

AGENDA ITEM 5

Falkirk Council

Title: Homelessness & Allocations Outcomes Report 2016/17

Meeting: Scrutiny Committee (Internal)

Date: 5 October 2017

Submitted By: Director of Corporate & Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on homelessness and allocation outcomes during 2016/17.
- 1.2 The Annual Homeless Statement (Appendix 1) sets out the current nature and extent of homeless in Falkirk compared to the national picture and progress made in tackling homelessness.
- 1.3 The Allocations Outcome Report (Appendix 2) provides statistical information on housing allocations during 2016/17 to assess whether the allocation policy continues to meet its objectives. It also highlights aspects of the allocation policy for further review.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 1) note the key homeless trends and future challenges for the homeless service within Falkirk**
- 2) note the allocation outcomes for 2016/17**
- 3) note the areas where further analysis and consultation on potential changes to the allocation policy will be carried out**
- 4) consider if allocations is an area for further scrutiny**

3. Background

- 3.1 Falkirk Council's allocation and homeless policies must comply with a number of statutory responsibilities as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

- 3.2 There is also a legal obligation under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult both tenant groups and individual service users over policy matters likely to significantly affect them.
- 3.3 In addition to compliance with the legal framework, all housing policies are also expected to meet the outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, particularly in relation to Equalities; Housing Options; Access to Housing and Tenancy Sustainment indicators.
- 3.4 The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is the sole strategic document on housing, homelessness and support. Housing policies must therefore take account of the LHS and local needs and circumstances.
- 3.5 Falkirk Council introduced a Choice Based Letting (CBL) scheme in 2010. This method of allocating properties provides an open and transparent system that reflects the preferences, choices and aspirations of applicants, within the context of available housing stock. Whilst, Home Spot offers choice and flexibility to all applicants, it also recognises those in most housing need, ensuring that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations.

4. Annual Homeless Statement 2016/17

- 4.1 The Annual Homeless Statement 2016/17 is attached in Appendix 1. This document brings together homelessness and housing advice issues in a format that is accessible to key stakeholders. It covers the three stages of homeless assessment i.e.: application; assessment and outcome.
- 4.2 The key findings in 2016/17 are:-

Applications

- 1,142 homeless applications were made. This was 75 cases (7%) more than the number of applications received in 2015/16.
- Although there has been a slight rise in applications in 2016/17, the number of homeless applications has reduced by half compared to 2010.
- The main reasons for homeless applications remain unchanged i.e.: dispute within the household/relationship breakdown (25%) or being asked to leave (28%).

Assessments

- 80% of applicants (911 out of 1,142 applications) were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness. The remaining 20% resolved their homelessness prior to decision or lost contact.
- 775 cases were assessed as unintentionally homeless/threatened with homelessness
- Repeat homelessness has reduced slightly from 2.8% to 2.2%.
- The proportion of homeless applicants who have been assessed as requiring at least one support need has increased from 84% to 87% between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Temporary Accommodation

- 195 households were placed in temporary accommodation, an increase of 9 from the previous year.
- 48 households included children, a 6% decrease (3 households) from the previous year.
- There were 62 children in temporary accommodation during 2016/17, a reduction of 20 from 2015/16.
- There were no breaches of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation Scotland) Order 2014.
- Bed & Breakfast accommodation was not used in Falkirk, despite an increase in the use of this type of accommodation nationally.

Outcomes

- 520 cases (77%) secured a social rented tenancy; 4% secured a private rented tenancy.
- The overall proportion of lost contact or outcome unknown has remained consistent since 2014/15.

- 4.3. In summary, the Annual Homelessness Statement shows that there was a slight increase in the number of people seeking housing options advice and presenting as homeless during 2016/17. We were able to find secure accommodation for 75% of homeless applicants within 6 months of their presentation. We provided housing support and temporary accommodation to those who required it, without using any bed and breakfast facilities. However, with more pressure being placed on our services we need to ensure that we continue to work in a co-ordinated, collaborative and effective way. Future considerations for homelessness are outlined in Section 6 of this report.

5. Allocation Outcomes Report 2016/17

- 5.1 The Allocations Outcome Report 2016/17 is attached as Appendix 2. This report provides statistical information on letting outcomes to enable an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Allocation Policy with regard to its overall objectives. These objectives include ensuring applicants with the greatest housing need are rehoused; making better use of the housing stock and providing housing applicants with more choice.

- 5.2 The Allocations Outcome Report is divided into 10 sections:

Section 1 - The introduction briefly explains how Home Spot works.

Section 2 - An overview of the housing waiting list, providing information on the demographics of applicants and their housing requirements.

Section 3 - A review of the bid activity to inform the level of demand for housing and from which groups.

Section 4 - The sequencing of properties is analysed to ensure that each group has received the allocated quota of a third each and ensures that this is sequenced fairly and evenly in terms of the allocation area, size and types of properties.

Section 5 – An analysis of properties let within the year. The numbers of properties available for let in each month is recorded along with the area, house type and size to analyse the level of turnover in a year.

Section 6 – An analysis of lets to applicants. This section examines lets within each of the applicant groups (i.e.: Home Seeker, Home Starter, Home Mover) and also Housing with Care which is housing for elderly people. It also looks at the priority (i.e.: banding award) of the applicants that were rehoused. This is to analyse availability of housing for all applicants.

Section 7 – An analysis of the length of time people waited to be rehoused after being awarded their priority banding. Again, this is important to ensure that the allocation policy is rehousing applicants in greatest housing need quickly as well as enabling other applicants the opportunity to be rehoused.

Section 8 – An analysis of lets to local applicants

Section 9 – Provides equalities information

Section 10 – Future considerations

5.3 The key points to note from the Allocation Outcome Report 2016/17 are:

- There are 10,858 applicants on the housing list including 100 applicants for Housing with Care. The percentage of applicants in each group is noted below:

Home Mover	28%
Home Starter	68%
Home Seeker	3%
Housing with Care	1%
- 4,076 applicants (38%) made a bid during 2016/17, compared to 42% during 2015/16. This indicates that more than half of the applicants who currently have a live housing application are not actively seeking to be rehoused.
- The average number of bids per week was 652, with 57% placed online; the remainder were placed either by telephone or visit to the office. A more user friendly Home Spot website was launched in July 2017 and it is hoped the new layout and design will encourage more applicants to bid on-line.
- 1,125 general needs properties were advertised during 2016/17 (498 of these were re-adverts), a reduction of 243 properties compared to 2015/16. Properties were advertised equally across the 3 applicant groups for the first advert. If a property is not let after the first advert, it is re-advertised and all groups are able to bid.

- 1,404 properties were let during 2016/17, a decrease of 10 properties compared to 2015/16. Turnover of properties (i.e. properties that became available for re-letting) was 8.1% last year which is comparable with the national average.
- Properties are sequenced and advertised equally across all groups. However, this is not reflective of applicants who are actually rehoused. Analysis has shown that properties which are re-advertised as “All Groups” are mostly accepted by Home Starters who are the largest category on the housing list. The list below shows how lets were distributed across each group:

	16/17	15/16
Home Seekers	31%	25%
Home Movers	25%	27%
Home Starters	41%	46%
Housing with Care	3%	2%

- The priority banding of the applicants who were rehoused in 2016/17 are noted below. This shows that over half of all lets were to Band 1 applicants i.e.: those with the greatest housing need.

	16/17	15/16
Band 1	53%	46%
Band 2	21%	22%
Band 3	16%	21%
Band 4	7%	9%
Housing with Care	3%	2%

- The information below, broken into each applicant group, shows the percentage of applicants that were rehoused within 6 months of priority award:

	16/17	15/16
Home Mover	33%	41%
Home Starter	53%	54%
Home Seeker	75%	73%
Housing with Care	65%	74%

- 55% of all applicants were housed in less than 6 months of applying and a further 21% were rehoused within 12 months. 89% of all applicants were housed within 2 years of applying, compared to 87.5% in 2015/16.
- An average of 39% of lets went to local applicants (i.e. moved within the same area)
- The gender breakdown of the housing list is 55% female applicants / 45% male applicants. The gender breakdown of applicants rehoused during 2016/17 is 57% female / 43% male, consistent with the housing list.

- The age profile of applicants is:

13% applicants are under 25 years
 33% applicants are aged 26 – 40 years
 31% applicants are aged 41 – 60 years
 23% applicants are aged over 60

- The age profile of applicant rehoused is:

26% under 25 years
 35% 26 – 40 years
 26% 41 – 60 years
 13% over 60 years

- 5.4 In summary, the Allocations Outcomes Report confirms that the policy continues to meet its overall objectives, recognising the limitations of stock availability. In general, the outcomes are comparable to previous years, although further analysis will be carried out where potential issues are identified. Areas for further analysis and consideration are detailed in Section 7.

6. Future Considerations - Homelessness

- 6.1 With a continued trend of homeless presentations and a duty to rehouse households, we need to ensure that there is a suitable supply of affordable housing options in the Council area. We will do this by maximising the use of resources to develop new affordable homes built either by the Council or through partnership work with RSLs, property buybacks and through the application of the Affordable Housing Policy in appropriate circumstances.
- 6.2 The Scottish Government are currently consulting on a potential change to The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2014 to reduce the period of time (14 days to 7 days) that families and pregnant women can stay in unsuitable accommodation. Although this will not affect Falkirk at this present time, as we do not currently use Bed and Breakfast accommodation, plans need to be in place to ensure that this duty can be met.
- 6.3 Regional Housing Options Hubs were established across Scotland to promote a housing options approach to homelessness prevention. The Housing Options Hubs have recently collaborated to commission a unique housing options training tool to ensure that there is a consistency to the delivery of housing options advice across Scotland. The training toolkit will roll out in 2018.
- 6.4 The Hubs are also contributing to the Prison Based Housing Options 'Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' (SHORE) project. This will ensure that the housing needs of individuals on remand or serving short sentences are handled at an early stage and in a consistent manner and ensure that people leaving prison can access the same services and accommodation as those living in the community.

In Falkirk, we have an outreach homeless assessment officer who visits prisoners to assess their housing needs prior to release.

- 6.5 Work is ongoing with our partners to ensure that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are able to access primary health care services that will improve their health and help to prevent them from becoming homeless in the future. We will also continue to work with our partners dealing with mental health and drug and alcohol dependency to ensure that support continues to be provided.
- 6.6 Initiatives with Children's Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership will continue to be necessary to assist in the prevention of homelessness. Where it is not possible to prevent homelessness, more work will be required to help households to sustain their accommodation arrangements and to prevent them from becoming homeless. An example of our joint approach with Children's Services is the review and re-launch of the Care Leavers Protocol. We will work collaboratively to ensure that all young people leaving care have access to appropriate support and accommodation.
- 6.7 In addressing homelessness and the reasons for this, an important element is to assess the support needs of individual applicants. Our housing support service aims to assess needs and identify an appropriate service to meet those needs. Following a review of our housing support service, Loretto Care were contracted in April 2017 to provide a tenancy support service within the community which offers outreach support to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness. Loretto Care also manage 3 supported accommodation units offering 24 hour on site support for young people, families and those with multiple needs. The units offer support to homeless applicants who are not yet ready to sustain their own tenancy and require additional support. The housing support service has been developed to meet the changing needs and demands of service users. It has been designed to be flexible and responsive to future demands.
- 6.8 The roll out of welfare reform changes means that we will continue to work with partners to identify vulnerable tenants to ensure appropriate measures and supports are implemented.

7. Future Considerations - Allocations

- 7.1 The analysis of the allocations outcomes and stakeholder feedback has highlighted some areas that require more detailed consideration and may require changes to the allocation policy. These areas also include some issues carried forward from the 2015/16 Allocations Outcome Report. It is proposed that further consideration and consultation will be carried out on these matters over the coming months and that a further report will be submitted for Members consideration following the consultation exercise.

7.2 Tenant Incentive Scheme

The Tenant Incentive Scheme has been in place since 1 April 2013. The aim of the scheme is to try and encourage tenants living in larger, family sized properties that are too big for them to move to smaller properties.

Over the past 4 years there has been a limited uptake, with applications falling year on year.

Consideration and consultation on options regarding the future continuation of the Tenant Incentive Scheme for Downsizing will be undertaken.

7.3 Under Occupancy

The Council requires to give reasonable preference to applicants who under-occupy their property. Since 2010, Band 1 priority has been awarded to applicants who are under occupying their current tenancies, regardless of whether they have 1, 2 or more spare bedrooms. Analysis has shown that 67% of Band 1 Home Movers have been awarded this priority for under-occupation, which is very high. This is also inconsistent with the way priority for overcrowding is awarded.

It is proposed that consultation is undertaken on aligning the application of Band 1 priority for under-occupation with overcrowding i.e. Band 1 priority applied in cases of under-occupation by 2 or more bedrooms.

7.4 Time Limited Priority for Band 1 Applicants

Band 1 priority is the highest level of housing priority that can be awarded and reflects an urgent need for rehousing. Under the current allocation policy only Home Seekers are time limited for an offer due to the Council's statutory obligations under homeless legislation. All other applicants awarded Band 1 retain their priority without time limit, however this means that some applicants who are assessed as requiring urgent rehousing are on the housing list for a considerable period of time, without bidding for properties that could be suitable for their needs.

Analysis has been on-going to ascertain the number of applicants who have had their priority for over 12 months. Consideration will be given to carrying out a regular review of applicants who have Band 1 priority and offering assistance to help move them to more suitable accommodation. It is not the intention to remove priority from applicants who have an urgent need for rehousing.

7.5 Applicants with Multiple Priorities

Applicants are only awarded one level of banding based on their most urgent housing need. It is acknowledged that some applicants who have multiple and complex housing issues could fall under several priorities (e.g. homeless and in a wheelchair).

Analysis has shown that the majority of applicants with multiple housing priority needs are rehoused within reasonable timescales. There is however cases where due to the applicant's exceptional housing needs, it is more difficult to find suitable accommodation e.g.: delayed discharge from hospital cases. Due to the small number of cases involved and where the situation is not covered by the allocation policy, it is proposed that these are considered under the exceptional need priority category. Guidance in the implementation of Exceptional Needs will be reviewed and expanded.

