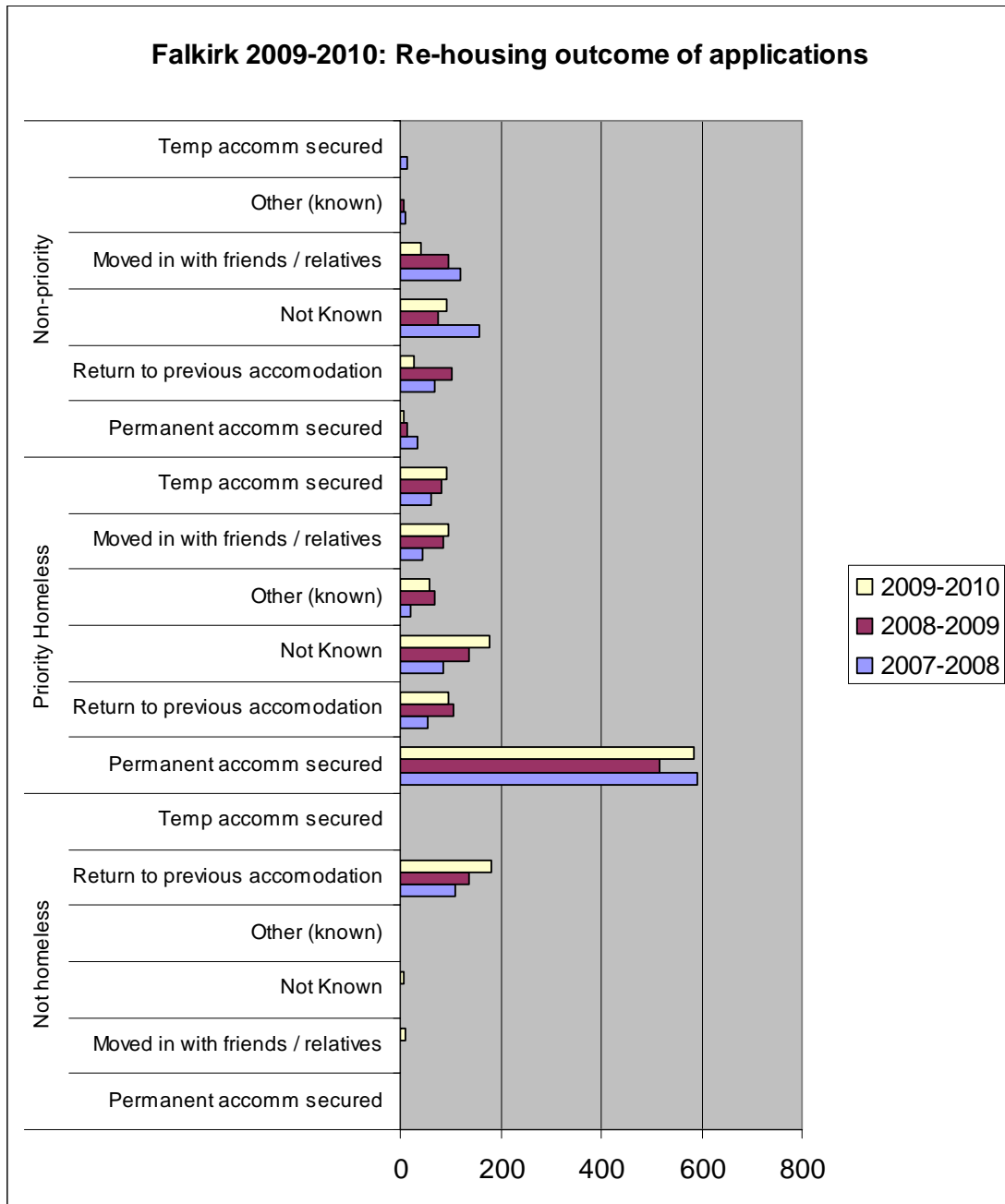


Figure 16

2.27 Figure 17 below shows the percentage of lets to the different categories of applicant in the Falkirk Council area from April 2004 – December 2009, whereas Figure 18 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.

