

RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLANS

2020-21
Annual Report



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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INTRODUCTION

Rapid rehousing is identified within Scotland's Ending Homelessness Together action plan as the key approach to ending homelessness. The rapid rehousing approach means prioritising prevention but if homelessness occurs then households are provided with appropriate settled housing as quickly as possible, moving away from the use of temporary accommodation as an automatic first response to homelessness. Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans are part of Scotland's strategy to end homelessness, developed and delivered in response to local authority circumstances.

Local authorities have been working on the development and implementation of their rapid rehousing transition plan (RRTP) since 2019 and this report provides a summary of the work carried out by local authorities and their partners on progressing their plans in 2020/21.

Overall findings

In the context of the pandemic and the impact of Brexit, local authorities have reported a number of challenges to the delivery of the RRTPs in 2020/21.

Several local authorities reference reduced capacity to deliver homelessness prevention activity, some citing the impact of the lack of face-to-face interaction with clients. However, there has been evidence of the adaptation of services to accommodate remote working.

The pandemic and aftermath of Brexit has resulted in supply issues in the construction industry, which has impacted on void processing timescales. Local authorities have reported that this has resulted in a slower transition of people into settled accommodation and out of unsuitable temporary accommodation.

Local authorities have also reported challenges to staff recruitment and retention which has impacted on the maintenance of frontline homelessness services and the progress of RRTPs. Short term funding commitments have been referenced as a contributing factor to this issue. The Scottish Government have therefore made a two

year funding commitment for RRTPs during 2022/23 and 2023/24 to mitigate these challenges for local authorities.

Whilst there has been a decline in homelessness applications as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, there was an increased demand on temporary accommodation. This increased demand has had a knock-on impact on the ability of local authorities to support people into settled accommodation. The practice of 'flipping' or converting temporary accommodation to permanent lets was adopted to varying degrees by most local authorities during the period.

There has been acknowledgement in RRTPs that the pandemic has caused some delays in the starting and scaling up of Housing First in some local authority areas. In addition, the pandemic has served to create obstacles to involve people with lived experience in the development and delivery of homelessness services.

There was a recognition of positive developments including the establishment of closer working relationships with partners such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and health services due to the needs generated by the pandemic, and the creative use of digital platforms for service provision or holding virtual meetings with partners at short notice.

There is evidence of progress in terms of RRTP activity across Scotland. Whilst the impact of this activity has been evidenced in some instances, this is not consistent. Scotland's Housing Network completed their second benchmarking exercise and reported on RRTP monitoring on a Housing Options Hub basis. The reports capture data from each local authority on homelessness presentations, temporary accommodation usage, timescales of homelessness cases, outcomes (lets to homeless applicants and tenancy sustainment rates), repeat presentations and support needs. The Scottish Government will build upon this evidence through the development of the Activity and Spend templates for 2021/22, which will aim to capture the overall impact of RRTP policy and practice.

The report is structured around the following headings:

- Prevention
- Temporary accommodation
- Settled accommodation
- Housing First
- Lived experience

Within these headings the report summarises the practice implemented by local authorities and partners in 2020/21, highlighting some specific examples. Detail of some planned activity for the year 2021/22 is also given within each of the above headings.

PREVENTION

Published in October 2020, the updated Ending Homelessness Together action plan was revised to reflect actions needed in response to the pandemic. The updated action plan emphasises the importance of prevention, highlights measures to reduce the risk of evictions and proposes phasing out night shelters, replacing them with rapid rehousing welcome centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Prevention of homelessness remains at the heart of the updated action plan and all RRTPs place a significant focus on homelessness prevention.

This section sets out the issues that local authorities have faced over the period as well as showing what was put in place to continue to implement their RRTP to prevent homelessness and to mitigate the unprecedented challenges. Detail of future developments for prevention activity during 2021/22 is also provided.

Context

Private Rented Sector

There was a notable decrease in households becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy with a reduction of 2,161 (42%) from 5,145 in 2019/20 to 2,984 in 2020/21. 11% of households assessed as homeless in 2020/21 gave this as their previous accommodation type, compared to 16% in the same period in 2019/20.¹ Where local authorities have reported a reduction in the numbers of evictions, this has been caveated as likely being due to the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 (Eviction from Dwelling-houses) (Notice Periods) Modification Regulations 2020 which temporarily extended eviction notice periods.

Some extracts from individual RRTPs included:

- *We anticipate an increase in homelessness demand when the current eviction guidance expires and as the social and economic impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt. We are monitoring this and continuing to build on existing partnership working to ensure that we work together to prevent homelessness or to identify appropriate sustainable housing options.*

¹ [Homelessness Statistics 2020-21 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/homelessness-statistics-2020-21)

- *Emergency legislation was put in place that banned evictions taking place in both the social and private sector, resulting in a lower number of Section 11 notices being issued. In addition, the stay at home message throughout 2020/21 impacted on our plans to be more proactive in terms of carrying out home visits to help improve engagement with tenants and the likelihood of preventing homelessness.*

Local authorities reported that the pandemic had a significant impact on the delivery of their RRTPs, including reduced capacity to deliver homelessness prevention activity during 2020/21.

Practice

Service re-design

The pandemic drastically changed working arrangements for homelessness and housing services across the country. As such, a number of local authorities took measures to ensure that services could continue to support people throughout the pandemic.

Aberdeenshire Council's homelessness service set up an emergency contact number for use by members of the public during office hours to address potential delays with call waiting times through their contact centre. They also set up a WhatsApp account which allowed the public to contact the council via instant message. This service also enabled the council to triage calls and to signpost to housing officers for follow up contact.

Perth and Kinross Council further developed their housing management system to provide an online housing options self-assessment service with the ability to apply for housing online (non-homelessness scenarios) and manage some aspects of applications on a self-service basis.

Digital Inclusion

The updated Ending Homelessness Together action plan included a new action to support and enable digital inclusion in order to support people to access digital equipment, data and training.

Several local authorities took measures to promote digital inclusion for people accessing homelessness and housing services to prevent social isolation and encourage engagement with support services.

Aberdeenshire Council supplied mobile phones and laptops with the help of Connecting Scotland² funding. A lending facility was also established within two accommodation units to provide access to computer equipment.

Angus Council made a successful application to the Digital Connections Fund and received a number of devices to provide support to homeless households who were digitally excluded. The council's communities learning and development teams deliver ongoing digital skills support for service users.

Argyll and Bute Council were successful in their application to a local flexible fund to assist with digital inclusion. Staff have been trained as digital ambassadors and are able to support people to enable them to stay connected to social networks, keep up to date with universal credit journals and participate in a range of online activities and skills programmes.

Falkirk Council provided every household in temporary accommodation with a mobile phone, if required, to maintain communication and reduce social isolation. The council also successfully applied for devices from Connecting Scotland. The council was awarded 155 devices (50 iPads and 105 Chromebooks with 24 months' unlimited data packages) which were distributed over three stages to people most affected by national lockdowns, families with children and young people, and those with barriers to employment.