7.6 Arrears Suspension Policy

Applicants who owe more than a month's rent are automatically suspended until they have made an arrangement to clear their debt and that arrangement has been in place for 13 weeks. It is proposed to amend the wording within the policy to make it clearer to tenants of their obligation to clear their current debt before being made an offer of housing.

7.7 Housing with Care

In partnership with the Integration Joint Board, a Housing Contribution Group has been established, to explore and identify opportunities to support the delivery of elderly and disabled housing accommodation. This includes a review of Housing with Care Level 2 accommodation and the appropriateness of existing accommodation going forward.

7.8 Local Letting Initiatives

There are currently two Local Letting Initiatives in place within Falkirk i.e.: Multi Storey Flat Letting and New Build Council Properties. We are required to regularly review the outcomes of our local letting initiatives and information within the Allocations Outcome Report provides further information.

7.9 Mental Health

An increasing number of applicants are applying for rehousing due to mental health issues. Whilst, the functional needs assessment process looks specifically at the physical suitability of a property, applicants with mental health issues can be awarded a Band 2 for social need if a medical professional has confirmed that the applicant's current housing situation is exacerbating their condition and a move of house would significantly improve their condition. When assessing both mental and physical health issues for rehousing, it is not the health condition that is being assessed but the suitability of the current housing and future housing to meet the applicants' needs.

A review of guidance on how we assess mental health issues will be carried out to ensure this is explained more explicitly. Housing staff will also raise awareness of the allocations policy with other interested stakeholders.

7.10 Letting Quotas

The data within this report shows that all vacant properties were advertised equally, however the outcome of the lets thereafter differs. Analysis shows that 46% of lets went to home starters, 27% to home movers and 25% to home seekers. This profile is consistent with the housing list profile. As properties are firstly advertised on an equal sequence basis this ensures that all categories are equal opportunity to bid for houses. If properties are not let, they are then re-advertised under All Groups to allow everyone the opportunity to bid. The property is then let on the highest banding in line with the allocation policy. It is not proposed to change the letting quota as every group has equal access to all properties and those in greatest housing need have opportunities to bid for properties. Letting quotas will continue to be analysed and reviewed on an annual basis.

7.11 Care Leavers Housing Options Protocol

A draft Housing Options Protocol for care leavers is being jointly drafted between Housing Services and Children's Services and will thereafter be submitted to Executive. The Allocations Policy and all relevant procedures will be reviewed thereafter to ensure that it meets all the recommendations of the protocol.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The Council is obliged to carry out a consultation process prior to amending the Allocations Policy. Consultation on the above issues will be undertaken through the Tenants Forum, involving the Registered Tenants Organisations and developing a questionnaire and publicity campaign to ensure all applicants and stakeholders are given the opportunity to participate. The outcomes of the consultation will thereafter be reported back.

9. Implications

Financial

- 9.1 There are no financial implications.

Resources

- 9.2 No additional resources required. Services will continue to be provided within existing resources.

Legal

- 9.3 The Council must ensure that it meets all its legal obligations in terms of statutory legislation. Further guidance from the Scottish Government on a number of housing issues is awaited. Policies and procedures will continue to be monitored to ensure they meet statutory and good practice requirements.

Risk

- 9.4 No risks identified

Equalities

- 9.5 As necessary, an Equalities & Poverty Impact Assessment will be carried out following the consultation process on any proposed changes and reported back to Members.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 9.6 Not applicable.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 The Homelessness and Allocations Outcome Reports provide an update on homelessness and lettings activity during 2016/17. The reports evaluate the effectiveness of our approaches to preventing and addressing the issues of homelessness and the Allocations Policy with regard to meeting housing needs, making better use of the housing stock and providing housing applicants with more choice.
- 10.2 The statistical data has shown that whilst our approaches to homelessness and allocations continue to meet its objectives, a number of issues that require further analysis and consultation have been highlighted.
- 10.3 Whilst there is clearly a link between homelessness and the overall supply of affordable housing, it is evident that a shortfall of affordable housing is not the only cause of homelessness. Poverty, substance misuse, unemployment and the way the benefits system operates can also be contributory factors. We therefore rely on the commitment and support from other agencies who deliver services to homeless people to assist in addressing and helping to meet housing need.

Director of Corporate & Housing Services

**Author – Elizabeth Hood, Access to Manager, 01324 590820,
elizabeth.hood@falkirk.gov.uk**

Date: 20 September 2017

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Annual Homelessness Statement 2016/17

Appendix 2 Allocations Outcome Report 2016/17

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- none

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING OPTIONS IN THE FALKIRK AREA



2016/17

Contents

Introduction	2
Key Trends	2
Homeless Applications	4
Housing Options approaches	4
Assessments	11
Temporary Accommodation.....	13
Housing Support.....	14
Outcomes	14
Future Considerations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Notes on Tables.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix A - A Quick Guide to Homelessness Applications.....	19
Appendix B - Summary of current Homelessness legislation.....	20

Introduction

This document gives an overview of key trends and features of homelessness in Falkirk and a comparison to the national homeless picture. It provides information on homelessness applications, assessments, temporary accommodation and outcomes to 31st March 2017.

The Annual Homelessness Statement is prepared alongside Falkirk's Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The LHS is the sole strategic document on housing, homelessness and support issues and integrates homelessness into the wider issues of housing quality and supply.

The Annual Homelessness Statement brings together the main issues relating specifically to homelessness and housing advice in a format that is accessible to key stakeholders.

It covers the three stages of homelessness process; Applications, Assessments and Outcomes.

Key Trends

The key trends for housing options, homelessness and housing support to note in 2016/17 are:

Applications

There were 1,142 applications. This was 75 cases higher than the number of applications received in the same period in 2015-2016.

Although there has been a slight rise in applications in 2016/17 the number of homelessness applications has reduced by half since 2010.

54% of homeless applicants had made an approach for a Housing Options interview prior to (or on the same day) – a decrease of 1% on 2015/16. In Falkirk we complete a dual housing options and homeless assessment to ensure that all prevention options are considered. Therefore **all** homeless applicants have had a Housing options interview.

The main reasons for applying as homeless remained largely unchanged. Dispute within the household/ relationship breakdown is one of the main causes of homelessness applications (25% of all applications) or being asked to leave (28%).

Assessments

80% of applicants (911 assessments out of a total of 1,142) were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness. This proportion has increased from 74% in 2015/16.

775 cases were assessed as unintentionally homeless/threatened with homelessness, and therefore entitled to settled accommodation.

Some applicants are found to be intentionally homeless because they have acted or failed to act deliberately to resolve their housing situation. In Falkirk 12% (or 135 cases) of all homelessness assessments in 2016/17 were found to be intentionally homeless. This proportion has decreased from 16% in 2015/16.

Repeat homelessness has reduced by just over half a percentage point from 2.8% to 2.2%. The proportion of homeless assessments where the applicant had at least one support need has increased from 84% in 2015/16 to 87% for 2016/17.

Temporary accommodation

As at 31 March 2017:-

There were 195 households in temporary accommodation, an increase of 9 households since last year.

Of these households in temporary accommodation, 48 included children – a decrease of 3 households compared with one year earlier.

The number of children in temporary accommodation decreased by 20. From 82 to 62 compared with the same date one year ago.

There were no breaches of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014¹ and there were no placements in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Housing Support

There were 378 individuals housed in supported accommodation during 2016/17.

Supported accommodation was occupied for 85% of the time available.

70% of residents leaving supported accommodation achieved a positive outcome.

Outcomes

For those households assessed as unintentionally homeless (with a right to settled accommodation), 520 cases secured a social rented tenancy (76.5%) or a private rented sector tenancy (3.7%). This proportion has varied slightly from 2015/16 (74% and 3.18%).

An outcome of lost contact or unknown outcome was reported for 0.1% of cases closed which had been assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness. The overall proportion of lost contacts has remained roughly the same since 2014/15, varying between 0.88% and 1.1%

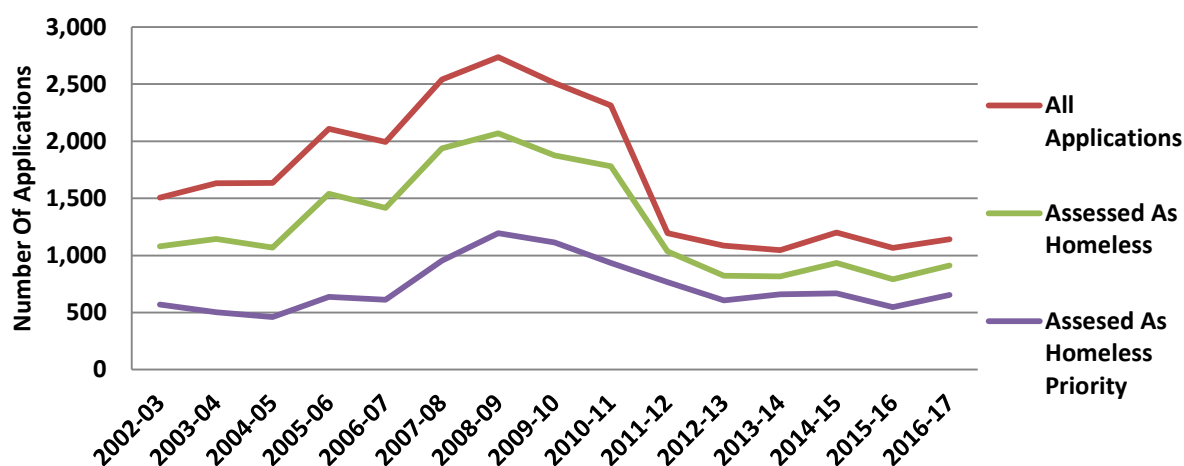
¹ <http://legislation.data.gov.uk/en/ssi/2014/243/made/data.htm?wrap=true>

Homeless Applications

Changes over time

In 2011-12, there was a significant decrease in homeless applications mainly due to the impact of the introduction of Housing Options services and a focus on prevention². Since then the figures have remained around 1,000-1,200. In 2016-17 this trend continued with 1,142 applications. This was an increase of 75 cases (7%) from the previous year.

Chart 1: Falkirk - Number of applications and assessments under the homeless legislation



Housing Options approaches

The underlying drivers of homelessness have remained largely the same over the past few years. However, the introduction of **Housing Options** work in 2010 has resulted in a decrease in the number of homelessness applications. In 2014 the Scottish Government issued further guidance to local authorities on the delivery of housing options advice³.

² Homelessness in Scotland: Annual Publication 2016-17 is published alongside this publication and are available at the same location online. <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables#Publications>

³ The Scottish Government's Housing Options Guidance, was published in March 2016 and is found online at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/6556>

This guidance responded to a set of recommendations from the Scottish Housing Regulator's Housing Options in Scotland - A thematic inquiry, published in May 2014, and found online at: <https://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-options-scotland-thematic-inquiry>

Impact on Homeless Applications and Assessments

There is no evidence to indicate that any one group is being impacted more by housing options work than any other.

At the Scotland level, 63,135 unique households sought assistance from a local authority. 33,307 of those households proceeded to a homeless application (53%). Within Falkirk, 1,985 households presented for Housing Options assistance, of that 57% of cases proceeded to a Homeless Application.

The main reason for approaching for housing advice is for general advice and assistance. This is often as a result of a change in circumstances within the household, the suitability of their current property or being asked to leave. The reasons for approach are split into 'homeless reasons' and 'different from Homeless reasons'. The majority of homeless reasons lead to a homeless presentation, although prevention work to secure the current tenancy does continue, if appropriate.

Table 1 – Falkirk – Housing Options, Reason for approach.

		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
	Reason for Approach			
Homeless Reasons	Termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments	23	17	6
	Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy	29	41	15
	Applicant terminated secure accommodation	6	2	4
	Loss of service / tied accommodation	4	2	2
	Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution	81	49	53
	Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order from Environmental Health etc.)	3	0	0
	Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	7	7	5
	Other reason for loss of accommodation	74	94	128
	Dispute within household: violent or abusive	262	251	249
	Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent	208	132	135
	Fleeing non-domestic violence	8	2	3
	Harassment	60	51	50
	Overcrowding	18	16	3
	Asked to leave	372	275	303
	Other reason for leaving accommodation / household	72	61	87
Different from Homeless Reasons	General housing options advice	627	667	827
	Property condition - disrepair	14	2	5
	Property condition – lacking amenities	1	0	0
	Property condition – fire/flood	0	2	5
	Accommodation unsuitable - Overcrowded	8	3	3
	Accommodation unsuitable – Mobility/ Adaptation Issues	1	1	1
	Accommodation unsuitable – Location	2	2	0
	Household experiencing anti-social behaviour / neighbour problems	0	1	1
	Household experiencing hate crime	0	1	0
	Household member needing care	6	4	4
	Personal issues – affordability / financial difficulties	29	47	63
	Risk of losing accommodation - eviction/ repossession	25	40	7
	Risk of losing accommodation - asked to leave - parents	11	3	0
	Risk of losing accommodation - asked to leave – other family	3	1	0
	Risk of losing accommodation - asked to leave – friends	2	1	0
	Landlord issue - Harassment from private sector landlord	1	1	0
	Landlord issue - Illegal eviction – private sector landlord	11	12	5
	Other	88	42	21
	All	2056	1830	1985

The outcomes for Housing Options advice are difficult to determine as applicants often lose touch with the service as they have just received one off advice or a homeless presentation is taken. We have however improved our recording mechanisms for outcomes and now are able to illustrate the outcomes that we have achieved for applicants.

Table 2 displays the outcomes for housing options cases (disregarding those where a homeless application was completed). It illustrates the effectiveness of the service which has ensured that 52% of those seen have been able to remain in their current accommodation and 22% have secured alternative accommodation. Unfortunately we have lost contact with a number of clients (17%) however this figure has reduced from 33% from the previous year.