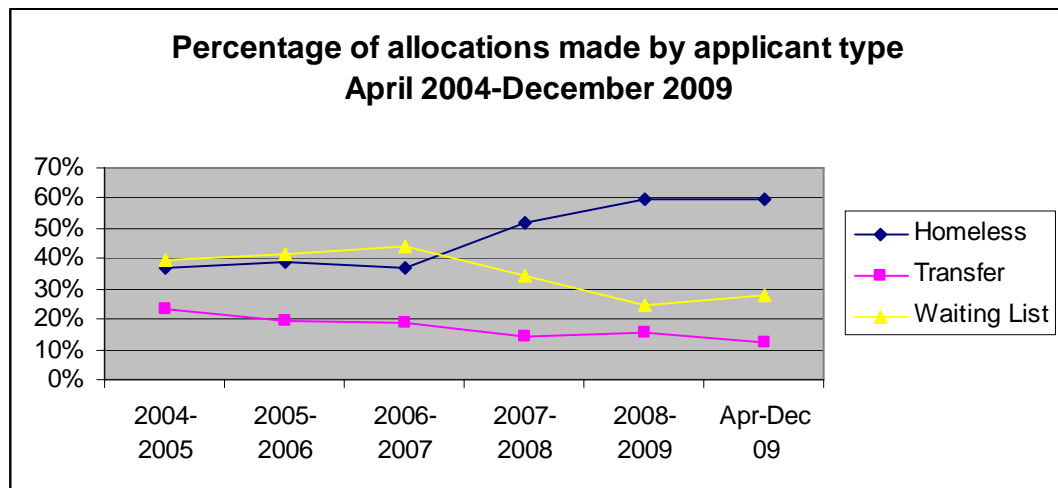


Figure 17

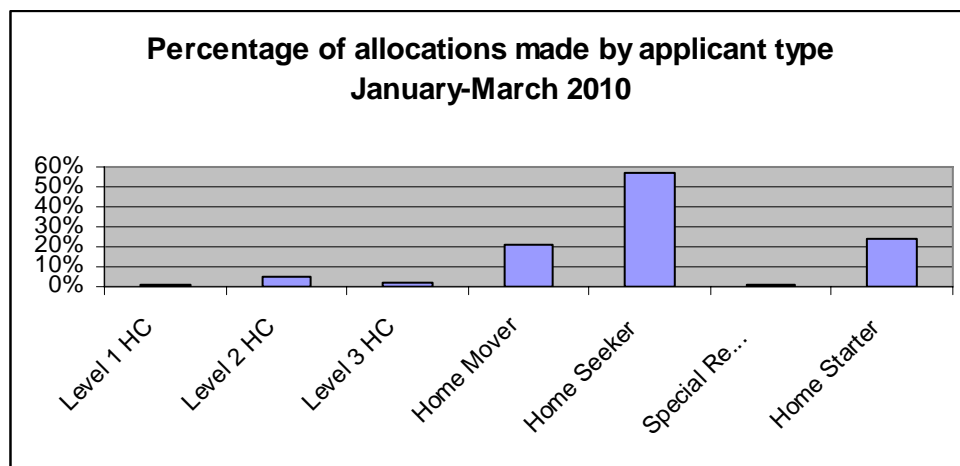


Figure 18

2.28 In general, however, it is fair to say that a high proportion of lets is now going 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 have 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.

Rough Sleeping

- 2.29 The trend in the percentage of applicants who claim to have slept rough the night before presenting as homeless over the last two years is downwards. Figure 19 shows that the percentage of applicants who said they slept rough the night before presenting as homeless varies from just over 1% (currently) to nearly 12% (December 2008). The comparative figure across Scotland is 5%.

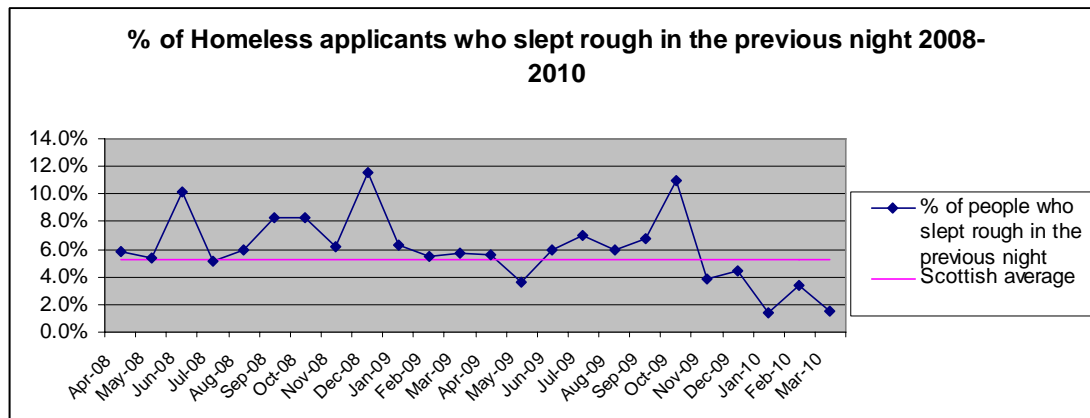


Figure 19

- 2.29 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 communications plan for homelessness prevention. In addition, 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 providers. 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.

Completion of the Assessment Process

- 2.30 All elements of the process for dealing with a homeless application are recorded and the data is submitted regularly to the Scottish Government for national analysis. The final factor that is recorded is the last action taken by the local authority in respect of each homeless application. Figure 20 below shows the position in Falkirk.