² [Connecting Scotland](#)

Perth and Kinross Council worked with their third sector partners including The Rock Trust and Turning Point Scotland to provide mobile phones to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. There was a particular focus on young people, and those with multiple and complex needs, who were identified as being historically difficult to engage with.

Evidence of the impact which these measures had is limited at present.

A number of local authorities pay particular attention to prevention activities for groups who are predictably at highest risk of rough sleeping and homelessness. This section is broken down into methods of homelessness prevention utilised by local authorities which focus on high priority groups.

People leaving prison

The Sustainable Housing On Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards have been developed in partnership between the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), local government and housing partners to agree best practice in meeting the housing needs of individuals in the prison system. All of Scotland's local authorities have signed a data sharing agreement with the SPS to aid in the transition to settled housing for people due to be released from prison in accordance with these standards.

During the pandemic, services in the community in Aberdeen City came together to co-ordinate its support for people being released from prison. Homelessness services, housing, criminal justice, prison and alcohol and drug partnerships (ADPs) met weekly to discuss potential releases. Aberdeen City Council's operational delivery committee approved changes to its allocation policy to ensure that people experiencing homelessness from prison are afforded a higher priority to increase the likelihood of a permanent accommodation offer being made on release.

Dundee City Council's housing options team led in the development of a virtual team which included representatives from criminal justice, health and social care, the Scottish Prison Service, health, third sector, Department for Work and Pensions and police to coordinate planned prison releases during the pandemic. This team has

remained in place and now links in with the community justice partnership. The council also funds a project with Positive Connections which aims to support the council in its task of meeting the SHORE standards and to minimise any risk of rough sleeping for those leaving prison.

In East Dunbartonshire Council, an early release working group was set up with key partners to support people released as per Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 (Release of Prisoners) Regulations 2020 and the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 (Incidental Provisions) Regulations 2020.

South Lanarkshire Council recruited a prison link worker to support effective implementation of the SHORE standards and prevent homelessness on release from prison. Funding was released in 2020/21 for recruitment of one FTE Housing Officer following a pilot using resources from the Central Homelessness Team. The officer made contact with 203 individuals to discuss their housing circumstances and options before planned release. 52 requests were refused, 103 were advice cases with no further action required and 48 cases required intervention from the SHORE officer to assist with securing accommodation on release.

Falkirk Council has been successful in applying for a digital inclusion grant to ensure that anyone leaving prison is able to connect digitally with the services and support they need on the day of release. Training was also provided through Cyrenians and the Education Training Unit to frontline staff to ensure they are aware of issues that prisoners face on release and the support available.

Families

East Lothian Council implemented a partnership model to support prevention pathways for families and young people at risk of homelessness and, where families are in temporary accommodation, support them to permanently resolve homelessness and work to resolve challenges that have been a factor leading to homelessness presentations. The model provides links and an extension to the existing mediation service, promoting joined up working between the voluntary sector and health, education, housing and children's services, based on the principles of whole family prevention and early intervention.

East Ayrshire Council launched a child wellbeing protocol in November 2020 to prevent homelessness and improve transitions and address trauma for children, young people and families by ensuring notification to the named person service in the event that a council tenancy may be at risk with the threat of homelessness. Further consideration is being given to implement this across other housing tenures.

Angus Council has a family mediation and conflict resolution service in place which works with families, young people and couples where there is a current threat of homelessness due to relationship breakdown. This went live in October 2020 and has received 19 referrals, with one progressing to mediation; and six individuals being supported to remain in their current accommodation. Work is ongoing to promote the service and the referral pathway has been reviewed to ensure that anyone who makes a homelessness application citing relationship breakdown or being asked to leave the family home (where there are no risks identified) is contacted by Relationship Scotland and made aware of the service and the support available. Homelessness applications in Angus as a result of relationship breakdown/asked to leave have reduced from 265 applications in 2019/20 to 156 applications in 2020/21. These figures have been caveated with the overall reduction in homelessness applications in Angus. However, a full evaluation of the project will be carried out prior to 31 June 2022.

Gender specific support

In Dundee City Council's RRTP, gender specific support is highlighted as a key factor in tenancy sustainment and part of their RRTP funding has been allocated to recruit two gender specific workers with Dundee Women's Aid. A co-ordinator and support worker will continue to work in partnership with the mainstream Housing First service to deliver specific support to women and their children and inform future gender specific support service requirements.

Young People

A mediation officer was recruited in Aberdeenshire to work directly with young people and their families to resolve conflict and prevent homelessness. Part of this role involves developing and sharing resources promoting youth homelessness prevention activities and to provide a point of contact between education settings and

housing. Homelessness presentations across 2020/21 from those aged 16/17 years have reduced by 24, a 36% reduction.

East Dunbartonshire Council's Project 101 is a youth housing information service with a variety of support provisions in place, including 'New Young Tenant Visits' and 'Independent Living Skills' courses. Contact has been made with landlords in the area. However, school lessons had to be put on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Within Perth and Kinross Council's RRTP, reducing youth homelessness is a key priority. As such, Perth and Kinross Council commissioned a service, known as 'Youth Boost' from The Rock Trust, for an initial period of 12 months from 1 April 2020. The project aims to support young people with their transition from homelessness into settled accommodation, as well as supporting those at risk of eviction and for young people who want to return home and maintain their relationships with family. Support is offered on a one-to-one basis and covers areas such as budgeting and finance, education and employment, health and well-being and social networks. Young people at risk of homelessness are identified in several ways: the council works closely with schools, youth services and third sector partners; young people often self-refer either to the council for housing options advice or directly to The Rock Trust service. A total of 218 referrals have been made to The Rock Trust since the service began in April 2020 (up to the end of August 2021). This contract is funded using the budget from a vacant Housing Support Officer post in addition to RRTP funding.

North Ayrshire Council is undertaking a young person's housing sustainability pilot within one of its most deprived areas. Households under the age of 25 are being offered a package of support to improve their independent living skills and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of maintaining a tenancy. North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership has identified a youth addiction worker to work within this project. This project includes an offer to undertake the SQA tenancy and citizenship programme.

North Lanarkshire Council has received funding from their local Alcohol and Drug Partnership to support young people experiencing homelessness in partnership with

Barnardo's. Services include 'Creative Faces' which supports young people who are in care (see section below 'People leaving care') or who are experiencing homelessness and aged between 14-26 years. The primary aim of Creative Faces is to encourage young people to meet friends, learn new skills or take up a hobby.

People leaving care

As part of Aberdeen City Council's effort to prevent anyone who meets the definition of being care experienced presenting as homeless, the new *Housing for Care Leavers Procedure* was approved in 2021. This sets out clear responsibilities and ways of working for the council to meet its corporate parenting duties. In addition, a care experienced housing support officer has been recruited to support care experienced young people to transition into housing. This includes helping those who are already in housing or experiencing challenges in their current tenancy in order to prevent homelessness. The council has reported that the guidance and improved joint working led to a 29% reduction in homelessness applications among this client group during 2019/20, and this continued into 2020/21 where a further 31% decline has been recorded.