Outcomes for Housing Advice 2016/2017

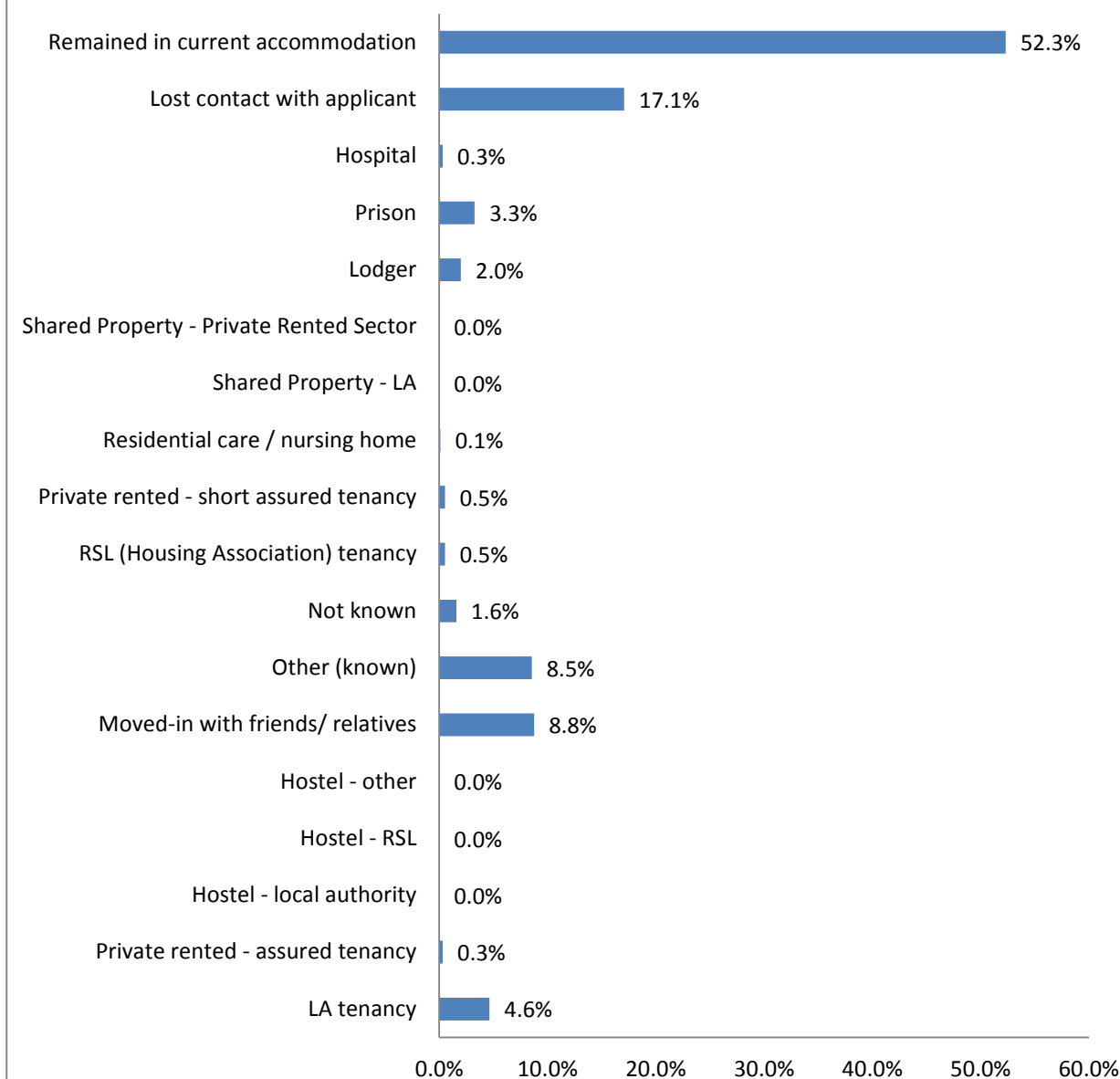


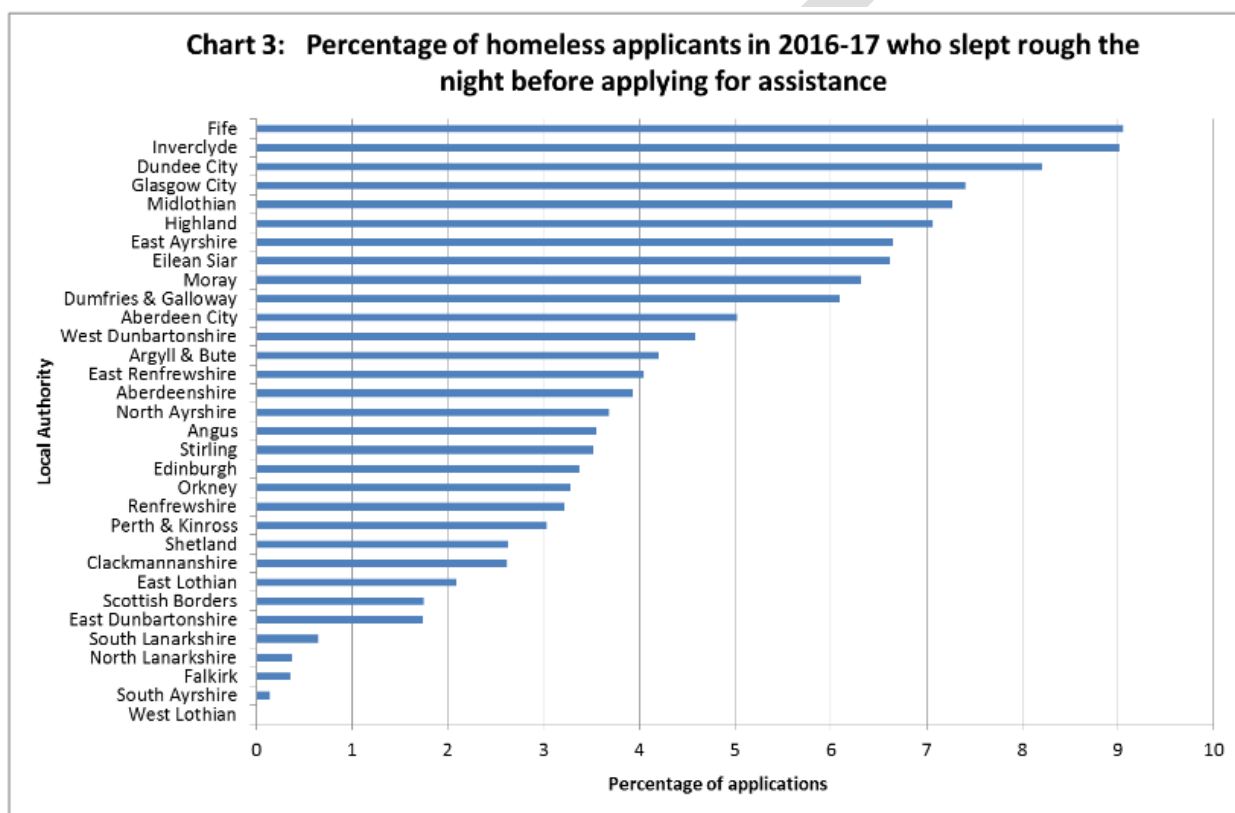
Chart 2: Housing Options Outcomes 2016/17

We are continually working to improve our services to ensure that we are able to give our clients the best outcome that we can. As part of our Housing Options service we are able to give debt and welfare advice from dedicated advisors. This service has made a significant impact with 135 evictions having been halted and £6.3m in benefit secured.

Rough sleeping

Applications where a household member reported rough sleeping at least once during the last 3 months prior to application has remained at 8% nationally since 2013/14. In Falkirk, the comparative level is 1.3%, although there was an increase in 2016/17 from 5 to 10 applicants.

In 2016/17, nationally 10% of applicants (1,500 in total) slept rough the night before applying for assistance (Chart 3). Falkirk had only 5 Cases (1%). One of the lowest in Scotland.



Characteristics of applicants

Over the past decade or so, the characteristics of applicants have not changed much, fluctuating at most by a few percentage points. The majority of applicants tend to be single, males aged 26- 59, of White Scottish ethnicity.

Of the 1,142 applications for assistance in 2016-17:

Age and gender

Over half of applications (64%) were from those aged 26 to 59 years (53% male and 47% female).

Household type

Two-thirds of applications (69%) were from single persons household. Around 24% of applications were from households with children. There were 17.6% of applications from single parent households, most of which were from females (96%).

Ethnicity

84.5% of applicants were of White Scottish ethnicity. This is consistent with the ethnicity distribution of Scotland as shown in Scotland's Census 2011⁴. The proportion of those identifying themselves as in Other ethnic group has increased over time, from about 0.1% in 2002-03 to 1.0% in 2016-17.

Other

Within Falkirk, there were no applications made for homeless assistance from anyone being discharged from the Armed Services. Proportions of applications from these groups have largely remained the same in the last year or so.

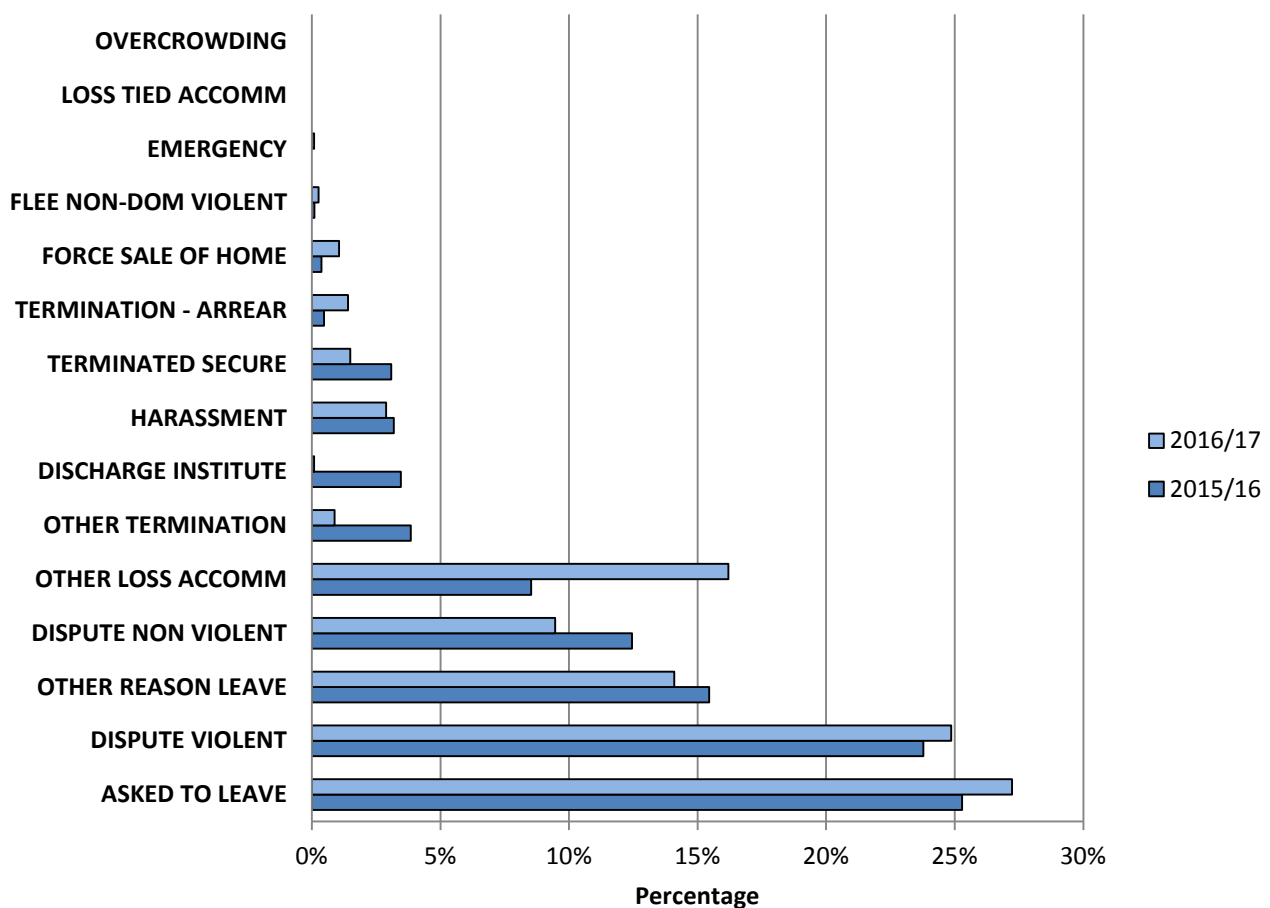
⁴ Further information on the ethnic classifications used is found online at: <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/variables-classification/ethnic-group>

Reasons for homelessness

The main reasons cited for having to leave prior accommodation have remained largely unchanged since 2007/08. Being asked to leave is one of the main causes of homelessness applications (28%). 24% of homelessness applications come from those who have been through a domestic violent dispute, with 9.5% of homeless applicants from a non-violent domestic household dispute.

16% of applicants cited Other Loss of Accommodation as reason for applying for homeless assistance. Meanwhile, the numbers being discharged from institutes has fallen from 5% in 2012/13 to less than 1% of applications in 2016/17.

Chart 5: Main reason for applying for assistance - Falkirk 2015-16 & 2016-17



Homeless Assessments

During the 2016-17 year, 68% of applicants (775 assessments out of a total of 1,142) were assessed as homeless (655) or threatened with homelessness (120). The proportion of applicants assessed as homeless/threatened with homelessness has increased from 60% in 2015-16.