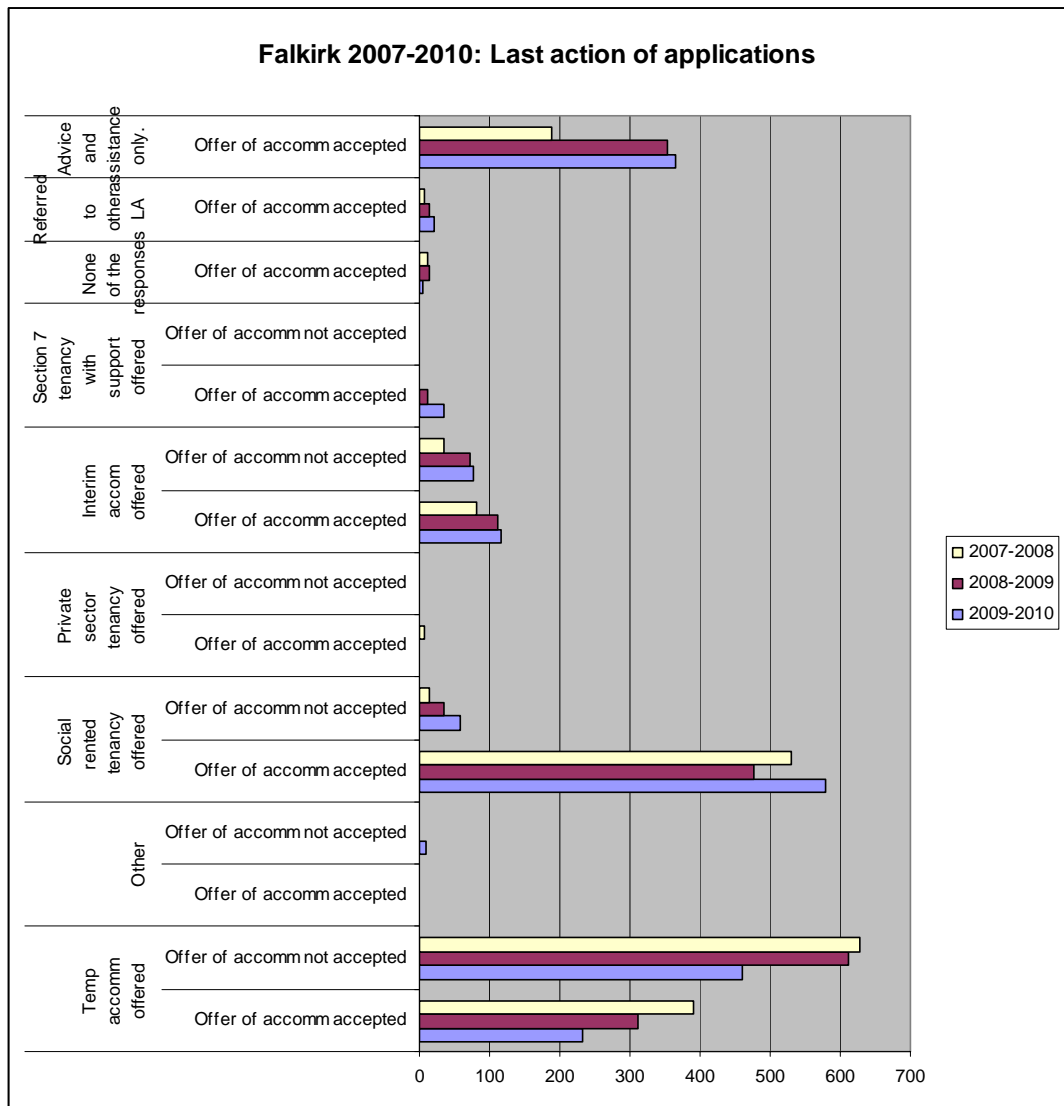


Figure 20

2.31 It is anticipated that the recent legislative changes in respect of Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 will mean that, over time, greater use will be made of the private rented sector as a means of resolving homelessness – consistent with the housing options approach - and this should show in future analysis of this part of the homelessness process.

3. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

- 3.1 In the past year considerable work has been done to improve and update the range of performance indicators used to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the homelessness service and a new comprehensive and robust Performance Management Framework (PMF) has recently been developed – see Annex 1. Targets have now been set for performance in 2010-11 and it is proposed that progress against these targets will be reported as follows:

Level	Audience	Frequency
One	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
Two	Neighbourhood Services Senior Management Team (Heads of Service/4 th tier Service Managers)	Monthly
Three	Homelessness Implementation Group (internal: 4 th and 5 th tier managers)	Monthly
Four	Operational Management and Staff Teams (5 th 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.

Percentage of Assessments Completed within 28 Days, 2009-10

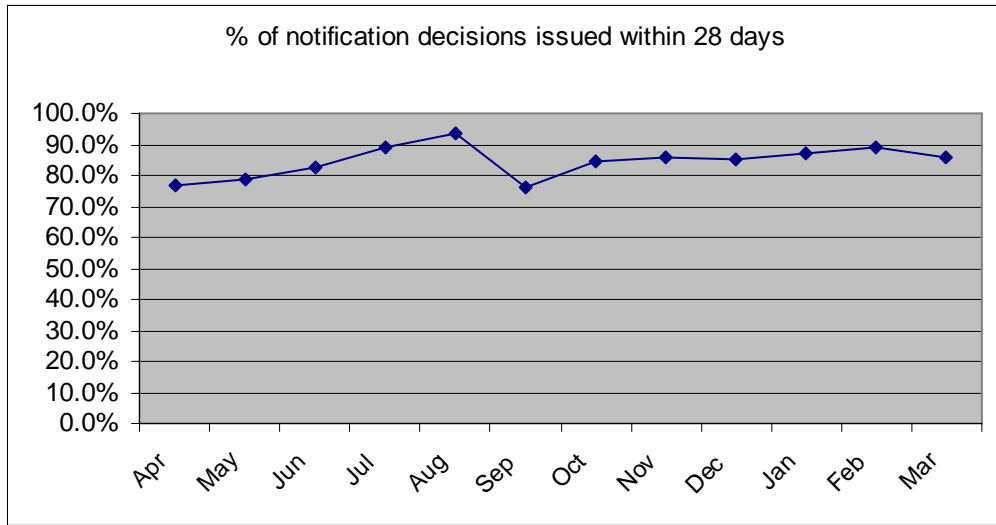


Figure 21

3.3 Figure 21 shows that with the exception of a dip in September 2009 there has been steady improvement over the last year in the percentage of homelessness assessments which are completed within 28 days of presentation.

Percentage of Homeless Applicants in Priority Need, 2009-10

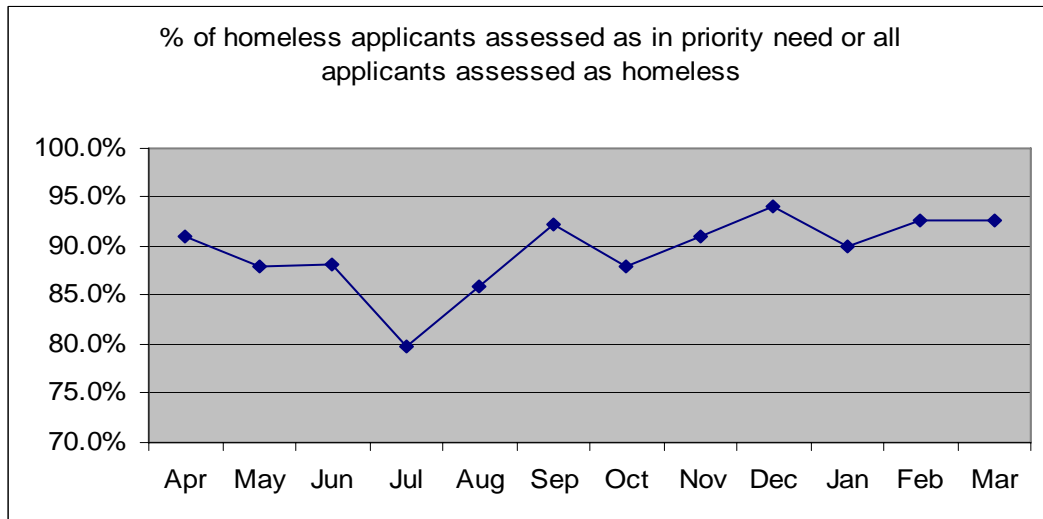


Figure 22

3.4 Figure 22 shows that the percentage of applicants found to be in priority need fluctuated on a monthly basis from just under 80% to around 92%. The target figure set by the Scottish Government for the Falkirk Council area, based on projections from the 2003-04 baseline, is 82%. In 2009-10 as a whole the percentage of priority need assessments achieved was 89.7%. The target has been achieved through the use of the support needs assessment which now

assists in identifying applicants who are vulnerable and who might previously have slipped through the net.