Through additional funding from the Life Changes Trust, Fife Council has been able to establish the National House Project in Fife. Care leavers are identified and undertake a four month pre-tenancy support programme. At the end of this programme, the Housing Service guarantees to provide an offer of housing. The first cohort of 10 young people have been through the project, all of whom have been rehoused and are successfully sustaining their tenancies. A first year review has been undertaken of the project and the outcomes achieved. The second cohort of 11 young people have been inducted and are ready to start their programme.

As part of City of Edinburgh Council's focus on prevention pathways for vulnerable groups, the [Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers](#) was created. The pathway ensures that people leaving care are accessing appropriate accommodation with a sustainable housing solution and are regarded as a priority group. In addition, necessary support will be provided to give the person the best opportunity to sustain their home.

Highland Council's updated [Highland Care Leaver Housing Protocol](#) was agreed in 2019. The protocol has seen 17 care leavers housed within Highland Council and their RSL partners during 2020/21, which is an increase on the previous four year average of 10 lets per year.

North Lanarkshire Council, in partnership with Barnardo's, utilised funding from its local Alcohol and Drug Partnership to support care experienced young people. Barnardo's operates two 'Training Flats' to provide opportunities for young people, 15-20 years old, who are still in care to gain the experiences and skills they need to assist them make an informed choice as to whether or not they are ready to move out of care and into their own accommodation. Over the last five years, 66 young people have been able to access the flats. Barnardo's also provide the 'Forever Homes' service for this group. The service provides permanent accommodation, support from health services to help navigate into adult health services, regular ongoing support from social work as well as emotional and practical support from Barnardo's within their home and within their local community.

Orkney Council works in partnership with Children and Family Services to ensure that there is accommodation available to young people leaving care to prevent homelessness presentations for this group.

People experiencing domestic abuse

A new [Domestic Abuse Policy](#) was adopted by Aberdeen City Council during 2020/21. The aim of the policy is to provide an alternative to transitioning to other accommodation which is disruptive for families, instead allowing them to stay in their own home. It allows for perpetrators of domestic abuse to be rehoused away from the family home, preventing homelessness, whilst the police and courts take appropriate action against the perpetrator. In addition, all frontline staff (e.g. repairs and maintenance) who have contact with tenants will have domestic abuse awareness training to identify any signs that abuse might be taking place.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has developed its domestic abuse and coercive control pathway, and the protocol is complete with a multi-agency training package

for staff which was implemented in summer 2021. The council also recommissioned its support service for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

During 2020/21, Dundee City Council's Housing Service implemented its Domestic Abuse policy developed in partnership with the Violence Against Women Partnership and third sector services. Training has been developed and delivered to housing staff as well as other council services involved in the response to the CIH's 'Make a Stand' campaign and to support affected tenants. The council's allocation policy looks to award a priority for those affected by domestic abuse to the same level as those awarded a homelessness priority and is due to be consulted on within year three of the RRTP.

Fife Council used RRTP funding to support people experiencing domestic abuse and to establish a Prevention of Homelessness Fund. The fund has assisted 75 people during 2020/21 and covered removal costs, storage costs, furnishings, etc. The project has also developed new housing advice resources and a case management model to ensure an individual case manager is assigned to people experiencing domestic abuse. During the pandemic, partnership working has deepened with Fife Women's Aid where additional refuge accommodation was funded, and the demands being placed on the service were constantly monitored.

Renfrewshire Council funded a 0.5 FTE post through SAY Women to provide emotional support for young women aged 16 to 25 who are survivors of sexual abuse, rape or sexual assault. SAY Women aim to prevent repeated cycles of homelessness and to increase tenancy sustainment for the young woman they work with. By July 2021, they had assisted eight young women through 43 sessions and 83 welfare calls.

People with complex needs

Fife Council currently operates Housing Plus which supports service users who are not statutorily homeless. The council works to provide accommodation, technology and support solutions for people whose needs are beyond mainstream accommodation.

In Shetland, as part of a joint venture with the Health and Social Care Partnership, a dedicated housing support worker was recruited in January 2021 to support individuals with substance misuse issues to maintain/sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

People leaving hospital

Angus Council has implemented a Delayed Discharge Prevention Fund which aims to support people from all tenures to be discharged from hospital in a timely manner. Funding of £4,230 from Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) in 2020/21 was used to create the fund to support hospital discharges, which includes furnishing costs, cleaning, clearing of utility bills, etc. An additional £10,000 has been provided by the HSCP for 2021/22.

West Dunbartonshire Council set up a working group to review and update its Hospital Discharge Protocol during 2020/21. The group is responsible for monitoring its implementation and operation, and assess if it is meeting its objectives.

Perth and Kinross Council also has a well-established Hospital Discharge Protocol in place, where the person must have accommodation to enable their discharge.

Veterans

East Lothian Council's RRTP acknowledges that veterans are at high risk of becoming homeless and are vulnerable to falling into poverty. As such, six units of supported accommodation for veterans have been created, which provides a potential base for further support.

West Dunbartonshire Council developed and published an Armed Forces Pathway, which aims to ensure veterans can access all necessary information regarding securing settled accommodation.

Gypsy/ Traveller Communities

Falkirk Council developed an engagement plan for their Gypsy/Traveller communities to identify their accommodation needs and preferences to inform future provision. Part of this plan has involved raising awareness of housing options,

support and their rights and entitlements. The council has supported tenants of Gypsy/Traveller sites to become more digitally included by providing each family/pitch with a device (iPad/Chromebook) of their choice with two years free WiFi through Connecting Scotland/Fairer Scotland funding. Training has also been identified for all front-line housing staff and partner agencies to ensure understanding around the needs of Gypsy/Traveller communities to increase meaningful engagement and to aid the delivery of appropriate services.

In addition to the prevention methods for high priority groups outlined above, local authorities across Scotland have also used a number of different general prevention methods.

Eviction Prevention

Many RRTPs highlighted the partnerships with RSLs and the importance of that relationship in achieving settled housing outcomes for homeless households. An example is the development of an information sharing agreement for Section 11s³ to allow the council to be involved before any recovery action is initiated.

Perth and Kinross Council has been working with RSL partners to develop what it terms an Enhanced Section 11 protocol. This involves a much earlier, voluntary notification of 'at risk' tenancies, primarily at the point when a Notice of Proceedings (NOP) is served. The notification results in a joint offer of support from the RSL and council support staff with the objective of intervening early to try to support the tenant to resolve the issues that are placing the tenancy at risk.