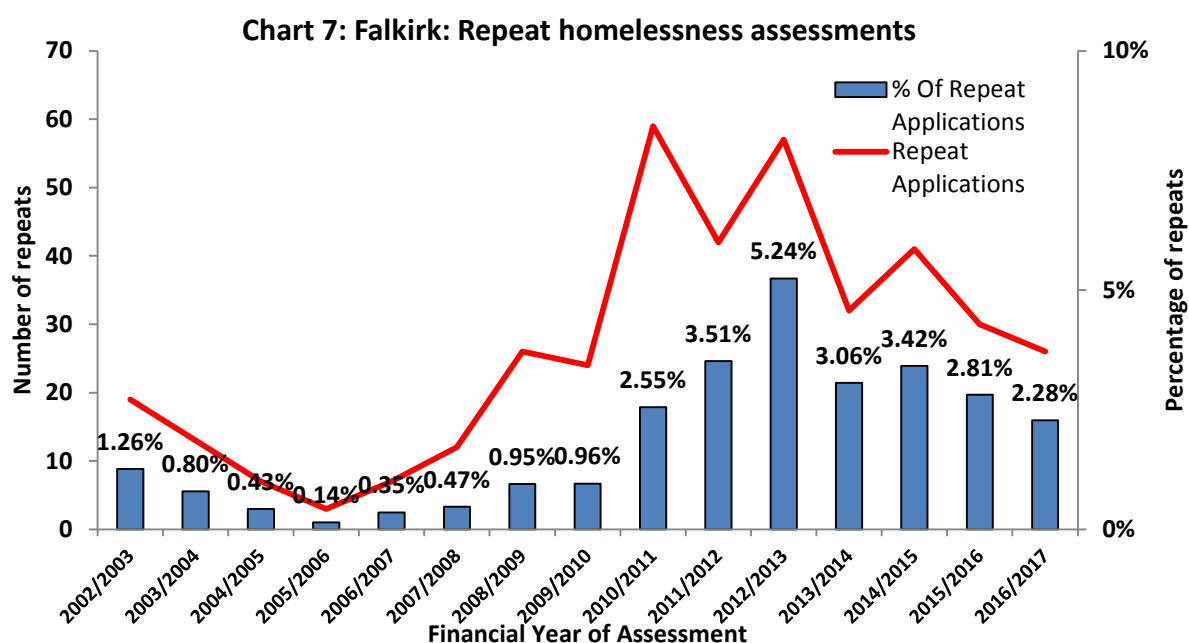
There were 135 applications assessed as intentionally homeless this was 12% of all assessments. However, this proportion has fallen over the last year from 14%.

Prior to the abolition of the priority need test, only those assessed as homeless (or threatened with homelessness) and in priority need would have proceeded to the intentionality test. However, following abolition, all those assessed as homeless (or threatened with homelessness) are tested for intentionality. As a result, more homeless applicants may be found to be intentionally homeless.

The number of applicants that withdrew their application before their assessment decision was 5.2% in 2016/17. 5.7% of applicants resolved their homeless decision before they became homeless. Only 1% of applicants lost contact with Falkirk Council before their assessment decision was made.

Repeat homelessness

The percentage of homeless assessments identified as repeat cases (i.e. where a previous application from the household had been closed less than 12 months before the current assessment⁵) fell from 2.81% in 2015/16 (30 assessments) to 2.28% in 2016/17 (26 assessments). The percentage of repeat applications received by Falkirk Council has fallen for the last three years.

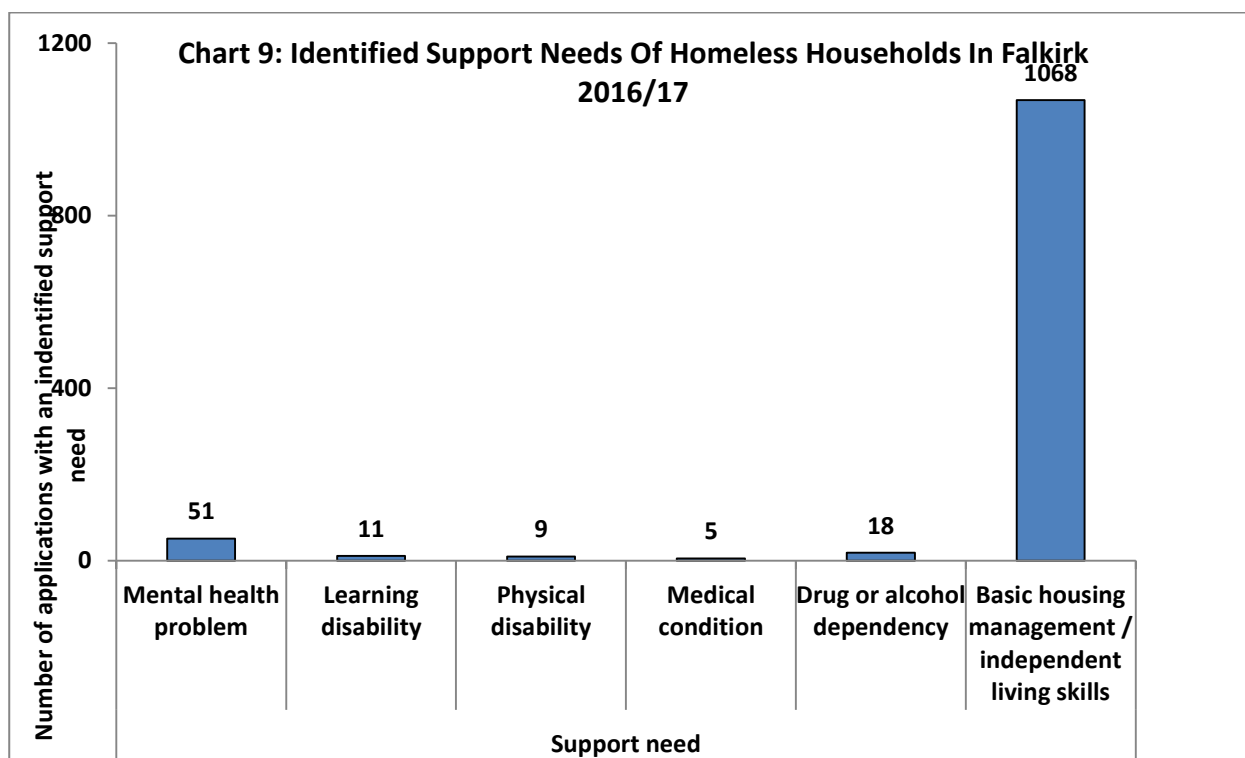


⁵ To be classed as a repeat homelessness assessment the applicant household must (1) be assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in both applications; (2) the previous case must have been closed within 12 months of the current assessment and; (3) the adults and family circumstances also need to be the same in both applications.

Support needs of homeless households

During 2016/17, 1,068 (91%) applicants with support needs cited support for basic housing management and independent living reasons, 4% specified a mental health problem as a support need and 1.5% cited drug or alcohol dependency.

The high level of support needs identified in applications may indicate the more complex situation of cases where an applicant is homeless.



In addressing homelessness and the reasons and consequences for this it is important to consider all the support needs required by each individual household. To meet this requirement Falkirk Council contracts a third sector party to provide tenancy support services within the community and three supported accommodation units.

The Tenancy Support service, delivered by Lorretto Care⁶, offers outreach support to people within their homes. The key focus of this service is to ensure the prevention of homelessness and the sustainment of tenancies. Lorretto Care also manage an additional three supported accommodation units offering 24 hour onsite support for young people, families and those with multiple needs. These accommodation units offer support to those who are homeless but are not yet ready to sustain their own tenancy and require support to learn the skills and responsibilities to do so. This structure has been amended from previous provision to ensure that we are meeting the required need within the area with our young persons supported accommodation unit in Garry Place, Grangemouth now closed to allow us to extend our provision of service to families.

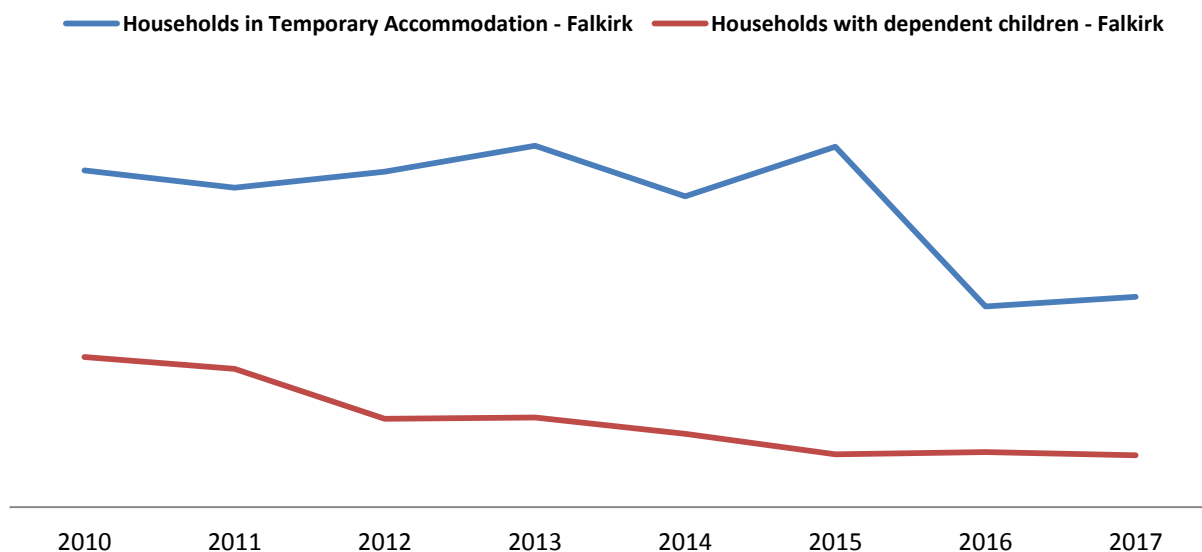
⁶ This contract, previously delivered by YPeople, was awarded through a competitive tendering process in 2017 and commenced on the 1st of April 2017

Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Applicants

Homeless applicants may be placed in temporary accommodation while the Local Authority assesses their application or while awaiting the offer of a permanent housing.

Since 2010, the numbers in temporary accommodation has fluctuated between a high of 335 in 2013 and a low of 186 in 2016. For the reporting period 31 March 2017, 195 households were in temporary accommodation.

Chart 9: Falkirk: Households in temporary accommodation at 31 March each year



From 2010 the number of homelessness applications has been falling mainly as a consequence of the development of homelessness prevention activities by councils adopting a 'housing options' approach to meeting acute housing need. This change in practice has contributed to the overall drop in numbers in temporary accommodation nationally between 2011 and 2014.

On 31 March 2017, the latest snapshot figures reveal that:

There were 196 households in temporary accommodation, an increase of 10 households from last year.

Of these households in temporary accommodation, 48 had children – a decrease of 3 households from the previous year.

The number of children in temporary accommodation also reduced in 2017. The numbers fell from 82 to 62.

Types of Temporary Accommodation Used

The majority of households in temporary accommodation were in Local Authority or Housing Association accommodation (48%), with a further 32% in hostels (20% 'Other Hostel and 12% Local Authority owned hostel facilities). The remaining 20% were in Private Sector Lease temporary accommodation.

Households with children or pregnant women are mainly provided with Local Authority or housing association accommodation (59%), the remaining proportion were placed in PSL accommodation managed by the council.

Offers of Temporary Accommodation

In 2016/17 Falkirk Council made 849 offers of temporary accommodation and 92% of these offers were accepted. This is a decrease from 96% in 2015/16. Further analysis shows that homeless applicants are refusing properties because it does not meet their preferences. We always offer accommodation within the boundaries of the Falkirk Council area and have not used bed and breakfast accommodation since 2013/14.

Time in Temporary Accommodation

The time that applicants spend in temporary accommodation depends on a number of factors including

- the outcome of the household's assessment decision and entitlement to permanent accommodation. If Falkirk Council has a duty to rehouse the applicant then we have to provide temporary accommodation until they have accepted a suitable offer of accommodation
- the time taken to complete their homeless assessment. On average it takes Falkirk Council 20 days to give a decision for a homeless application
- the requirements of the household. If the household has a particular housing or social need that means they need a particular housing type, adapted property or a particular area then this will increase the time they will spend in temporary accommodation as there are less properties available to offer them.
- the number of properties that are available to let from social landlords. If the authority has a duty to find accommodation for the household then they have to have accommodation to offer them. This is found from the normal turn over of stock.
- the quota of properties available on the council's waiting list. Currently the council offers all groups on the waiting list an equal percentage of lets available (33.3% to each group: waiting list, transfer and homeless applicants).

Taking these factors into consideration, our applicants stay in temporary accommodation for an average of 87.3 days. This is in line with the 2015/16 national average of 91.73 days. On average applicants stay in Falkirk Council owned temporary accommodation for 122 days and Private Sector Leased accommodation for 116 days. Our supported accommodation is designed to offer short term temporary accommodation until the applicant has gained the skills or proven they have the skills to move onto a mainstream tenancy or a normal temporary accommodation property. On average those in supported accommodation stay for 46 days.

Housing Support

A redesign of our tenancy support services which includes our supported accommodation and outreach tenancy support services has been undertaken. Following a procurement

exercise Loretto Care were appointed to deliver our young persons supported accommodation unit, outreach tenancy support services and our multiple needs dispersed accommodation service from April 2017.

Last year our outreach tenancy support service, which was delivered through Ypeople, supported 343 individuals. On average, people were supported for a period of 6 months until it is determined that they are able to cope in their own tenancy.

The Castings assessment unit, which Falkirk Council operates, had 75.3% of its occupants leaving with a positive housing outcome. Our young persons supported accommodation units and our multiple need unit (operated by Ypeople and Loretto Care) achieved 69.1% occupancy last year and 65.3% of those moving on, move to a positive outcome. Those not achieving a positive outcome have abandoned their placement.

As part of the review for the delivery of supported accommodation, evidence revealed that the need for two separate young persons units was not required. The spaces available at our Seaforth complex was increased from 15 to 17. Our Castings assessment centre also increased its facility from 21 to 24. A new unit 24 hour supported accommodation facility has also been established in Grangemouth to address an identified need for accommodation that will support families. Within this there is capacity for shared accommodation for a small number of young people. This mixed setting will provide those with low support needs a realistic outlook of what having a tenancy of their own will be like. It is anticipated that the increase within these three units should fulfil demand.

Outcomes for Homeless Applicants

Households assessed as unintentionally homeless have a right to settled accommodation - this is usually a Scottish Secure Tenancy with a local authority landlord or Housing Association, or an assured tenancy in the private rented sector.