Repeat Applications, 2009-10

- 3.5 Where there is a high level of repeat applications within a year of a previous assessment this is an indicator that assessment processes need to be more robust. Figure 23 below shows that the percentage of repeat applications in 2009-10 was only 1.4% and is now consistently below the Scottish average figure of 6%.

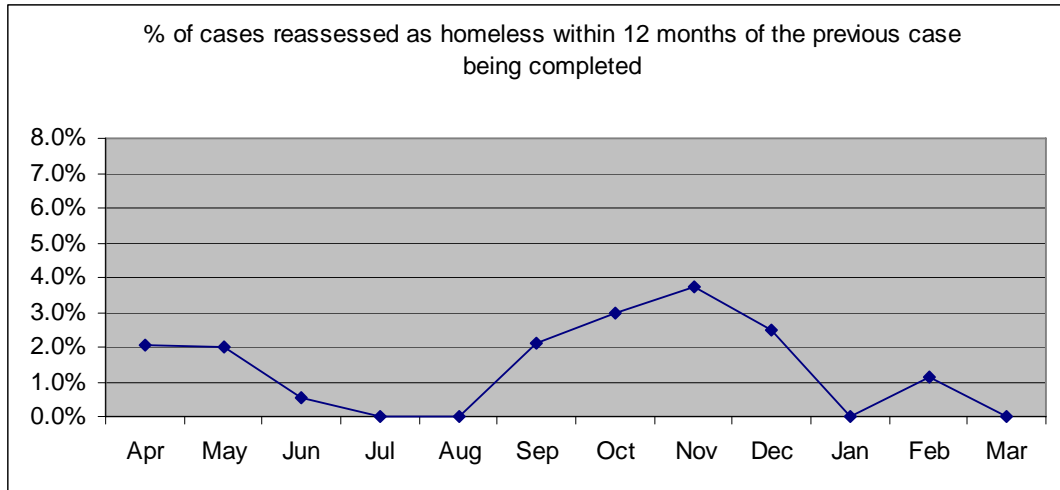


Figure 23

Percentage of Homeless Tenancies Sustained for over 12 Months

- 3.6 A similarly positive picture emerges when tenancy sustainment levels for homeless people are considered as set out in Figure 24. The figure for the year as a whole is 90%. The Falkirk position compares well with an average figure across Scotland of 86%.

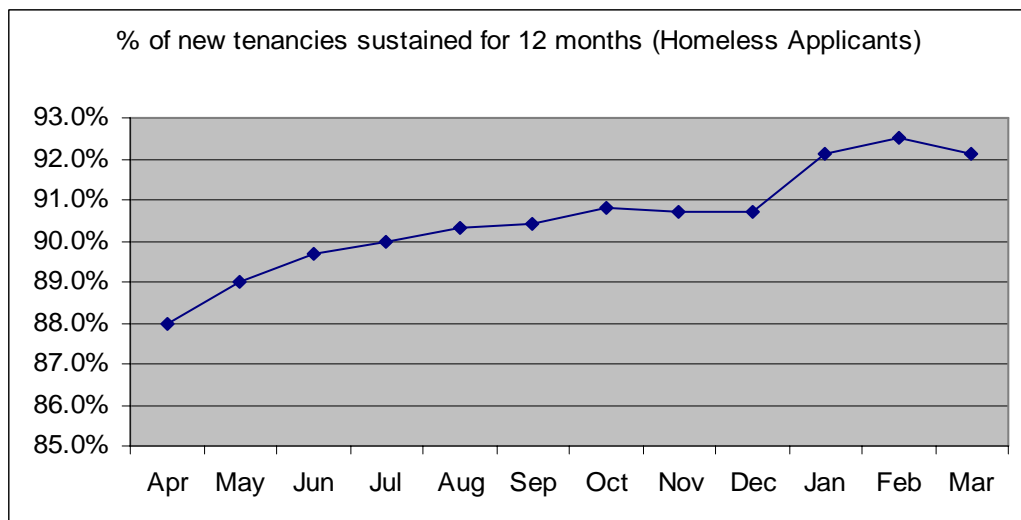


Figure 24

Percentage of all Tenancies Sustained for over 12 Months, 2009-10

3.7 Figure 25 shows the percentage of all tenancies sustained for over 12 months. This indicates that 91.6% of all new tenancies are sustained for over a year and suggests that there is very little difference in tenancy sustainment levels between homeless applicants and other new tenants.

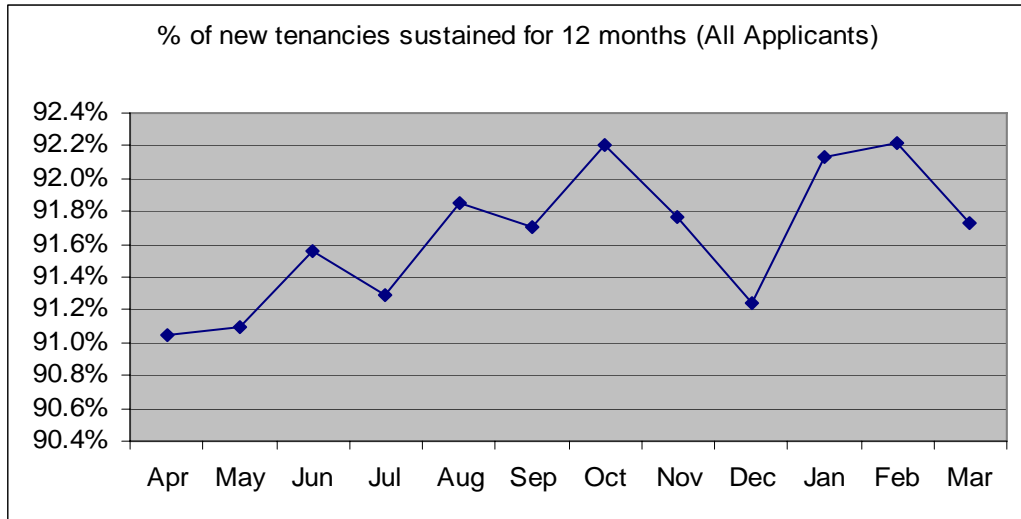


Figure 25

Discharge of Duty within 6 Months

3.8 Figure 26 below shows performance in relation to the discharge of the Council's duties to homeless people within 6 months of their being assessed. As noted in paragraph 2.28 above, even although a higher percentage of lets is now going to homeless applicants, given the supply of vacant accommodation such applicants still often have to wait longer than six months to be housed, depending on the type of house they need and the areas they bid for.