A Section 11 pilot project was carried out by the North and Island's Housing Options Hub during 2019, which involved Highland Council in partnership with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Scotland's Housing Network and led to the development of [guidance](#). The housing associations involved in the project agreed to serve Section 11 notices to local authority Homelessness/Housing Options teams

³ **Section 11 notifications:** Landlords and creditors are legally obliged to notify the local authority when they take action which put the household at risk of homelessness due to eviction. This duty arises from **section 11** of the Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003.

earlier in the process than is statutorily required. Highland Council took this forward in 2020/21 and received 131 Section 11 notices. Due to the success of the process, only five evictions occurred (all in the Private Rented Sector). As a result of the project, all Highland Housing Register partners have agreed to issue Section 11 notices earlier which will enable prevention activity to be undertaken.

As part of Falkirk Council's Prevention Action Plan, a reduction in evictions and repossessions through the PRS, RSLs and owner occupied properties was identified as a desired outcome. Falkirk Council subsequently reduced evictions from the PRS by 155 during 2020/21. This was achieved by increasing engagement with private landlords and raising awareness of Section 11 notifications to ensure landlords knew their duty in this respect. In addition, housing staff highlighted support services and offered support and guidance around domestic abuse and gendered based violence. In 2021/22 Falkirk Council will recruit a PRS Liaison Officer.

Falkirk Council has also worked alongside RSLs to ensure that Section 14s are now being served alongside NOP to allow more time for meaningful engagement with clients to consider prevention pathways. Similarly, the council will also be informed of intentions to send Section 11s to allow the opportunity to introduce prevention activities such as debt advice, ability to apply to the prevention fund for those who meet the criteria, alongside signposting to any other relevant support services. Falkirk has also revised its Section 14⁴ letters to ensure it has the most up to date information regarding benefits.

City of Edinburgh Council set up a Private Rented Sector Team in late 2019 with all staff in place by summer 2020. The main aim of the team is to support households at risk of homelessness to remain in their tenancy where safe to do so. Since March 2020, the PRS Team has supported 324 households, with homelessness prevented in 225 instances via access to new PRS or mid-market rent tenancies.

Glasgow City HSCP children and families and homelessness services have continued to fund the private rented sector hub working with households within the

⁴ [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

PRS at risk of homelessness. The pandemic saw a move to telephone contact, but the PRS hub continued to see increased demand from tenants.

Dundee City Council commissioned the homelessness prevention pilot during 2020/21 in partnership with Shelter Scotland. The purpose of this pilot is to take a proactive approach to working with tenants across all tenures to prevent the development of rent arrears and reduce the risk of homelessness. Briefing sessions have been delivered to partners and the pilot was launched in May 2021.

Argyll and Bute Council has launched a 'Rent Arrears Prevention Fund' to assist households who are at risk of homelessness due to rent arrears. Claims are assessed based on the household's entitlement to Housing Benefit over the previous 12 months. At 31 March 2021, the fund had assisted 36 households at a cost of £60,945 (from Scottish Government RRTP funding). In cases where payments have been made, outcomes have been very positive with tenancies being sustained successfully in the majority of cases. No evictions have taken place where interventions were made using the Rent Arrears Prevention Fund.

As part of Scottish Borders Council's Crisis Intervention Fund, the council launched a 'Housing Intervention Fund' in February 2021. The fund aims to improve the housing options available to applicants who are in need of intervention due to rent arrears and who often face the prospect of becoming homeless. The fund has an allocation of £20,000 per annum and, since its launch, has supported seven households at risk of homelessness to remain in their tenancies.

A bid was supported by South Ayrshire Council for third sector partners to develop the "I'M IN!" project, aimed at early intervention in the PRS and owner occupation sectors to prevent homelessness, complementing existing efforts to develop prevention pathways and improve links between services. This project received two years of funding from the Scottish Government's Third Sector Homelessness Fund in March 2021 and will support the council's efforts to move prevention activity further upstream.

West Dunbartonshire Council launched a pilot prevention fund which has provided assistance to 15 households at a cost of £5,200 (from RRTP funding) up to 31 March 2021. All 15 households remained in their tenancies and were maintaining agreed arrears arrangements. The fund is administered by the Homelessness Prevention Officer (see section 'Dedicated Prevention Posts') and referrals are sent to the officer from landlords where the tenant is at risk of losing their tenancy due to rent arrears. The prevention officer engages with the tenant in areas such as utilising Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), applying for other entitled benefits and linking in with the council's employment service, Working4U. The fund then provides up to a maximum payment of £500 to address arrears which allows the tenant to agree an affordable repayment arrangement for outstanding balances that they can sustain and stops legal action being taken. Ongoing support is provided to ensure payments are maintained and the tenancy is sustained.

Flexible Funds

Argyll and Bute Council has rolled out a Flexible Emergency Fund with the aim that funds are available at local locations to provide immediate solutions for clients. Funds can be made available for gas or electricity top ups, food or any other crisis interventions that can be resolved simply by having funds available. The fund is held and administered by local support providers. In 2020/21, funds were provided to Blue Triangle Housing Association, Carr Gorm, Women's Aid and the HELP project which supports young people with housing, employment, health and wellbeing information and advice. During 2020/21, £8,250 of RRTP funding was allocated to the Flexible Emergency Fund, with a further £5,000 allocated for 2021/22.

East Lothian Council is working to set up a Spend to Save Prevention and Support Fund using £20,000 of RRTP funding during 2020/21. Dedicated staff resource was in place by April 2021. The fund will have agreed criteria to enable homeless households to access small one-off sums of money to assist in the prevention of homelessness/enable tenancy sustainment.

The City of Edinburgh Council has trialled a new prevention fund with the PRS Team since summer 2020 using £13,000 of RRTP funding. The fund has been used on 25 occasions and will continue to be trialled in 2021/22 (planned future spend of

£55,000 RRTP funding), with consideration to be given as to whether it can be accessed by the Multi-disciplinary Team. Funding can be used for a number of preventative measures including: loss of employment or relationship breakdown leading to issues paying rent; furniture provision; shortfall in rent; or rent deposit guarantees to prevent the use of B&B and temporary accommodation.

Perth and Kinross Council has a Property Ready Fund which has been designed to make properties 'ready to occupy' rather than just ready to let. Basic furnishing and white goods are provided to enable someone to move into a property quickly, in many cases avoiding the need for temporary accommodation. This is an innovative approach, which Perth and Kinross has highlighted for a number of years, in response to waiting times for Community Care Grants. In addition to the Property Ready Fund, Perth and Kinross Council also administers a Prevention Fund, which staff can use at their discretion, providing an option to prevent homelessness where a relatively small sum of money can provide positive outcomes. During 2020/21, £121,287 of RRTP funding and £29,837 of local authority funding was allocated to both funds (which were combined during 2020/21). Approximately 300 people were assisted by the funds 2020/21.