In 2016/17, just over three quarters of unintentionally homeless households secured settled accommodation (436 or 77% of unintentionally homeless households which had an outcome). This proportion has increased slightly from the previous year (423 cases, 74%)

Contact Lost / Unknown Outcomes

In 2016-17, Falkirk Council closed 1,038 cases. Of these, following an assessment of homeless or threatened with homelessness, contact was maintained until case closure for 972 applications (93% of cases). An outcome of lost contact or unknown outcome was reported for just over 6% of cases. The overall proportion of lost contacts or unknown outcomes within Falkirk has been reducing consistently from 2011/12 (21%)

Future Considerations

As this report highlights Falkirk Council has experienced an increase in the number of people seeking housing options advice and presenting as homeless during 2016/17. With more pressure being placed on our services we need to ensure that we are able to work in a coordinated and effective way to ensure that we get the right services to people at a time when they need them.

Falkirk's 'Strategic Outcomes and Local Delivery (SOLD) Plan 2016-2020' priorities seek to,

- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Maximising job creation and employability
- Minimising the impact of substance misuse
- Addressing the impact of poverty on children

The Access to Housing and Community Advice Team strives to ensure that we work towards achieving these priorities through the services that we deliver.

Many of our challenges going forward address the priorities stated within the SOLD and our Local Housing Strategy. Over the coming year the following challenges have been identified. These are detailed below.

- With an increase in homeless presentations and a duty to rehouse households we need to ensure that there is a suitable supply of affordable housing options in the Council area. We will do this by maximising the use of resources to develop new affordable homes built either by the Council or through partnership work with RSLs, and the application of the Affordable Housing Policy in appropriate circumstances. Since 2011 we have added 1,468 properties into our social housing stock. We have committed within our new LHS to build an additional 2,456 properties by 2021 and provide new affordable housing options.
- As a local authority we have a duty to produce and supply information on the offers and time in temporary accommodation. In 2016/17 we reported an increase in the time spent in temporary accommodation from 74 days to 87 days. This increase has been identified as a direct result of a number of longer term applicants who we have managed to be successfully rehoused. We have implemented new procedures to ensure that all applicants in temporary accommodation are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the time spent in temporary accommodation is as short as possible.
- The Scottish Government are currently consulting on a potential change to The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2014⁷ to reduce the period of time that families and pregnant women can stay in unsuitable accommodation from 14 days to 7 days. Although this will not affect our authority at this present time as we have not used Bed and Breakfast accommodation in recent years, we cannot rule out the potential need to use this in the future. The decrease in the number of days that we would be able to house homeless applicants in this accommodation will place additional pressures on our

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2004/489/made>

current temporary accommodation stock. If the outcome of the consultation reduces the order stipulations to 7 days we will assess our position and put in place plans to ensure that we can meet this duty.

- In 2010 the Scottish Government established 5 'Housing Options Hubs' with local authorities across Scotland. Falkirk is a member of the East of Scotland Housing Options Hub⁸. The hubs were given a remit for the prevention of homelessness through a housing options approach. Since their establishment there have been a number of successful projects launched. The Hubs have recently collaborated to commission a unique housing options training tool which will be utilised by a number of organisations to ensure that there is a consistency in the delivery of housing options advice across Scotland. It is planned that the training toolkit will be rolled out in 2018.
- Since the publication of the Scottish Governments Housing Options guidance in March 2016 local authorities have been applying the principles of the guidance within their services and reporting the outcomes within the prevent 1 monitoring system⁹. There is an ongoing review of housing options guidance to provide further guidance and clarity on the delivery of housing options for information providers.
- The East of Scotland Housing Options Hub have been contributing to the Prison Based Housing Options 'Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' (SHORE). This will ensure that the housing needs of individuals on remand or serving short sentences are handled at an early stage and in a consistent manner and ensure that people leaving prison can access the same services and accommodation as those living in the community.
- The integration of Health and Social Work has provided opportunities for further partnership working in relation to housing and housing priorities. Our Local Housing Strategy highlights the work that is ongoing and planned to assist the elderly and disabled to remain at home longer. In addition, we will continue to work with our partners to ensure that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are able to access primary health care services that will improve their health and help to prevent them from becoming homeless in the future. We will also continue to work with our partners dealing with mental health and drug and alcohol dependency to ensure that support continues to be provided.
- The continuous roll out of universal credit which merges means tests benefits such as housing benefit, income support, job seekers allowance, working tax credit and child tax credits. Benefits are being paid direct to the household monthly in arrears rather than the current fortnightly system. It is anticipated that there will be a significant impact on rent arrears across the social rented sector. We continue to work with partners to identify vulnerable tenants to ensure appropriate measures and supports are put in place/implemented.

⁸ <http://www.eastscotlandhousingoptions.co.uk/>

⁹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/introductionprevent1>

- Partnership working will continue to be necessary to take this challenging agenda forward, particularly in relation to supporting people who are particularly vulnerable. Initiatives with Children's Services, Social Work and the Health & Social Care Partnership will continue to be necessary to assist in the prevention of homelessness from occurring by providing people with the support they need to manage their lives better. Where it is not possible to prevent homelessness completely, more work will be required to help households to sustain their new accommodation arrangements and to prevent them from becoming homeless again.
- Whilst there is clearly a link between homelessness and the overall supply of affordable housing which is explored in the Local Housing Strategy, it is evident that a shortfall of affordable housing is not the only cause of homelessness. Poverty, substance misuse, unemployment and the way the benefits system operates can also be contributory factors. We rely on the commitment from other agencies who deliver services to homeless people to assist us in addressing and resolving these problems as it is vital if homelessness is to be prevented and people are to be sustained in accommodation as part of sustainable and inclusive communities.

Appendix A - A Quick Guide to Homelessness Applications

There are **three stages**:

1. The Application stage where the applicant first presents to the Council.
2. The Assessment stage where the Council assesses:
 - a. whether the applicant is homeless;
 - b. if so, whether the applicant made themselves homeless intentionally; and
 - c. if they were unintentionally homeless, and if they have no local connection with the Council area to which they made the application, it may test whether they have a local connection with another Council area.
3. The Outcome stage. The type of accommodation the applicant is entitled to dependant on the Councils assessment decision.

Applicants are entitled to **temporary accommodation**:

- whilst they are awaiting an homeless assessment decision;
- whilst waiting for settled accommodation to be found; or,
- if they are intentionally homeless, then they are provided with temporary accommodation and advice and assistance to help them secure alternative accommodation.

More information on the duty to provide temporary accommodation can be found in the [Code of Guidance on Homelessness](#).

Appendix B Summary of current Homelessness legislation

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, now consolidated into Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, introduced statutory duties on Local Authorities to assist those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (potentially homeless), including providing accommodation in certain circumstances.

The legislation currently requires Local Authorities to make inquiries into the circumstances of applicants to satisfy themselves whether the applicant is homeless or potentially homeless. Once the authority is satisfied this is the case, prior to 31st December 2012, it also determined whether the applicant had a priority need. However, from 31st December 2012, the priority need test has been abolished. The Local Authority then tests whether the applicant became homeless intentionally and, in some cases, whether the applicant has a local connection with another authority in Scotland, England or Wales. A local connection with an authority means that the applicant normally resided in that area from choice, either because he/she was employed in or had family associations with it, or for other special reasons.

Section 24 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, defines homelessness for the purposes of the Act as follows. A person is homeless if he/ she have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere. A person is also homeless if he/ she has accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it, for example because of a threat of violence. A person is potentially homeless (threatened with homelessness) if it is likely that he/ she will become homeless within two months. A person is intentionally homeless if he/ she deliberately did or failed to do anything which led to the loss of accommodation which it was reasonable for him/ her to continue to occupy.

Section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, defined the categories of household regarded as having a priority need for accommodation. Further details can be found in the Code of Guidance on Homelessness. This is available on-line at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366>.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 amends the 1987 Act and requires councils to provide a minimum of temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to all applicants assessed as homeless, regardless of whether they have been assessed as being in priority need. The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 is more long-term in scope, notably introducing a phasing out of the distinction between priority and non-priority applications, and enabling the suspension of the test of local connection. The ultimate aim of the Act was to ensure that everyone assessed as being unintentionally homeless was entitled to settled accommodation from 31st December 2012.

In November 2012, the Scottish Parliament approved the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012 which gave effect to this commitment. From 31st December 2012 the priority need test for homeless households was abolished. As a result, from this date, all unintentionally homeless households are entitled to settled accommodation.

Summary of Local Authority duty to homeless households:

1. Unintentionally homeless [and in priority need]¹⁰

- Provide temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation has been secured.
- Permanent accommodation is defined as:
 - A Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST)
 - An Assured Tenancy (not a Short Assured Tenancy)
 - If the applicants have previously been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years or if they are subject to an anti-social behaviour order - a short Scottish Secure Tenancy can be offered.

In some circumstances, the Local Authority can provide non-permanent accommodation. These circumstances are laid out in the Homeless Persons (Provision of Non-permanent Accommodation) (Scotland) Regulations 2010

Under certain circumstances, a Local Authority may apply a local connection test and refer the applicant to another Local Authority. However, the receiving Local Authority must then secure settled accommodation for the applicant.

2. Intentionally Homeless [and in Priority Need / Homeless and not in Priority Need]:

- Provide temporary accommodation for a reasonable period of time, advice and assistance.

3. Potentially homeless, unintentionally so [and in Priority Need]:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available.

4. Potentially homeless, intentionally so [and in Priority Need / Potentially Homeless and not in Priority Need]:

- Provide advice and assistance to help retain accommodation.

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 came into force on 6 December 2004, and is intended to prevent the routine use of unsuitable temporary accommodation for households with family commitments. Under this Order, Local Authorities cannot put households with children and pregnant women into temporary accommodation which is not suitable, unless exceptional circumstances apply. Unsuitable accommodation is defined in the Order as accommodation which does not meet standards relating to the physical properties of the accommodation (the physical standard), its proximity to health and education services (the proximity standard) and its suitability for use by children (the safety standard).

The 2004 order was revoked by [The Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Order 2014](#), which came into force on the 21st November 2014. The 2014 order adds the additional requirement that the accommodation must be wind and watertight.

¹⁰ If before 31st December 2012.

While the Order provides for exceptional circumstances, in which accommodation which does not meet the physical and/or proximity standards may be used, the safety standard must always be met. Further details can be found in the Code of Guidance available on-line at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366>

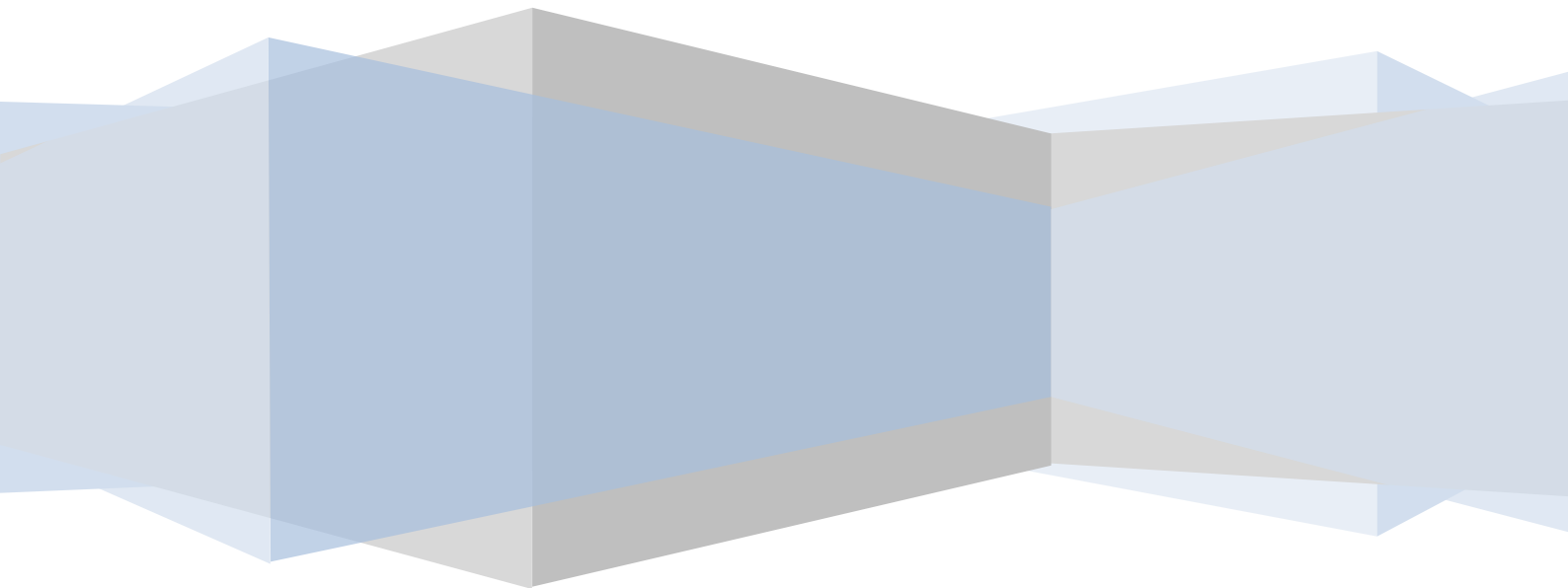
The Housing Support Services (Homelessness) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 came into force on 1st June 2013. These Regulations make provision in relation to the duty of Local Authorities to assess whether some persons found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness (“an applicant”) need housing support services. Regulation 2 prescribes four types of housing support services which apply for the purposes of that duty. If a Local Authority has reason to believe that an applicant may be in need of one or more of these services, it must assess whether the applicant, or any person residing with the applicant, is in need of such support. If so, the Local Authority must ensure that the service is provided to the person who needs it. For further information on these regulations can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/3279/2>.