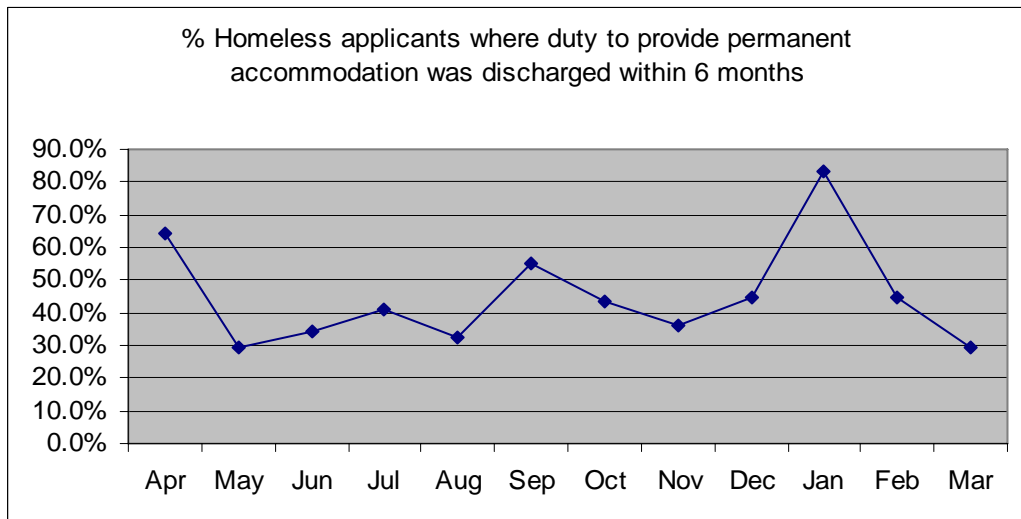


Figure 26

4. HOMELESSNESS AND EQUALITIES

- 4.1 2738 people presented as homeless in 2008-2009 and a total 2778 assessments were completed in that year. Of these assessments 2078 were found to be homeless and 1781 or 86% of these were found to have a priority need as defined in the homelessness legislation.

Gender

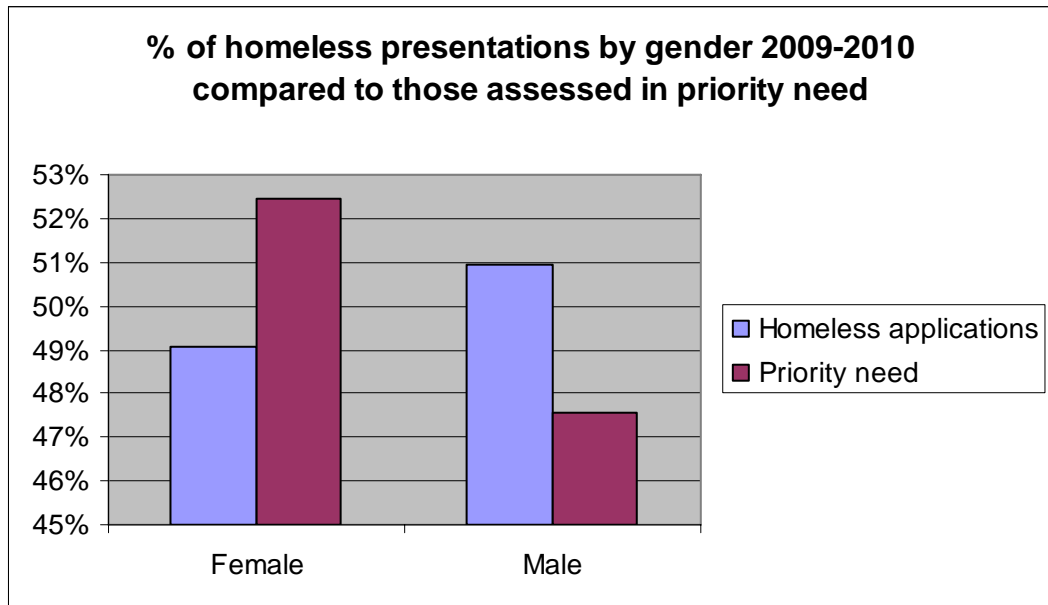


Figure 27

- 4.2 Figure 27 shows that men and women present as homeless in roughly equal proportions (women represent 49% and men 51% of total applicants) but women are more likely to be found to have a priority need compared to men. This is perhaps to be expected as female applicants are more likely to have custody of children when there is a relationship breakdown.

Ethnicity

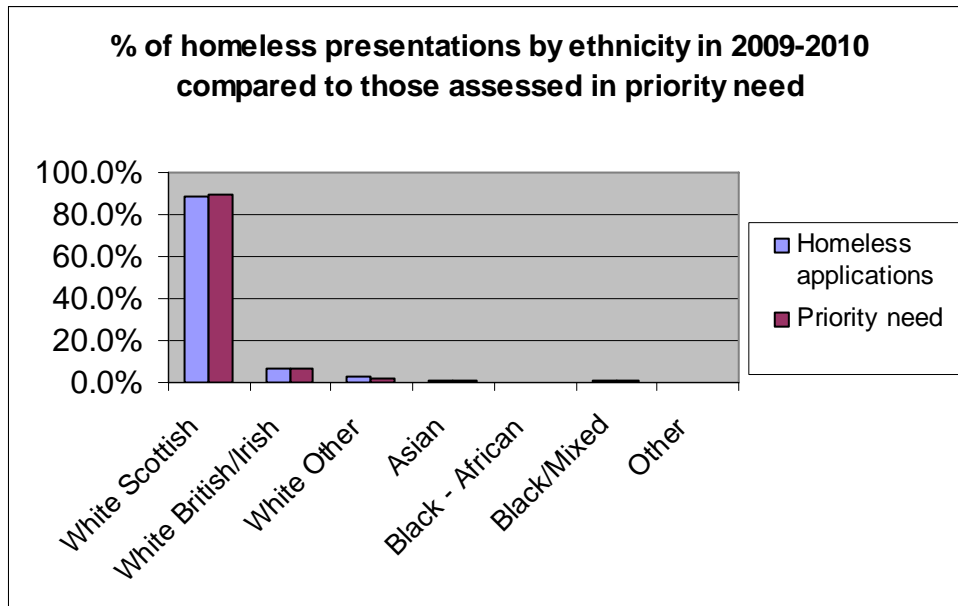


Figure 28

- 4.3 Figure 28 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 are entirely consistent with this which suggests that all applicants are being treated fairly. However, the number of applicants from minority ethnic groups is so small that it is difficult to draw definite conclusions and this issue may warrant more in depth consideration at a later stage.