Property Swaps/Downsizing

Midlothian Council has made changes to its housing allocation policy which includes increased incentives for people willing to downsize and encouraging mutual exchanges, helping to ensure other households in housing need are able to access suitable accommodation without the need to present for homelessness assistance. Due to restrictions on unnecessary house moves during the majority of 2020/21, Midlothian Council has reported that it is not yet possible to fully evaluate the effectiveness of this measure.

Community engagement

In order to develop East Ayrshire Council's relationship with communities, with the aim of reducing demand and dependency on services over the longer term, the council began a 'Neighbourhood Coaching' scheme. Phase one of Housing and

Communities' Service Redesign in March 2021 included the appointment of an additional six neighbourhood coaches. The additional posts and reduced patch sizes creates the space for neighbourhood coaches to embed themselves within communities, facilitating collaboration, prevention, and early intervention activities to underpin all aspects of service delivery across the whole council and Integrated Joint Board services.

Dedicated Prevention Posts

Glasgow City HSCP has funded a Housing Options and Early Intervention Development Worker to support the continued enhancement of operational homelessness prevention and early intervention pathways links with housing associations within the city. Co-located within the Wheatley Group, the post is planned as part of the implementation of the RRTP in 2021/22 and will work with the three Housing Options Senior Homelessness workers to enhance joint working with RSLs and a range of key stakeholders.

West Dunbartonshire Council funded a Prevention Officer post with £36,000 of RRTP funding, with the aim of introducing an additional, more proactive Homelessness Prevention Service, specifically aimed at tenancies where the landlord is considering actions to end the tenancy. At 31 March 2021, there had been 70 referrals made directly to the Prevention Officer. This led to engagement with 52 households where advice and assistance was provided which included assistance in terms of agreeing sustainable arrears arrangements, referrals to money advice, assistance to apply for DHP and providing assistance from the pilot prevention fund (see section 'Flexible Fund') where appropriate.

West Lothian Council, in partnership and funded through resources allocated by the West Lothian Alcohol and Drug Partnership, has recruited a Housing Options Officer with a specialism in addictions support.

Partnership working

North Lanarkshire Council undertook a review of preventative approaches and responses across agencies. There is current work ongoing with pathways created in the new GP Community Link Worker team to ensure direct access to Housing Advice

from GP referrals. The aim is to expand this across all partners to have two-way pathways to ensure early intervention and proactive prevention. This will involve: creating pathway routes between agencies to ensure preventative approaches upon any person presenting with risk of homelessness; and reviewing information, advice and signposting to all agencies' websites and offices.

Early intervention

Clackmannanshire Council has implemented a multi-agency system which brought together a range of public services including housing, police, child services and money advice, to assist and support people on the cusp of statutory intervention. The system, known as STRIVE (Safeguarding Through Rapid Intervention), aims to intervene early, in order to address welfare concerns before reaching crisis point. From February 2020 to March 2021, the STRIVE team has supported 138 customers and their households. A [Vanguard study](#) found the most common outcomes for customers were: improved financial security; reduction in police involvement; reduction in use of drugs and/or alcohol; improvement in mental well-being; and the prevention of homelessness. Whilst STRIVE serves a range of services within Clackmannanshire, the council has reported the importance of RRTP funds to its development.

Future Developments for Prevention Activity during 2021/22

Policy Developments

The joint Scottish Government and COSLA consultation on the Prevention of Homelessness Duties was launched on 17 December 2021, and is open for responses until 31 March 2022. The consultation creates an opportunity for individuals and organisations to have their say on changes to the homelessness system in Scotland.

Practice

People leaving prison

East Ayrshire Council plans to facilitate interactive 'virtual property viewings' in order to prevent homelessness presentations from people released from prison. The aim of this service is to embrace a digital approach and provide new tenants with a smooth transition from prison to a new tenancy, with increased knowledge of their future home and surrounding community prior to release.

Families

East Dunbartonshire Council is working to prevent homelessness presentations as a result of family relationship breakdown. A case worker has been recruited at the Project 101 service (see section Young People above) to provide Mediation Services to families. Training for this service began in May 2021.

People with complex needs

North Ayrshire, North and South Lanarkshire and the City of Edinburgh Council have embarked on the Reducing Harm, Improving Care project with Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) for people experiencing homelessness who require alcohol and drug services. This aims to identify and understand where prevention activities could intervene within health systems to reduce the risk of crisis, and subsequently homelessness. Key pieces of work are being undertaken by Homelessness/Addictions and Mental Health staff to allow HIS to analyse the demand for existing services. The next phase of the project will look at service user involvement with research being carried out by Homeless Network Scotland and Scottish Drugs Forum.

Housing First used as a Prevention Method

Within Angus there is planned partnership working between the council's Homelessness Support Service and the Alcohol and Drug Partnership to apply for funding to increase capacity of the Housing First service and recruit an additional worker so the eligibility criteria can be widened to include people with multiple complex support needs who have existing tenancies.

Flexible Funds

Proposals to introduce a Crisis Intervention Fund were approved by Midlothian Council in May 2021. The fund will be accessible to front line officers and allow a more preventative approach to be taken when assisting those in housing need such as: preventing action to end a tenancy being taken following an unforeseen change in circumstances; enabling a household to access accommodation they would otherwise be unable to; and assisting a household to remain in their current accommodation until a planned move to alternative accommodation is completed. It will run as a two year pilot initially with an interim review completed after 12 months. An annual budget of £30,000 has been committed to the fund for the duration of the pilot. This will make use of savings realised from ending the use of B&B accommodation.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Through their RRTPs, local authorities aim to transform the use of temporary accommodation to both reduce the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households and the length of stay. It also means a change in the type of accommodation used, with a move away from unsuitable accommodation such as hostels and B&Bs in favour of dispersed, self-contained properties in communities.

Over the course of this reporting year, local authorities have been working against a backdrop of extreme challenges never before experienced in the shape of both a global pandemic and Brexit.

Whilst the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions saw a decline in the number of homelessness applications, the demand for temporary accommodation increased significantly. The impact on temporary accommodation meant that many of the measures being implemented or planned to reduce or transform temporary accommodation use had to be temporarily abandoned or suspended in order to meet the many challenges of the pandemic and the statutory duty to provide accommodation. However, it should be noted that while the pandemic interrupted implementation of some planned activity by local authorities, there was a real sense that RRTPs were an important factor in informing responses to the pandemic.

This section is broken down into challenges that local authorities have faced over the period as well as showing what was put in place to continue implementation of their RRTP around temporary accommodation and to mitigate the unprecedented challenges.