Falkirk Council

Housing Allocations Outcomes Report

2016 – 2017



Contents

Section 1 – Introduction to HomeSpot	2
Section 2 - Current Housing List: Applicant Groups & Band of Priority	4
Section 3 - Bidding Activity	6
Section 4 - Sequencing and Advertising of Properties	7
Section 5 - Properties Let	10
Section 6 - Applicants housed during 2016/2017	12
Section 7 - Time Applicants Spend in Housing Need	13
Section 8 - Lets to Local Applicants	16
Section 9 - Equalities Analysis of those on the housing list	17
Section 10 – Future Considerations	20

Table	Contents	Page
Table 1	Comparison of number of Applicants by Band of Priority	4
Table 2	Average Weekly Bidding Activity	7
Table 3	Bids by Group and Bands	7
Table 4	Sequencing of Properties	8
Table 5	Properties Advertised by House Type	9
Table 6	Properties Advertised by Size	9
Table 7	Houses Let Each Month	11
Table 8	Houses Let by Allocation Area	12
Table 9	Applicants Housed by Allocation Area	13
Table 10	Breakdown of lets per applicant group/banding	14
Table 11	Home Seeker Lets 2015/16	15
Table 12	Lets to Home Seekers over past 3 years	15
Table 13	Home Mover Lets 2015/16	15
Table 14	Home Starter Lets 2015/16	15
Table 15	All Applicants – comparison of time taken to re-house 2014/15 & 2015/16	16
Table 16	Profiles of Applicants by Age Bands	18

Section 1 – Introduction to HomeSpot

- 1.1 This report provides comprehensive information about Falkirk Council's housing list as at 31 March 2017 and allocation outcomes during 2016-2017. The report seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the Allocations Policy with regard to meeting housing needs, making better use of the housing stock and providing housing applicants with more choice.
- 1.2 Homespot is a Choice Based Letting system which Falkirk Council uses to let its properties. All vacant houses are advertised on the Council's website or in the Homespot Newsletter every week. Applicants are invited to place bids for the properties they are interested in.
- 1.3 Each application is assessed into an Applicant Group and awarded a banding depending on the level of housing need. Applicant Groups are:

Home Seekers: Applicants who are considered to be homeless in terms of housing legislation.

Home Movers: Tenants of Falkirk Council or a Housing Association already living in the Falkirk area and looking to move home.

Home Starters: All other applicants.

- 1.4 Each application is then awarded a banding depending on the level of housing need.

Band 1: Home Seeker; leaving Armed Forces; Care Leavers; significant medical condition/disability; hospital discharge; overcrowding; under-occupation; lacking amenities; regeneration or re-development area.

Band 2: Home Starters with no security of tenure; sharing amenities & overcrowded; overcrowded by 1 bedroom; social need (e.g. where an applicant needs to move to give or receive care and support).

Band 3: Families with children under 10 living in a tenement flat with no access to a shared garden; frequent/regular overnight contact with children and don't have own home; limited independence due to medical condition/disability; local connection to Falkirk area; Home Starter living in house too big; private sector tenants with a short assured tenancy; sharing amenities.

Band 4: Applicants will be awarded Band 4 if they do not have any of the above noted housing needs.

- 1.5 Houses are advertised equally between the 3 Applicant Groups (i.e. we aim to let 33% of properties equally between Home Seekers, Home Movers and Home Starters). There are 10 allocation areas :

- Bo'ness
- Bonnybridge/Banknock

- Braes
- Dawson
- Denny
- Falkirk Central
- Falkirk East
- Falkirk West
- Grangemouth
- Larbert/Stenhousemuir

- 1.6. In order to achieve the Council's target of 33% of mainstream allocations being made to each Applicant Group, an automatic sequencing process is used. The process aims to ensure, over time, that the targets for lets to each applicant group are met in each of the allocation areas and that as even as possible a distribution of properties in terms of size is achieved. This is in recognition of the fact that within each of the applicant groups (Home Seeker, Movers and Starters) there is a range of household types who need accommodation of varying sizes. The sequencing process is complex and takes account of the location, type, size of each property and the date the property became vacant.

The process of sequencing voids is continuous and sequencing for each new edition of the HomeSpot Newsletter starts from the point where it left off from the previous list.

- 1.7 Adapted properties and Housing with Care Level 3 properties are advertised in HomeSpot and let in accordance with agreed procedures however, they are not included in the sequencing process. Housing with Care Level 1 and 2 properties are not advertised and are directly matched to applicants that have been assessed as needing this type of supported housing. As part of the Older Persons Housing Strategy a review of how we allocate housing with care properties is being undertaken. This work forms part of the remit of Housing Contribution Strategy Group and progress is reported to the Integration Joint Board Strategic Planning Group.

Section 2 - Current Housing List: Applicant Groups & Band of Priority

- 2.1 The total number of applicants on the housing list as at 31 March 2017 was 10,858 which included 100 applicants registered for Housing with Care. The table below compares the number of applicants on the housing list at 31 March 2017 with the total number of applicants on the housing list at 1 April 2016 broken down by applicant group and Band of priority.

Table 1 – Comparison of number of Applicants by Band of Priority at 31 March 2017 and 1 April 2016.

	Home Seeker		Home Mover		Home Starter		Total	
	Mar 17	Apr 16	Mar 17	Apr 16	Mar 17	Apr 16	Mar 17	Apr 16
Band 1	323	250	925	836	374	297	1622	1383
Band 2	0	0	443	367	983	865	1426	1232
Band 3	0	0	264	269	4906	4563	5170	4832
Band 4	0	0	1384	1259	1156	1111	2540	2370
Total	323	250	3016	2731	7419	6836	10758	9817
%	3%	2.6%	27.8%	27.8%	68.3%	69.6%		

Main Points to note:

All three mainstream applicant groups have stayed similar.

The proportion of applicants with Band 1 priority for housing has increased from 14.1% in April 2016 to 15.1% in March 2017.

The majority of applicants with Band 1 priority are Home Movers who are under occupying their homes.

The proportion of Home Starter applicants with Band 1 has increased from 21.5% in April 2016 to 23.1% in March 2017.

24% of applicants on the list do not fall into any of the statutory reasonable preference groups and therefore have no housing need. This has remained similar to the figure in April 2016.

There are 100 applicants on the housing list who are seeking Housing with Care. Housing with Care applicants make up 1% of all applicants.

There has been a rise in the number of applications received this year. Whilst demand for housing is increasing, there was an issue with the re-registration process for part of the year which has resulted in a number of applications not being cancelled. This issue has now been rectified.

2.2 **Home Seeker Applicants**

Home Seeker applicants make up 3% of the overall waiting list. As noted in the Annual Homelessness Statement the number of homeless applicants who are unintentionally homeless had fallen in 2015/16 however in 2016/17 we have seen an increase of 75 households. We will continue to monitor this. The effectiveness of our prevention approaches and housing advice will ensure that we are able to prevent homelessness before it occurs.

All 323 applicants with Home Seeker priority are entitled to an offer of permanent housing.

2.3 **Home Mover Applicants**

The percentage of Home Mover applicants in 2016/17 with Band 1 priority has remained at 31%, equal in number to the 2015/16 figure.

Of the 925 Band 1 Home Movers 68% (633) have been awarded priority for under occupying their property; 51% are currently living in a 2 bedroom property; 44% live in a 3 bedroom; and 5% live in a 4 (or more) bedroom property. Outcomes have shown the majority of Band 1 lets to Home Movers are for under-occupation. Falkirk Council is committed to continuing reasonable preference to this category however further analysis is required to be carried into the award of under-occupation.

15% (466) of Home Mover applicants are overcrowded; 2% (56) are lacking 2 bedrooms (Band 1) - 45 of these require a 5 or more bedroom property. 14% are lacking 1 bedroom (Band 2).

16% (480) of Home Mover applicants are living in a tenancy which is unsuitable due to a medical condition.

46% (1384) of all Home Mover applicants have been awarded a Band 4 as they have no housing need as defined by legislation and our Allocation Policy.

2.4 **Home Starters Applicants**

Home Starter applicants make up 68.3% (7,419) of the housing list and this has increased by 583 applicants from 2016.

Although Home Starters are the largest group of applicants, 82% of Home Starters have a low level of housing need 66% (4,906) have Band 3 priority and 16% (1,156) have Band 4 which means they have no housing need.

14% (1,071) of Home Starter applicants are overcrowded; 109 are lacking 2 bedrooms (Band 1) and 962 are lacking 1 bedroom (Band 2).

18% (1,308) of Home Starters are living in Private Tenancies and have no other housing need.

7% (588) of Home Starter applicants are living in a property which is unsuitable due to a medical condition.

Section 3 - Bidding Activity

- 3.1 Properties are advertised weekly and on average 38 properties were advertised each week in 2016/17. Applicants are only able to bid for properties that are advertised for the applicant group they are in or for any properties that are advertised under the All Groups category. Table 2 below shows the average number of bids per week by applicant group. Overall in 2016/17 the average number of bids per week was 652.

Table 2 – Average Weekly Bidding Activity

	2015/16	2016/17
Average No of Properties Advertised per Week	49	38
Average No of Bids From Home Seekers per Week	67	93
Average No of Bids From Home Movers per Week	125	140
Average No of Bids From Home Starters per Week	478	419
Average No of Bids From Housing With Care	1	1

- 3.2 4,076 of all applicants bid for properties during 2016/17 which is 38% of the housing list.

Table 3 – Bids by Group and Bands

Group	Housing with Care	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total
Housing with Care	4	-	-	-	-	4
Home Mover	-	414	265	128	462	1269
Home Seeker	-	729	-	-	-	729
Home Starter	-	292	493	1147	142	2074
Total	4	1435	758	1275	604	4076

The highest number of bids from Band 1 applicants was from Home Seekers. On 31 March 2017 there were 925 Home Mover applicants with Band 1 priority; however during 2016/17 only 414 bids were placed by Home Movers which is just 45% of Home Movers actively bidding. Further analysis and monitoring of bidding activity for Band 1 applicants will be carried out.

The majority of bids received are from Home Starters with Band 3 priority. Analysis shows that this is mainly from applicants currently residing in the private sector.

Section 4 - Sequencing and Advertising of Properties

- 4.1 The table below shows the sequencing of general needs properties by allocation area and applicant group for all advertising cycles during 2016 - 2017. The table shows that 1,125 general needs properties were advertised during 2016 - 2017.

Table 4 – Sequencing of properties

Allocation area	Home Seekers	Home Movers	Home Starters	Total
Bo'ness	34	35	34	103
Bonny/Bank	24	25	24	73
Braes	30	29	31	90
Dawson	39	42	41	122
Denny	40	39	43	122
Falkirk Central	23	25	22	70
Falkirk East	46	47	44	137
Falkirk West	27	28	27	82
Grangemouth	79	81	77	237
Larb/Shm	31	30	28	89
Total No.	373	381	371	1125
Total %	33%	34%	33%	100%

In addition to the 1,125 properties above, a further 195 properties were advertised for “Adapted” and 61 Housing with Care Level 3 properties have also been advertised during the year with applicants over 60 years of age being eligible to bid for these properties.

- 4.2. Applicants can only bid on properties that have been advertised for their group (e.g. Home Seeker is only able to bid on Home Seeker advertised properties). However, if there are no suitable bids received from applicants in the advertised category then properties will be re-advertised the following week under the category “All Groups”. This allows any applicant to bid for the property and the property is then let on the basis of priority need (i.e. banding) and date of award. In 2016/17, 353 properties were re advertised for “All Groups”, resulting in a total of 498 adverts. The majority of the lets advertised under All Groups were let to Home Starters.

4.3 Properties Advertised by House Type

The table below shows the number of adverts by house type.

Table 5 – Properties Advertised by House Type

Allocation area	4-in-a-block	Flat	House	Total
Bo'ness	50	106	31	187
Bonny/Bank	12	38	54	104
Braes	50	36	57	143
Dawson	49	174	8	231
Denny	32	176	36	244
Falkirk Central	6	99	16	121
Falkirk East	42	96	57	195
Falkirk West	54	64	9	127
Grangemouth	42	335	24	401
Larbert/Stenhousemuir	22	53	59	134
Total No.	359	1177	351	1887
Total %	19%	62%	19%	100%

Two thirds properties advertised (62%) were tenement flats and high rise flats with the remainder of properties being evenly split between houses and 4-in-a-blocks.

However these proportions vary with allocations area, for example, in Grangemouth nearly 83.5% of available properties were flats with only 6% of available properties being houses. This can create problems where applicants are trying to meet their housing aspirations as well as their housing needs.

4.4 Properties Advertised by Size

The table below shows the number of adverts by size.

Table 6 – Properties Advertised by Size

Allocation area	1 + 2 beds	3 beds	4 beds +	Total
Bo'ness	125	55	7	187
Bonny/Bank	73	30	1	104
Braes	103	35	5	143
Dawson	172	58	1	231
Denny	112	128	4	244
Falkirk Central	108	11	2	121
Falkirk East	167	25	3	195
Falkirk West	100	27	0	127
Grangemouth	318	81	2	401
Larbert/Stenhousemuir	97	35	2	134
Total No.	1375	485	27	1887
Total %	73%	26%	1%	100%

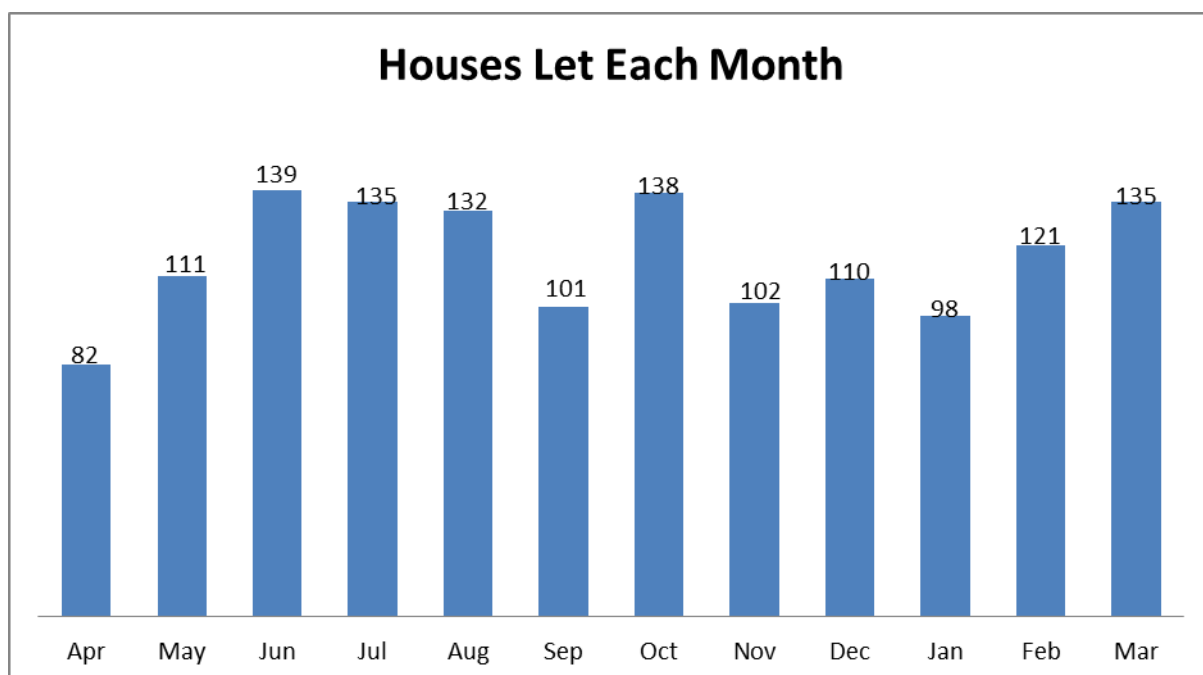
There were 388 one bedroom adverts with one quarter of these advertised as Adapted or Housing with Care Level 3.