Age

- 4.4 Figure 29 below 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. It is reasonable to conclude therefore that the homelessness assessment process treats all applicants equally regardless of age.

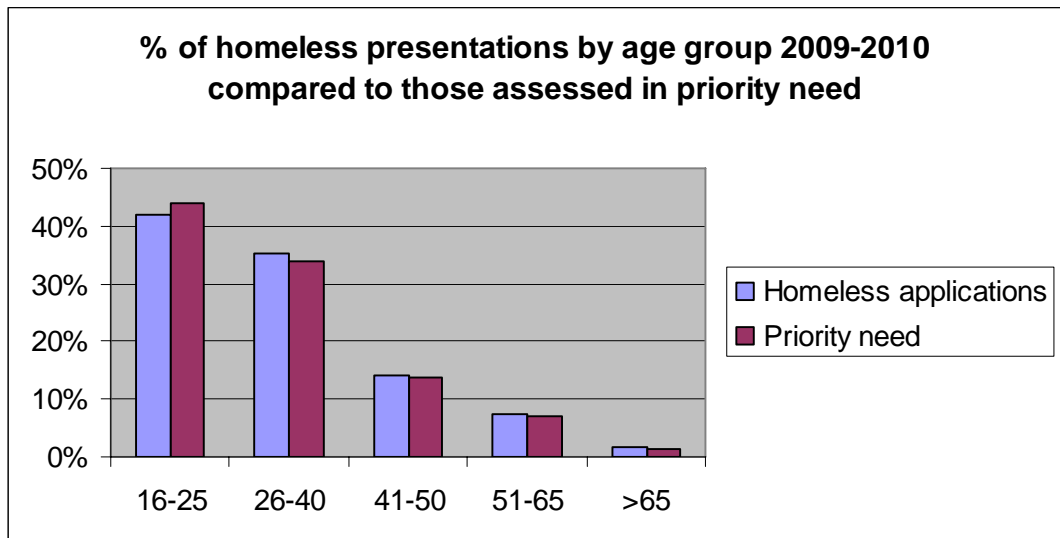


Figure 29

Disability

4.5 Figure 30 below 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 were considered to have a disability and the data suggests that these groups are being treated fairly in terms of the assessment process. It is generally acknowledged that people with a mental illness or personality disorder are more likely to become homeless because of their condition than other people and the data shown below shows that the homelessness assessment process is picking up the fact that such applicants are vulnerable in terms of the homelessness legislation.

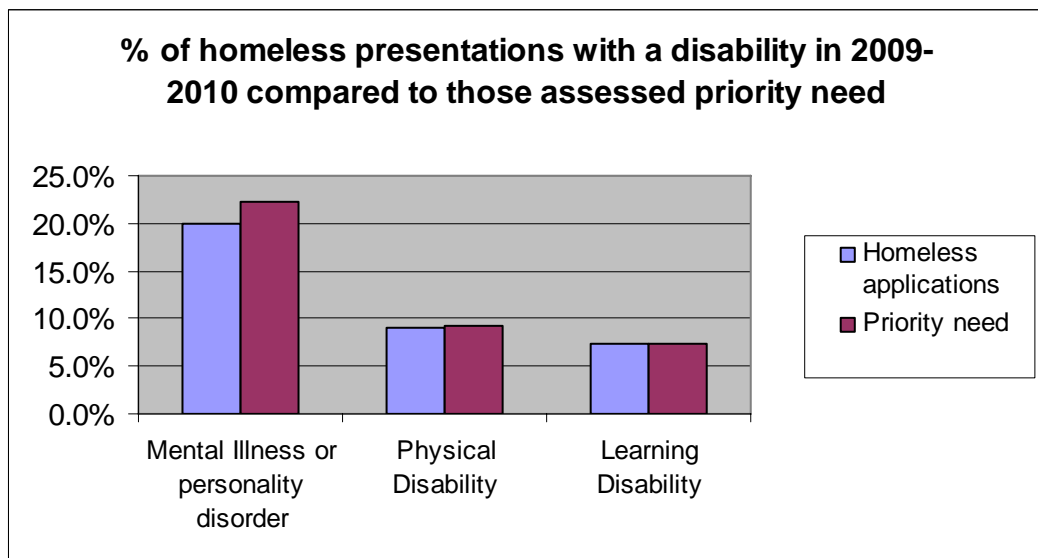


Figure 30

Homeless Service-Users Questionnaires

4.6 All service users are encouraged to complete questionnaires about their experience of the different parts of the service. In terms of reception services at the Accommodation Resource Centre (ARC), 539 questionnaires were returned with only one person indicating dissatisfaction with the services provided.

- 4.7 In relation to the advice and assessment elements of the homelessness process, 177 questionnaires were returned with all but two service users indicating satisfaction with the service they received.
- 4.8 Work is continuing to improve return rates for questionnaires on levels of satisfaction with the temporary/supported accommodation services provided and to look at other methods for obtaining higher rates of service-user feedback taking account of the fact that not all service-users will be comfortable using a questionnaire format. A range of other ways of engaging with service-users is being explored with a view to being implemented in 2010-11.

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 2009-10, 82 homeless applicants appealed the decision made, 12 of the appeals were upheld with the remaining 70 being rejected.