Challenges

The pandemic led to large scale disruption across council services including staff absences and vacancies, particularly during the first half of 2020/21. During this period, the most prominent challenge faced was securing permanent rehousing outcomes for all statutory homelessness cases. The subsequent slowdown in throughput during this period impacted greatly on being able to access settled accommodation, placing increased strain on resources and temporary

accommodation capacity. Challenges local authorities faced during this time included:

- Properties from temporary accommodation stock were held to support anyone who needed to self-isolate and were not in a position to do so in their own home. Councils had to increase the number of temporary accommodation units available, at least in the short term.
- This was especially prevalent in areas where accommodation was required for those who had high numbers of people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Accommodating people with NRPF was permitted as a public health response, not as a relaxing of homelessness legislation.
- Some areas saw an increase in B&B/hotel usage and some reported breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) as a result of not being able to move people on from temporary accommodation. There was also a slowdown in relets in temporary accommodation due to Covid-19 protocol restrictions on staff.
- Covid-19 restrictions on repair staff, as well as issues around the supply of materials for repairs, were responsible for a longer turnaround on voids for many authorities. Delays in the Scottish Welfare Fund process due to Covid-19 was also cited as adding to delays.
- A combination of the pandemic and Brexit was also an issue in the loss and recruitment of staff, with local authorities experiencing problems getting staff in place for new and existing posts.
- Widely, it was recognised that the pandemic had a knock-on effect on other areas within council RRTPs with delays or suspension of planned work, such as allocation reviews and new build developments.
- Although not appearing to be an issue experienced across the board, some local authorities noted an increase in refusals of offers, contributing to time spent in temporary accommodation and the movement of people through the system.
- All of these issues, including the temporary suspension of allocations during the first lockdown, impacted negatively on throughput from temporary accommodation to permanent accommodation. This led to many authorities experiencing significantly increased numbers being housed in temporary accommodation and increases in the lengths of time spent in temporary accommodation.

- In effect, although Covid-19 measures, including households being advised to remain at home and a ban on evictions, saw the number of homelessness applications, those assessed as homeless and homelessness cases that closed decreasing, the number of households in temporary accommodation and open applications increased.

Extracts from individual RRTPs:

- *Figures remain high at over 400 households in temporary accommodation each week due to lack of flow through the housing system and inability to move homeless households into permanent accommodation.*
- *We brought an additional 114 properties into our temporary accommodation portfolio from our mainstream pool to avoid the use of unsuitable accommodation.*
- *Despite the lowest recorded demand for temporary accommodation since 2015/16, with all new mainstream lets suspended for several months during the first lockdown, the backlog of households in temporary accommodation continued to grow.*
- *Restrictions continue to cause significant delays to void turnaround times and new build developments are also significantly delayed.*
- *B&B had not been used for a number of years. We had to increase stock to a peak of 257 properties by June 2020 and use B&B accommodation during the early stages of the pandemic.*
- *The temporary accommodation targets need to be revised in light of the pandemic response and the additional temporary accommodation acquired.*
- *Due to the pandemic, the RRTP target of 25 weeks maximum period of time in all temporary accommodation in year 2 was not met, with about 31% of households whose cases closed in 2020/21 spending more than 6 months in temporary accommodation.*
- *Work to develop a Temporary Accommodation Strategic Plan (TASP) was delayed as a result of the focus on meeting immediate needs related to the pandemic.*
- *The Housing Support and Accommodation Service was affected by the pandemic and new ways of working had to be developed.*

- *Due to the increase in temporary accommodation demand, the progress in reducing the overall stock of temporary accommodation is delayed and it is anticipated that no further progress can be made until the backlog of those waiting a permanent housing solution is sufficiently reduced.*
- *While progress was made in reducing B&B usage before the pandemic, as a direct result of the impact of the pandemic and the lower levels of social rented lets available than expected, there has been a need to use additional emergency accommodation for much of 2020/21. From being at nil use of B&B accommodation in May 2020, this increased to 146 at 31st March 2021.*

Practice

The housing options hubs, which came to the fore of support for local authorities to share challenges and learning, met fortnightly throughout the full first year of the pandemic. Local authorities continued, where possible, to take forward their rapid rehousing work around temporary accommodation. What follows is an overview of some of the work progressed by local authorities.

Unsuitable temporary accommodation

The relatively small number of local authorities still using hostel and B&B accommodation found the pandemic impacted on their plans for moving away from these types of temporary accommodation. However, despite the challenges we still saw some progress in this area.

In East Ayrshire, at the onset of Covid-19, all homelessness applicants within the council's St Andrews Court Hostel were relocated to self-contained temporary furnished accommodation. Subsequently, refurbishment is taking place on the St Andrews Court Hostel, with plans to introduce a rapid access model of accommodation, whereby service users access essential support during a very short stay before transitioning to their own settled accommodation. Key partners in service delivery include the universal credit support team, health and homelessness nurse service and addiction services.

In Highland, a principal Housing Officer was recruited in March 2021, to work on the ending of B&B usage in the area as well as delivering the operational changes for the shared temporary accommodation team. Key performances of this team will look at ensuring there are no breaches of the UAO and reducing time in temporary accommodation.

Renfrewshire Council established an in-house 'matching and resettlement team' to enable homeless applicants to better transition from temporary to settled accommodation during the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. The council reported that from December 2020 onwards, B&B accommodation was no longer used as a direct result of the positive impact of this new dedicated team.

Transforming temporary accommodation

Flipping, or converting, temporary accommodation to a permanent let

This practice was adopted to varying degrees by most local authorities during 2020/21. While the principle of flipping is similar across the country, some authorities may differ in terms of the process used.

Moray Council described the process they use:

The flipping process in Moray is fairly simple. A group consisting of Homeless Assessment officers, Temporary Accommodation staff and Housing Support staff meet fortnightly to discuss each applicant who is currently in our temporary accommodation. This group will identify if the applicant is appropriately housed (as per our allocation policy) and is content living there. They will also consider the amount of time that the property has previously been used as temporary accommodation. If the applicant and property are a match, then we will begin the process which is really just handing the property back to our Area Housing Teams and making a formal offer to the tenant. To this date, all the flips we have made have been to properties that have been in our temporary accommodation stock for a considerable period, as has the furniture, so we have allowed the tenant to keep the furniture if they wish.

West Dunbartonshire Council spent £80,000 of RRTP funding in 2020/21 to support a conversion programme of temporary accommodation to Scottish Secure

Tenancies, reducing the number of transitions and improving tenancy sustainment rates for homeless households, which has proved popular with tenants. In 2020/21, there were 32 conversions. However, the council notes the impact of Covid-19 and the increase in demand for all forms of temporary accommodation on their service provision in 2020/21. The council plans to mainstream this programme in 2021/22.

Reconfiguration

Dundee City Council reconfigured nine individual flats suitable for family accommodation situated within a staffed accommodation block. This was previously used as direct access, temporary accommodation and has now been reconfigured as family supported accommodation. In partnership with Action for Children, Hillcrest Homes and the council's Children and Families Service, on-site support is now provided in accommodation for nine families.

Emergency Accommodation

In Midlothian Council, the Emergency Accommodation for Families project provides emergency accommodation to homeless households with either dependent children or a pregnant person in the household. A block of eight tenement flats provides self-contained emergency accommodation, with on-site concierge service, removing the need for this group to be placed in unsuitable accommodation.