Section 5 - Properties Let

5.1 Number of Properties Let Each Month

From 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, 1,404 properties were let across the Council. The number of properties let per month is set out in the table below. This is a decrease of 10 properties from 2015/16. The percentage of turn over of our stock which we can re let was 8.1% in 2016/17 and our properties are on average re-let within 33 days.

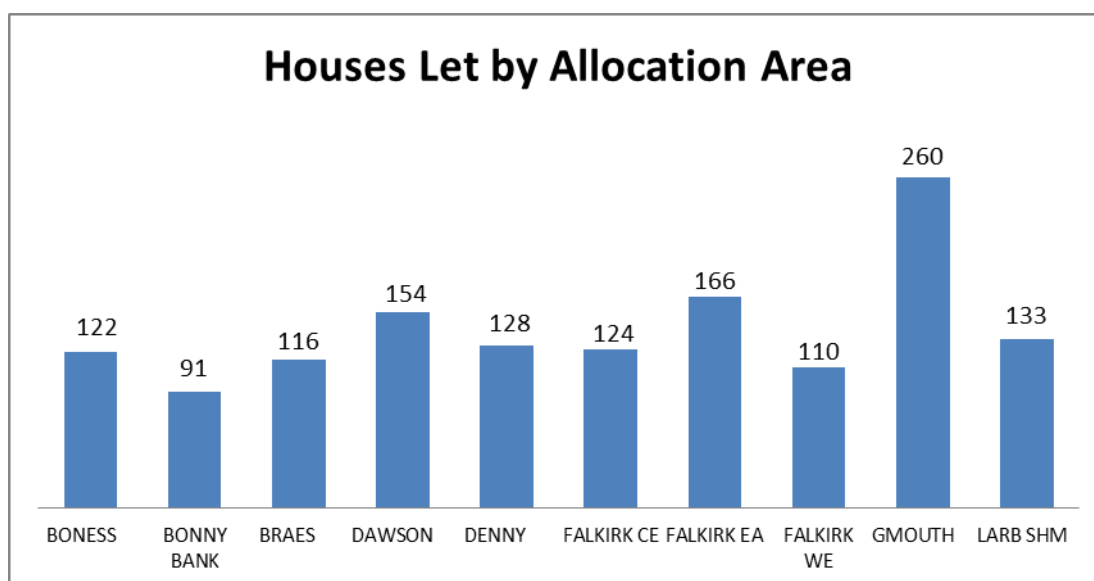
Table 7 – Houses Let Each Month



5.2 Number of Properties let in Allocations Areas

The chart below shows the breakdown of properties let by allocations area. The allocations area with the most lets was Grangemouth with 260 properties let during the year, followed by Falkirk East with 202 properties. The Bonny Bank area had the fewest lets with 91 properties being let.

Table 8 – Houses Let by Allocation Area



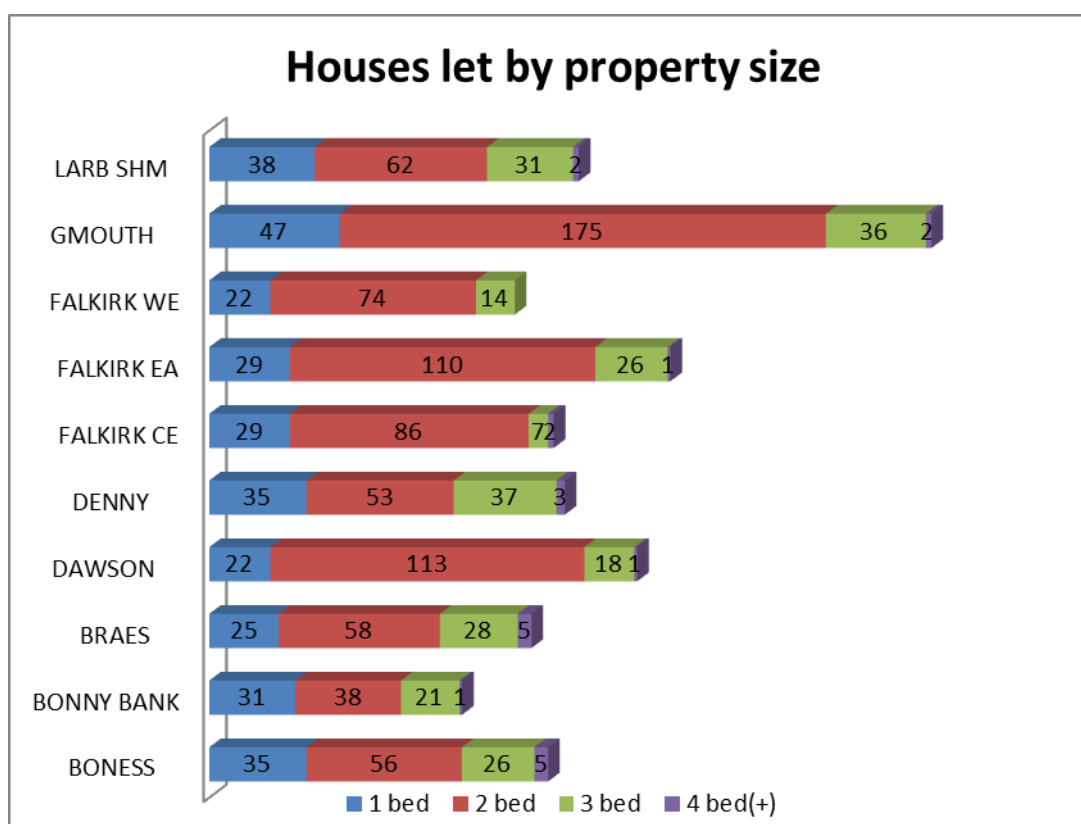
5.3 Size of Properties Let

22.3% (313 properties) let had 1 bedroom.

58.8% (825) properties let had 2 bedrooms

17.4% (244 properties) had 3 bedrooms

Only 22 properties (1.6%) of lets had 4 or more bedrooms.



Turnover of properties (i.e. properties that became available for re-letting) was 8.1% last year which is comparable with the national average.

Section 6 - Applicants housed during 2016/2017

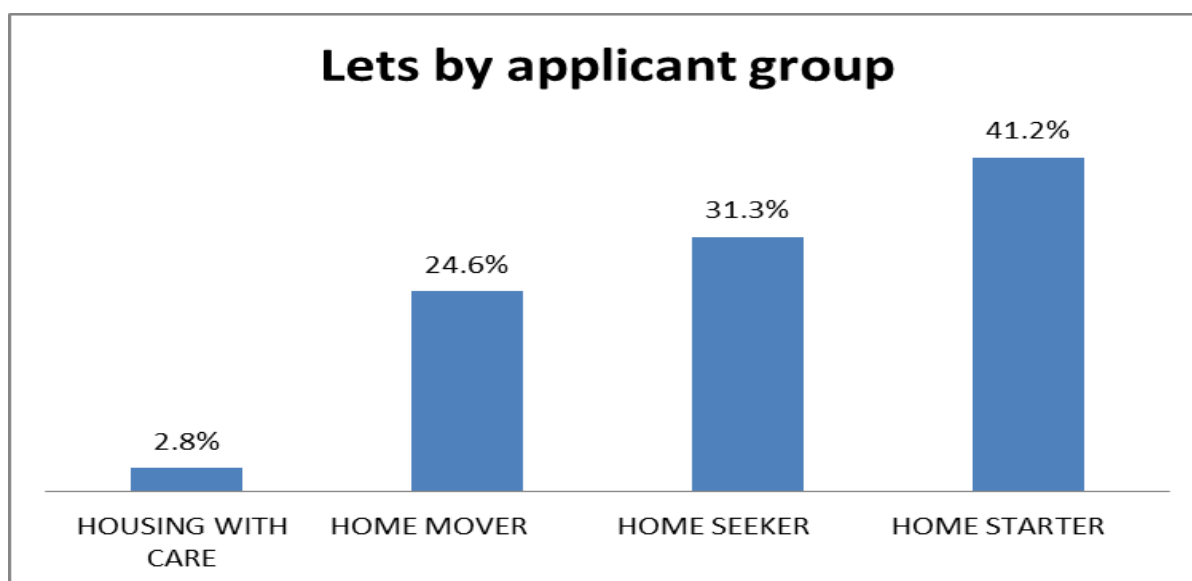
6.1 The table below shows the number of lets by applicant group and allocation areas during 2015 - 2016.

Table 9 – Applicants Housed By Allocation Area

Area	Housing with Care	Home Mover	Home Seeker	Home Starter	Total
Bo'ness	4	27	33	58	122
Bonny/Bank	0	31	25	35	91
Braes	0	32	38	46	116
Dawson	0	29	48	77	154
Denny	8	31	36	53	128
Falkirk Central	22	28	26	48	124
Falkirk East	1	47	63	55	166
Falkirk West	4	27	42	37	110
Grangemouth	0	49	86	125	260
Larb/Shm	1	45	42	45	133
Total	40	346	439	579	1404

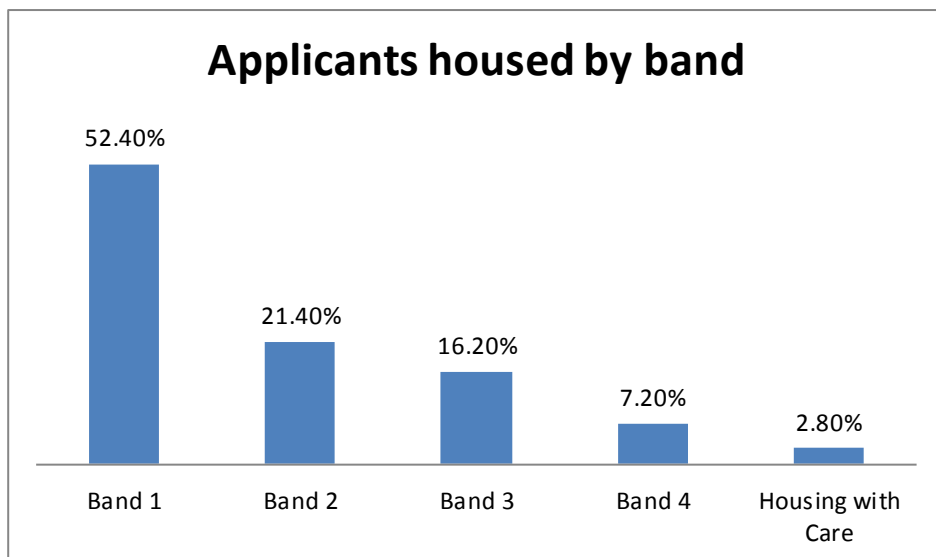
The outcome of all lets during the period, including Housing with Care properties, is as follows:-

- 31% of lets were to Home Seeker applicants,
- 25% of lets to Home Mover applicants
- 41% of lets were to Home Starter applicants
- 3% of lets were made to applicants needing Housing with Care



6.2 Meeting Housing Needs

Lets have also been analysed based on the Band of priority of the successful applicant. The majority of lets were to band 1 applicants.



73.8% of applicants have either Band 1 or Band 2 priority which indicates that the policy is effective in meeting housing needs and that lets are routinely made to those applicants in the greatest housing need.

Our homeless applicants (home seekers) all have a band 1 award and therefore make up the highest majority of band 1 applicants. The majority of our home starter applicants are awarded a band 2 or 3 priority, where as the majority of Home movers have a band 1 status

Table 10 – Breakdown of lets per applicant group/banding

Applicants Housed	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	HwC	Total
Home Mover	173	64	20	89	0	346
Home Seeker	439	0	0	0	0	439
Home Starter	124	236	207	12	0	579
Housing with Care	0	0	0	0	40	40
Total	736	300	227	101	40	1404

Section 7 - Time Applicants Spend in Housing Need

7.1 The tables below show the length of time that applicants spent in housing need (by applicant group) before accepting an offer of housing. 89% of all applicants were housed within 2 years of applying for housing.

Table 12 – Home Seekers Lets 2016/17

Applicant Group	< 6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	> 10 years	Total
HOME SEEKER	331	79	22	7	0	0	439
	75%	18%	5%	2%	0%	0%	439

Table 13 – Length of time home seekers are in housing need 2014-2017

Time taken to rehouse Home Seeker applicants	< 6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	> 10 years	Total
2014/15	78%	17%	4%	2%	0%	0%	520
2015/16	73%	19%	5%	3%	0%	0%	408
2016/17	75%	18%	5%	2%	0%	0%	439

This table shows the trend over the past 3 years.

Table 14 – Home Mover Lets 2016/17

Applicant Priority	< 6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	> 10 years	Total
B1	67	47	34	21	4	0	173
B2	18	12	18	13	3	0	64
B3	6	6	5	3	0	0	20
B4	24	20	18	18	8	1	89
Total	33%	25%	22%	16%	4%	0.3%	346

33% of Home Movers were housed in less than 6 months of being awarded their priority and 58% of Home Movers were housed within one year of being awarded their priority.