Gender

- 4.10 67% of appeals made were by males and 33% by females. This seems likely to be a result of fewer men being able to demonstrate that they have a priority need than women applicants. However, it is proposed to develop the analysis of appeals data in the coming year in order to be able to compare information on the reasons for an appeal against the various equalities strands to give a more informed picture and ensure equity in terms of the homelessness assessment process.

Ethnicity

- 4.11 96% of those who appealed the decision on their application were White compared to 4% of those from minority ethnic groups. This shows that more people from minority ethnic groups appealed the decision on their case than would have been expected (4% of appeals compared to 2% of total assessments Figure 6 above). However, the numbers concerned are so small (only 3 of the 82 people who appealed their homeless decision were from a minority ethnic group) that the percentage figures perhaps give a false perspective on the situation. Nevertheless, this issue will be considered further in the coming year.

Age

- 4.12 34% of appeals were made by applicants in the 16-25 age group and 35% by the 26-40 and 30% from the 41-60 age group. There are slightly more appeals from the older age group compared to the overall population of applicants.

Disability

- 4.13 6% of applicants making an appeal indicated they or a member of their household had a learning disability, 4% a physical disability and 18% a mental illness or personality disorder. The grounds for appeal were not based on the disability of the applicant.

Actions Required

4.14 This analysis for our performance management framework has highlighted a number of actions to be carried out to promote equality and ensure that there is no discrimination. These include targeting quality control on minority homeless applicants who are assessed as Neither Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness, improving procedures for assessing eligibility for homelessness, and ensuring minority ethnic applicants are given enough information about housing options.

5. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

5.1 The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan set out a total of 60 initiatives (127 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 the Actions which had target dates before 31 March 2010 as summarised below:

- 38 actions have been completed,
- 27 actions are in progress,
- 30 actions have not progressed in the planned timescale as many are fundamental to the forthcoming restructure to accommodate the housing options approach – it is hoped that these actions will move forward significantly within the next year.

5.2 Of those actions which have been completed, the following are worthy of particular mention:

- Development of Quickstart Furniture Scheme – this Public Social Partnership has involved significant joint working with Grangemouth Enterprises Ltd, Falkirk Homeless Project and the Community Recycling Network for Scotland (CRNS). The scheme was successful in winning CRNS's Local Authority Partnership Award. To date, over 350 homeless households have benefited from the scheme. Work is ongoing to increase the community benefits offered by this initiative in terms of recycling/waste-management and employment and training opportunities.
- Senior Worker (Homelessness Support) – this new generic post has been created following job redesign in respect of the previous posts of Senior Social Worker (Homelessness) and Community Psychiatric Nurse seconded from NHS Forth Valley. This post will play a key role in the coming year reviewing all the housing support and supported accommodation projects that provide services for homeless people in the Council area and in developing performance measures for homelessness support activities,
- Support Needs Assessments for all homeless applicants are now routinely undertaken and have helped the Council to achieve the 2009 Interim Target set by the Scottish Government,
- The Homelessness Strategy was successfully launched in June 2009 at an event attended by 150 delegates from a wide range of organisations involved in partnership work that delivers services for homeless people in the Council area,
- Quality assurance measures have been established for all temporary accommodation and Bed and Breakfast facilities used by the Council to ensure that all meet appropriate standards,
- Links have been established with Forth Valley Mediation Service who now offer mediation services to help young people and their parents to resolve any difficulties which may result in future homelessness,

- A Temporary Accommodation Plan has been developed and is being continuously reviewed to take account of the supply and demand of accommodation in different sectors,
- Section 5 protocols with RSL partners are in operation and working well with the result that 43% of RSL lets are now going to homeless people,
- A Protocol for dealing with homeless applicants who have mental health problems has been agreed with NHS Forth Valley and is now being implemented,

5.3 Some actions have taken longer than anticipated to complete whilst others have been completed sooner than planned - this reflects the complex nature of many of the actions where a significant number require the ongoing co-operation of a range of Council Services and other agencies. In addition, some actions have not been completed because further guidance or new legislation is awaited from the Scottish Government, e.g. in relation to the use of the private rented sector to discharge duty under Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and in relation to duties to migrant workers. There has also had to be some re-prioritising of actions in order to manage other priorities such as the implementation of the Council's new house lettings scheme although, in the longer term, this should have a beneficial impact on levels of homelessness in the area.

5.4 Implementation of the Action Plan is also affected by new issues and opportunities that can arise. For example, an opportunity arose to apply to the Fairer Scotland Fund for resources to employ additional staff to provide debt and welfare benefits advice and funding was also made available to develop the *Smart Skills* initiative which runs alongside the Cyrenians' rent deposit guarantee scheme. Whilst the bids for funding have been successful and these initiatives now make a positive contribution to the homelessness strategy, pursuing these initiatives has impacted on some elements of the Action Plan.

6. CHALLENGES FOR 2010-11

6.1 As noted in Section 1 of this report, the current economic climate is likely to bring additional pressures for the Council in respect of homelessness. Coming on top of years of an upward trend in homeless presentations, it seems likely that homelessness will continue to be a challenge for the Council, and its partners, 2010-11. 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.