Shared Tenancy Model

In 2020/21, Highland Council established a Shared Temporary Furnished Accommodation team. Progress to date includes:

- 26 properties established with a capacity of 52 clients;
- Positive response from service users and an affordable model, average weekly rent of £64 each;
- Positive improvements in tenancy related behaviour with only five neighbour complaints of anti-social behaviour in these properties;
- Target for 2021/22 is an additional 50 units; and
- It is intended that the team will be mainstreamed over the next two financial years once scaled up. A full cost recovery model is in place.

The City of Edinburgh Council started a home share model, predominately where four or five people live together. A pilot has been running since 2019 across six properties and has 26 residents:

- Criteria is for people aged 30+ who are working with no support needs;
- A pathway has now been put in place for women and children experiencing domestic abuse to access home share properties with support provided to increase choice of where to live; and
- A procurement exercise to increase the number of properties was due to start in 2020, but is now underway in 2021/22, as part of the expansion of the scheme.

There are other local authorities looking at the possibilities around shared accommodation models going forward:

- Aberdeen City, which intends to set up and test two flats that will be converted to a shared tenancy model.
- East Lothian Council is recruiting an Accommodation Officer, which is an additional temporary post that will focus on developing shared accommodation.

Resettlement Support Service

This service, which began with two resettlement officers and has since been expanded, was established by West Lothian Council in May 2020 to support people to move quickly from temporary to permanent accommodation and to provide them the best opportunity to successfully sustain those tenancies. The aim of the service is to assist and support in all aspects of moving to a mainstream tenancy, providing priority applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund, utility support, liaising with internal and external agencies and signposting to all local services. The service aims to increase the throughput of temporary accommodation by reducing the number of days that it takes for homeless applicants to terminate their temporary accommodation once they are permanently housed.

Argyll and Bute Council cited its Decoration Project as being a crucial element during 2020/21 in helping new tenants who were in temporary accommodation move timeously to their new home, thereby freeing up suitable temporary accommodation for those who were in B&B. The Decoration Project's aim is to ensure that properties are decorated to a good standard and are ready for occupation. The range of services offered include decoration of the property by the RSL, match funding provided by the RSL for the tenant to decorate themselves and clients being supported to make appropriate claims for assistance for household 'white goods'. The council reported that uptake of the decoration fund during 2020/21 was good, with 38 new tenants assisted at a spend of £25,172. It also reported that, to date, all tenancies that received funds from its Decoration Project have been sustained successfully.

SETTLED ACCOMMODATION

Rapid rehousing transition plans are a key delivery mechanism for moving away from a reliance on temporary accommodation and prioritising settled homes for all. The Covid-19 pandemic presented huge challenges for local authorities in their efforts to support people into settled housing. None more so than the increased demand for temporary accommodation experienced during the pandemic. Some of the other challenges presented by Covid-19 and Brexit, as highlighted in the temporary accommodation section, also had a knock on effect on accessing settled accommodation. In their RRTPs, local authorities highlighted some of the work carried out to help maximise settled and supported accommodation options and to support households access and sustain tenancies.

Practice

In Renfrewshire, using RRTP funding, the council recruited three resettlement assistants (temporary posts) as part of its Tenancy Resettlement Service. This is described as a proactive approach to help service users establish and sustain their tenancy. The council reported that since April 2020, in line with procedures developed in response to the pandemic, these new posts, as well as existing resources from within the council's Homelessness and Housing Support Service have seen 290 tenants assisted to settle into their new homes.

Highland Council adopted a similar approach to focus on support for tenants with complex needs who do not require Housing First. Three Rapid Rehousing Officers were recruited in August 2020 to provide support around: harm reduction (drug and alcohol); personality disorder; learning difficulties; repeat criminal offending; and NHS restricted patients' list clients.

Glasgow City HSCP is continuing to fund a post within the West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations to support the continued strategic development of the Local Letting Communities. The aim of this post is to build strong planning/operational partnerships with RSLs in order to improve access to tenancies for homeless people.

In February 2021 South Lanarkshire Council decided to extend the appointment of its RRTP Co-ordinator, initially appointed for 18 months. This post has specific

responsibilities for working with partners and co-ordinating the implementation of the plan. A total of 339 additional affordable homes for social rent were delivered in 2020/21. This included 142 new build homes by RSLs and 197 additional council homes.

Voids

Many local authorities highlighted the impact of the pandemic and Brexit on their attempts to turn around void properties. A combination of supply issues, lack of available tradespeople and recruitment problems, together with Covid-19 restrictions, has slowed this process considerably during 2020/21, and continues to do so.

In Falkirk, following a review of its voids procedure the council introduced a specialist voids team, aiming to quickly turn round voids. The council reports that this has reduced the average time a property is unavailable from 28 days to four days. Also, despite the service being hampered by lockdown, they have found annual savings of around £230,000 from overall costs.

Fife Council pulled together all voids management across several services to form an integrated team during the pandemic. The staff focused on business critical activities to maintain a good supply of repaired empty houses for let to homeless people. The Chartered Institute of Housing recognised the effective working of the team through the Team of the Year award in 2020.

During 2020/21, Glasgow City HSCP continued to reform how it delivers homelessness services. A key element of this work was the void led letting pilot with the Wheatley Group and three Housing Associations in the Govan area. The Activities and Spend Template indicates there have been significant improvements in the section 5 process with:

- Settled lets to homeless applicants increased; and considering the Covid-19 context significantly increased.
- Temporary accommodation capacity increased due to a rapid increase in temporary furnished flats provided by RSLs and repurposing city centre hotels.

- Refusals of an offer of settled accommodation on the part of service users fell from 21% to 12%.
- Section 5 rejection refusal referral rates fell from 17% to 3%.

Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) recruited a handyman to work with the Housing Options and Support Team. The council felt that this role would offer a number of benefits in terms of removing barriers to rapid rehousing. The remit of the handyman in this context included:

- Delivering items to/from temporary accommodation properties or items being provided through the Property Ready Fund. This would be limited to small items such as microwaves, starter packs, etc. which would not require two people to handle safely.
- Minor repairs or decoration to temporary accommodation and PKC Lets/Rental Bond Guarantee Scheme (RBGS) properties such as changing/fitting light bulbs, re-fixing carpet strips, adjusting doors, minor paintwork, etc.
- Carrying out small tasks within properties to turn a house into a home – hanging curtains, helping to lay floor coverings, assistance with small areas of decoration, etc.
- Cleaning temporary accommodation and PKC Lets/RBGS properties.
- Topping up gas/electric meters where required.
- Maintaining a record of stock levels in the store both in terms of new goods and storage of customers' property.
- Carrying out Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) of electrical items in temporary accommodation properties or in storage (subject to appropriate qualification).

By having a dedicated resource to assist with these tasks, the council aims to support people to move on from temporary accommodation quickly and recycle temporary accommodation units, enabling it to maintain a relatively small portfolio of temporary accommodation. It is also viewed as a means of avoiding excessive expense in relation to small jobs that would otherwise involve using a contractor.