Table 15 – Home Starter Lets 2016/17

Applicant Priority	< 6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	> 10 years	Total
B1	68	24	21	11	0	0	124
B2	153	38	31	8	6	0	236
B3	76	56	30	37	6	2	207
B4	7	4	0	0	1	0	12
Total	53%	21%	14%	10%	2%	0%	579

53% of Home Starters were housed in less than 6 months of being awarded their priority and 74% of Home Starters were housed within one year of being awarded their priority.

Housing with Care Lets 2016/17

65% of Housing with Care applicants were housed in less than 6 months of their Housing with Care assessment. Applicants moving into Housing with Care are able to move more quickly than applicants moving into general needs housing.

Section 8 - Lets to Local Applicants

8.1 An analysis has been carried out to assess the percentage of applicants who were housed in the same allocations area as the application address.

The results show that 553 (39%) applicants are housed in the same allocations area as the application address.

Allocations Area	From Bo'ness	From Bonny Bank	From Braes	From Dawson	From Denny	From Falkirk Central	From Falkirk East	From Falkirk West	From G'mouth	From Larbert/S'muir	From Outwith Falkirk Council Area	Total
To Bo'ness	77	0	4	1	0	3	5	4	14	3	11	122
	63.1%	0.0%	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	2.5%	4.1%	3.3%	11.5%	2.5%	9.0%	100.0%
To Bonny Bank	1	31	4	2	14	7	7	5	5	7	8	91
	1.1%	34.1%	4.4%	2.2%	15.4%	7.7%	7.7%	5.5%	5.5%	7.7%	8.8%	100.0%
To Braes	14	1	31	8	4	5	19	3	16	6	9	116
	12.1%	0.9%	26.7%	6.9%	3.4%	4.3%	16.4%	2.6%	13.8%	5.2%	7.8%	100.0%
To Dawson	9	2	5	41	9	7	24	12	18	18	9	154
	5.8%	1.3%	3.2%	26.6%	5.8%	4.5%	15.6%	7.8%	11.7%	11.7%	5.8%	100.0%
To Denny	5	13	2	9	68	4	2	3	6	8	8	128
	3.9%	10.2%	1.6%	7.0%	53.1%	3.1%	1.6%	2.3%	4.7%	6.3%	6.3%	100.0%
To Falkirk Central	0	5	7	11	6	20	25	13	16	14	7	124
	0.0%	4.0%	5.6%	8.9%	4.8%	16.1%	20.2%	10.5%	12.9%	11.3%	5.6%	100.0%
To Falkirk East	8	1	10	16	7	11	63	6	27	12	5	166
	4.8%	0.6%	6.0%	9.6%	4.2%	6.6%	38.0%	3.6%	16.3%	7.2%	3.0%	100.0%
To Falkirk West	4	1	5	16	4	12	13	31	15	4	5	110
	3.6%	0.9%	4.5%	14.5%	3.6%	10.9%	11.8%	28.2%	13.6%	3.6%	4.5%	100.0%
To Grangemouth	19	7	7	13	6	8	33	11	130	13	13	260
	7.3%	2.7%	2.7%	5.0%	2.3%	3.1%	12.7%	4.2%	50.0%	5.0%	5.0%	100.0%
To Larbert S'muir	4	0	1	15	5	6	13	8	10	61	10	133
	3.0%	0.0%	0.8%	11.3%	3.8%	4.5%	9.8%	6.0%	7.5%	45.9%	7.5%	100.0%

Section 9 - Equalities Analysis of those on the housing list

9.1. Information is provided below on the profile of applicants as at 31 March 2017.

Gender

- 55% of applicants are female
- 45% of applicants are male

Age

- 13% of applicants are age 25 years or less,
- 33% of applicants are between 26 and 40 years,
- 31% of applicants are between 41 and 60 years
- the remaining 23% of applicants are over sixty, less than half of these over 60 are over 75.

Disability

- 24% of applicants on the housing list have indicated that they consider that they have a disability.
- Over half of these applicants indicate this is in relation to a physical disability or mobility problems.

Ethnicity

- 87% of applicants are White Scottish
- the next most numerous ethnic groups are 3.6% Other British; 2.9% Other White Ethnic Group and 2.1% of applicants have not provided information about their ethnicity.

Religion

- Information is not available for 33% of applicants
- 43% of applicants have no religion
- 29% of applicant indicated that they are Church of Scotland
- 12% of applicants are Roman Catholic

Sexual Orientation

- 36% of applicants did not respond or indicated that they did not wish to respond.
- Of the applicants who did provide information, 86% indicated that they were heterosexual.

9.2 Applicants Re-housed

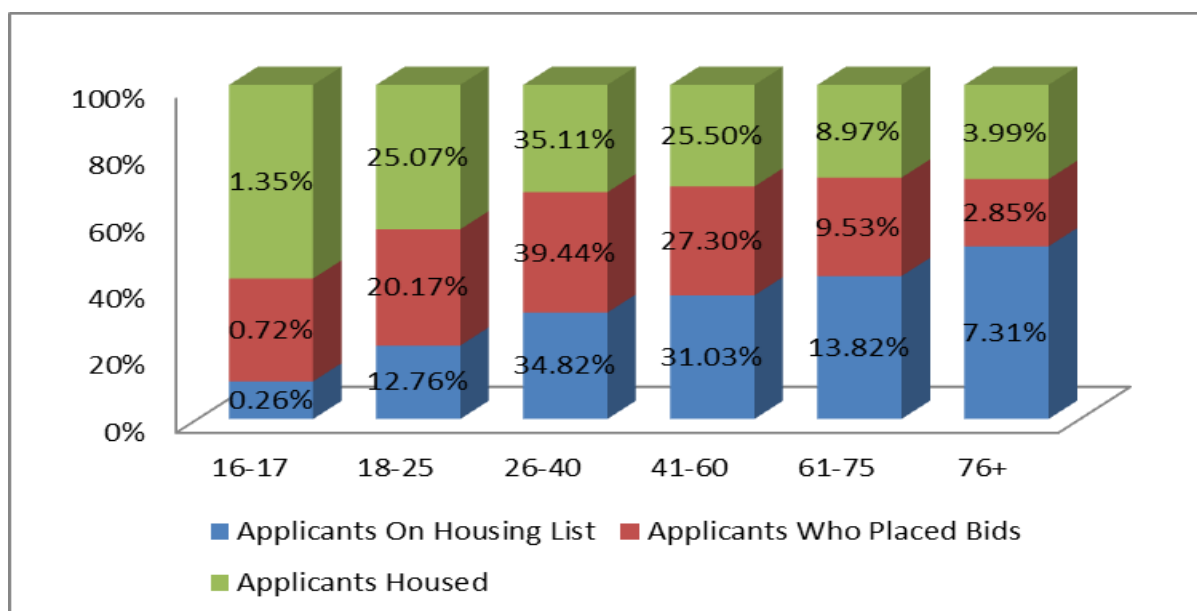
A breakdown of equalities information available regarding applicants who have been re-housed during 2016/17 is set out below, the main points to note as follows:

Gender Profile

57% of the applicants housed were female, 43% of applicants housed were male which is representative of the housing list.

Age

Table 16 – Profiles of Applicants by Age Bands



Young people aged 18-25 make up 13% of applicants on the housing register however, 25% of properties are being let to this group of applicants. Many of the young people have complex housing needs and have high priority to reflect this.

A smaller percentage of elderly applicants are being housed than are represented on the housing list. Applicants aged over 60 years old make up 21% of the housing register yet they account for only 13% of lets.

Disability

27% of applicants housed provided information that they considered that they have a disability; whilst just over half (59%) of these applicants indicated this in relation to a physical disability or mobility problems

Ethnicity

The allocations made is broadly representative of the waiting list and as such 89% of applicants housed were White Scottish, 3.6% of applicants housed were Other White Ethnic Group, 0.07% of applicants housed were Black Scottish British African. 0.6 % of applicants housed of did not provide this information.

Religion

78% of applicants housed either did not provide any information about their religion or said they had “no religion”. Of the remaining applicants that were housed 11% were Church of Scotland; 7% were Roman Catholic and 3% of applicants housed were Other Christian

Sexual Orientation

About 48% of applicants housed did not provide information about sexual orientation and 50% of applicants housed were heterosexual.

Section 10 – Future Considerations

As our waiting list continues to show that demand outstrips supply, we need to ensure that we are making the best use of our properties and meeting the needs of our applicants.

The analysis has highlighted some areas that require more detailed consideration, including some issues that have been carried forward from the 2015/16 Allocations Outcomes Report. Some of these may require a change to the allocation policy, so consultation will be carried out during this year prior to reporting back to committee.

- **Tenant Incentive Scheme**

The Tenant Incentive Scheme has been in place since 1 April 2013. The aim of the scheme is to try and encourage tenants living in larger, family sized properties that are too big for them to move to smaller properties. However, during the period the scheme has been in place, there has been limited uptake. Further consideration and consultation on options regarding the future continuation of the Tenant Incentive Scheme will be undertaken.

- **Under Occupancy**

The Council requires to give reasonable preference to applicants who under-occupy their property. Since 2010, Band 1 priority has been awarded to all applicants who are under occupying their current tenancies, regardless of whether they have 1, 2 or more spare bedrooms. Priority for overcrowding is awarded differently. Band 1 is awarded to applicants who require two or more additional bedrooms. Band 2 is awarded when one additional bedroom is required.

It is proposed that consultation is undertaken on aligning the application of Band 1 priority for under-occupation with overcrowding i.e. Band 1 priority applied in cases of under-occupation by 2 or more bedrooms.

- **Time Limited Priority (Band 1 Applicants)**

Band 1 priority is the highest level of housing priority that can be awarded and reflects an urgent need for rehousing. Under the current allocation policy only Home Seekers are time limited for an offer due to the Council's statutory obligations under homeless legislation. All other applicants awarded Band 1 retain their priority without time limit, however this can mean that some applicants who are assessed as requiring urgent rehousing are on the housing list for a considerable period of time without bidding for properties.

Analysis has been on-going to ascertain the number of applicants who have had their priority for over 12 months and to identify whether properties have become available during the period applicants have had their Band 1 which would have met their needs.

Consideration will be given to carrying out a regular review of applicants who have Band 1 priority and offering assistance to help move them to more suitable

accommodation. It is not the intention to remove priority from applicants who have an urgent need for rehousing.

- **Applicants with Multiple Priorities**

Applicants are only awarded one level of banding based on their most urgent housing need. It is acknowledged that some applicants who have multiple and complex housing issues could fall under several priorities (e.g. homeless and in a wheelchair – applicant would be awarded Home Seeker Band 1 to reflect their most urgent housing need, however their application would also attract a Band 1 functional need as they require an adapted property).

Analysis has shown that the majority of applicants with multiple housing priority needs are rehoused within reasonable timescales. There is however cases where due to the applicant's exceptional housing needs, it is more difficult to find suitable accommodation e.g.: delayed discharge from hospital cases. Due to the small number of cases involved and where the situation is not covered by the allocation policy, it is proposed that these are considered under the exceptional need priority category. Guidance in the implementation of Exceptional Needs will be reviewed and expanded.

- **Arrears Suspension Policy**

Applicants who owe more than a month's rent are automatically suspended until they have made an arrangement to clear their debt and that arrangement has been in place for 13 weeks. It is proposed to amend the wording within the policy to make it clearer to tenants of their obligation to clear their current debt before being made an offer of housing.

- **Housing with Care**

In partnership with the Integration Joint Board, a Housing Contribution Group has been established, to explore and identify opportunities to support the delivery of elderly and disabled housing accommodation. This includes a review of Housing with Care Level 2 accommodation and the appropriateness of existing accommodation going forward.

- **Local Letting Initiatives**

There are currently two Local Letting Initiatives (LLI) in place within Falkirk i.e.: Multi Storey Flat Letting and New Build Council Properties. We are required to regularly review the outcomes of our local letting initiatives.

Multi Storey Flats: There is a sensitive letting policy in place at the high flats to ensure that the community remains stable whilst balancing the age profile of tenants. Demand continues to be high from older applicants but we continue to monitor the high flat lets to ensure the LLI objectives are met.

New Build: The current LLI lets all new build mainstream properties to Home Movers. Adapted properties are let as per the policy. There was only 1 new build development let in 2016/17, which was built as adapted. Therefore the properties were not advertised for Home Movers only. This LLI will continue to be monitored for future

developments.

- **Mental Health**

An increasing number of applicants are applying for rehousing due to mental health issues. Whilst, the functional needs assessment process looks specifically at the physical suitability of a property, applicants with mental health issues can be awarded a Band 2 for social need if a medical professional has confirmed that the applicant's current housing situation is exacerbating their condition and a move of house would significantly improve their condition. When assessing both mental and physical health issues for re-housing, it is not the health condition that is being assessed but the suitability of the current housing and future housing to meet the applicants' needs.

A review of guidance on how we assess mental health issues will be carried out to ensure this is explained more explicitly. Housing staff will also raise awareness of the allocations policy with other interested stakeholders.

- **Letting Quotas**

The data within this report shows that all vacant properties were advertised equally, however the outcome of the lets thereafter differs. Analysis shows that 46% of lets went to home starters, 27% to home movers and 25% to home seekers. This profile is consistent with the housing list profile. As properties are firstly advertised on an equal sequence basis this ensures that all categories are equal opportunity to bid for houses. If properties are not let, they are then re-advertised under All Groups to allow everyone the opportunity to bid. The property is then let on the highest banding in line with the allocation policy. It is not proposed to change the letting quota as every group has equal access to all properties and those in greatest housing need have opportunities to bid for properties. Letting quotas will continue to be analysed and reviewed on an annual basis.

- **Care Leavers Housing Options Protocol**

A draft Housing Options Protocol for care leavers has been drafted jointly between Housing Services and Children's Services. This will be submitted to Executive at a future date. The Allocations Policy and all relevant procedures will be reviewed thereafter to ensure that it meets all the recommendations of the protocol.