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

- redesigning housing services to provide expert advice and assistance on the range of housing options available to applicants in the context of a finite supply of affordable rented housing,
- continuing to increase the range of affordable housing options in the Council area by maximising the use of resources to build new homes either by the Council itself or through partnership work with RSLs, and the application of the Affordable Housing Policy in appropriate circumstances,
- facilitating access to accommodation in the private rented sector which has the potential to play a more significant role in meeting local housing needs,
- implementing the new choice-based Housing Allocations Policy that will focus on housing those who are most in need and aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the allocations process,
- launching new publicity material about local housing options, including how to avoid homelessness,
- reviewing housing support services to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of tenants who are struggling to maintain their accommodation or who need interim accommodation to prepare them to live more independently in the community,
- reviewing 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,
- reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation,
- increasing the amount of temporary accommodation in the private rented sector.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 There has been significant progress in taking forward the Homelessness Strategy that was approved in December 2008 but challenges remain. Integration of the Homelessness Strategy with the next full Local Housing Strategy (LHS) which will be published in 2011 is vital if the overall vision of the Strategy is to be achieved.
- 7.2 Partnership working will continue to be necessary, particularly in relation to supporting people who are vulnerable. Initiatives with Social Work and Health will continue to be developed in an effort to (a) prevent homelessness from occurring by providing people with the support they need to manage their lives better and (b) to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness where prevention has not proved possible. Increased partnership with the private rented sector, facilitated by proposed changes to the legislation, should also help to reduce the extent of homelessness in the area.
- 7.3 Work will be required on an ongoing basis to assist those who face financial difficulties by helping them to manage their debt and gain access to any welfare benefits to which they are entitled. In the coming year work will be carried out jointly by the Council and its RSL partners to see if arrears management processes can be improved to identify cases where the individuals either cannot or will not engage at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.4 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.
- 7.5 However, the provision of a sufficient supply of good quality affordable housing is the key to tackling Scotland's homelessness problem and there are significant hurdles that have to be overcome in delivering this. In 2010 Falkirk Council will complete work on a Housing Need and Demand Assessment which will underpin the next LHS (to be published in 2011) and will seek to demonstrate the need for more affordable housing in the area in order to justify resource allocations from the Scottish Government. The preparation of robust annual Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs) will clearly be an important means of ensuring that the Falkirk Council area gets an appropriate share of the national resources available for meeting housing needs.

Performance Management Framework for the Homelessness Service

1. Introduction

1.1 The key elements of the proposed Performance Management Framework for the Homelessness Service are as follows:

- Performance Reporting
- Quality Control
- ISO Accreditation

2. Overview of Performance reporting

2.1 The proposed Performance Management Framework for the Homelessness Service is broken down into 3 levels of performance reporting as follows:

Level 1: Reporting to the Best Value Forum and the Departmental Management Team

Level 2: Reporting to the Senior Management Team

Level 3: Reporting to the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group

Level 4: Reporting to Operational Management & Staff Teams

3. Level 1 Reporting

3.1 The following high level indicators are to be presented in Covalent to the Best Value Forum on a quarterly basis, and to Departmental Management Team on a monthly basis:

HSH1.1.	% of notification decisions issued within 28 days
HSH1.2.	% of new tenancies sustained for 12 months
HSH1.3.	% Homeless applicants where duty to provide permanent accommodation was discharged over previous 12 months
HSH1.4.	% of offers of permanent accommodation to Homeseeker category

3.2 Management of performance for these indicators will be facilitated through an intervention framework, which holds senior managers accountable when performance dips below agreed thresholds.

4. Level 2 Reporting

- 4.1 The following high level indicators are to be presented in Covalent to the Senior Management Team on a monthly basis along with level 1 indicators:

HSH2.1.	% of cases reassessed as homeless/potentially homeless
HSH2.2.	% of homeless applicants assessed as in priority need
HSH2.3.	% of homeless applicants in temporary accommodation who are in B&B accommodation

- 4.2 Management of performance for these indicators will also be facilitated through an intervention framework, which holds senior managers accountable when performance dips below agreed thresholds.

5. Level 3 Reporting

- 5.1 A range of lower level performance indicators are to be presented in Covalent to the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group on a monthly basis. The indicators to be reported monthly to the Homelessness Implementation Group are shown below. These reports are to be augmented by Topic Focus reports, which are in depth analyses on areas such as equalities and tenancy sustainment.
- 5.2 Management of performance for these indicators will also be facilitated through an intervention framework, which holds 5th tier managers accountable when performance dips below agreed thresholds.

HOM3.1.	Total homelessness presentations
HOM3.2.	% of homeless tenancies sustained for 12 months
HOM3.3.	Total homelessness applicants
HOM3.4.	Total applicants with homeless points for longer than 6 months
HOM3.5.	% of homeless applicants housed within 6 months
HOM3.6.	Average days in B&B before leaving
HOM3.7.	Average days in Council temporary accommodation before leaving
HOM3.8.	% of void properties turned around within 7 working days
HOM3.9.	% of non-KPI assessments completed within 28 days

HOM3.10.	% of interviews commenced within 1 day
HOM3.11.	% of reception satisfaction surveys with positive response
HOM3.12.	% of assessment satisfaction surveys with positive response
HOM3.13.	% of temporary accommodation surveys with positive response

6. Level 4 Reporting

6.1 A further range of operational indicators are to be provided to managers and operational staff on a weekly and monthly basis. The monthly indicators are set out below. An overview of key issues will be prepared with each monthly report. The report will be reviewed at Accommodation Services team meetings and actions agreed to improve the service will be documented and reviewed at future meetings.

- Total appeals by reason
- % of appeals completed on target
- Total complaints by reason
- % of complaints completed on target
- % of supervision/APDR completed which were due
- % days lost through sickness absence
- Total applicants in B&B / temporary accommodation for 25+ weeks
- Weekly B&B expenditure
- Total arrears as a % of income due
- % of application forms input within 1 day
- % of interviews completed within 45 minutes
- Cases completed within 28 days by caseworker
- Total housing options interviews completed
- Total assessments by assessment decision
- % of applicants threatened with homelessness who have duty discharged before they become homeless
- % of furniture packages provided within target timescale
- Lets to homeless applicants through RSLs

6.2 A weekly operational exception report is to be distributed to all Homelessness staff and managers each week along with an overview of key issues for attention. These issues are to be raised at weekly team meetings and improvement actions noted in the following week's report. The following exception indicators are included in the weekly report:

- Total appeals outwith target
- Total complaints/enquiries outwith target
- Outstanding cases by case worker
- Outstanding cases by case worker (over 21 days)
- Outstanding cases by case worker (over 35 days)
- Temporary accommodation visits overdue
- Vacant temporary accommodation properties and days vacant

6. Quality Control

- 6.1 Quality control of between 10 and 15 homelessness assessment decisions will be carried out by the Performance Development Team each month and a report detailing the findings will be circulated to managers and operation al staff with the monthly operational performance report. A feedback meeting will be held with the Homelessness Assessment Manager who will raise any issues with individual Assessment Officers during supervision.

7. ISO Accreditation

- 7.1 The Service will work towards ISO:9001 certification for the Homelessness Service by November 2010. Key activities will include developing a management system that incorporates a range of standards and procedures, and implementing a programme of audits to monitor compliance.