Allocations

In their RRTP, many local authorities are, or have committed to, reviewing their allocation policy, including percentage of lets to homeless households.

North Ayrshire Council undertook a pilot to allocate 100% lets to homeless households during the third quarter of 2020/2021. They agreed to prioritise: households with children recognising the impact of homelessness on adverse childhood trauma; households in employment given the cost of temporary accommodation and the impact it can have on employment and affordability; and women experiencing domestic abuse, to reduce the risk of further trauma.

The council extended this pilot throughout the pandemic, prioritising the allocation of all social rented lets in North Ayrshire to either homeless households or those with a strategic need for housing. This resulted in a positive impact on the duration of homelessness. Prior to the pandemic, 76% of households were homeless for more than six months. However, as at Q2 (2021/2022) only 22% of households have been homeless for more than six months.

Dundee City Council increased its target quota of lets to 75% of lettable houses for households on its homelessness list. The council looks to make best use of stock on a housing needs basis, for example, wheel chair adapted, sheltered amenity, and other housing policy protocol allocations, which it noted does impact on its target of 75% to homeless households. However, the council has engaged Common Housing Register partners who are also aiming to work towards this level of allocation. This is in addition to preventative measures put in place such as its Homelessness Prevention Pilot and supporting access into the Private Rented Sector, where appropriate.

Stirling Council set out how its new allocation policy will support a reduction in time spent in temporary accommodation:

- The policy makes best use of housing stock, with single people and couples being able to choose two bedroom properties in addition to one bedroom properties. This significantly increases the opportunities for smaller homeless households to be offered a property.
- The policy sets out 50% of lets to homeless applicants and how Housing First cases are prioritised for housing.
- The policy targets 30% of lets to transfer applicants. This enables a vacancy chain and it is projected that this will increase the overall number of relets the council will make from approx. 300 per annum to more than 420 lets per annum, with half of those lets being made to homeless households.

In South Ayrshire, a working group has been established to review Section 5 and nomination arrangements, involving representatives from the Housing Service and RSL partners. In addition, an RSL partner has delivered 27 specialist units to meet the housing and support needs of people with learning disabilities, with the first tenancies starting during 2021/22.

Similarly, Dumfries and Galloway Council's Restart/Move on project, set up during 2020/21 following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions after the first lockdown, involves a group consisting of its RSL partners meeting with its Housing Options and Homelessness Assessment Supervisors weekly to discuss allocations to homeless applicants that have been matched to a potential offer of permanent accommodation. This is to ensure that the potential offer is a viable and sustainable offer for the household moving forward, enabling discussion around any further support that might be required.

This initiative has found that, by fitting the property to the individual household, the number of appeals has decreased and there has been a reduction in the length of time spent in temporary accommodation for clients, which had initially increased due to Covid-19 restrictions. Monitoring will continue in order to gauge the impact on

tenancy sustainment. Consideration is currently being given to mainstreaming the project.

Private Rented Sector (PRS)

Improving accessibility to the private rented sector as a route out of homelessness is a key theme of settled accommodation within RRTPs. This can be a challenging area for local authorities, especially around affordability. Many have highlighted a range of measures to improve access and promote the private rented sector as a sustainable and accessible housing option.

In April 2020, Angus Council introduced its Rent Deposit Scheme to assist individuals by paying a cash deposit or rent in advance to a landlord on their behalf. The tenant makes a savings plan to repay the money back to the council. In addition Angus introduced a rent guarantee scheme. In its RRTP, Angus reported that 17 households were supported to access the PRS through a combination of these schemes. The council noted some challenges with the repayment plans and with housing officer resource being stretched, which led to the recruitment of two Private Sector Officers in 2021/22. Their role is to build engagement with landlords, support people to access the private rented sector and be a first point of contact for tenants and landlords to prevent homelessness from the private rented sector.

Since the service was launched in June the officers have received 53 enquiries:

- 19 referrals have been received for existing tenants experiencing difficulties from a range of sources including landlords, tenants and other services;
- 23 referrals have been received for people looking for assistance to access accommodation in the PRS; and
- 11 have been general enquiries.

Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Angus Councils worked together with Crisis to design and carry out an online survey of private landlords during August 2020. The aim was to capture the views of landlords and identify the role that the PRS could play in increasing access to sustainable solutions for those with the greatest housing need. This included gathering information on their experience of existing PRS access schemes and the effect of Covid-19.

Taking on board some of the landlord concerns, Aberdeenshire Council used RRTP funding to test a dedicated post of Housing Officer (PRS) for a fixed term of 12 months and has now agreed to make this post permanent. The role involves maintaining contact with landlords/letting agents and developing positive relationships to sustain tenancies and address at an early stage any issues that may threaten homelessness. This includes making referrals for housing support or benefits advice and mediation as well as promoting and administering Aberdeenshire's Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

South Lanarkshire Council established a Private Sector Access and Sustainment Project, administered by YPeople, which replaces the existing rent deposit scheme, expanding the service to include a new Innovation Fund which provides financial assistance to sustain private sector tenancies and prevent homelessness. RRTP funding of £20,000 is the smaller part of the financial contribution, with £140,000 from the local authority. While access to the PRS has been hit by the pandemic, this project has enabled tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.

Empty Homes

Nationally, Shelter Scotland has established the Scottish Government funded [Scottish Empty Homes Partnership](#), with an objective of bringing as many privately-owned empty homes back into use as possible. Some local authorities have implemented similar initiatives at a local level such as in Perth and Kinross where its Empty Homes Initiative has seen the council providing grants totalling £330,016 in 2020/21, bringing a total of 30 properties back into use.

Angus Council launched an Empty Homes Grant Fund in 2020/21 with a condition attached that the property must be let out at, or below, Local Housing Allowance levels for the relevant property size for a minimum of five years. Owners are also committed to renting their property to someone currently engaging with the housing service to explore their housing options.

Highland Council is recruiting a private rented sector/empty homes liaison officer in 2021/22 with a target of bringing 10 empty homes back into use over the next two years.

In 2020, Western Isles Foyer successfully adapted their model from the provision of supported accommodation in Foyer tenancies to one where the young person is allocated a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy by the Hebridean Housing Partnership with support from the Foyer. If sustained successfully, the tenancy converts to a permanent tenancy after approximately 12 months. Western Isles Council points out that, while not fully following the Housing First model, this model adheres to the principles of Housing First.

In Dumfries and Galloway, a number of housing support services have been recommissioned during 2020/21, including services for women and children experiencing domestic abuse and/or coercive control and one outreach housing support contract, to ensure continuity of service following the withdrawal of one of the service providers. During 2021/22, the review of services will continue with the recommissioning of all outreach housing support services.

A revised nomination agreement was put in place with Women's Aid East and Midlothian to provide those experiencing domestic abuse with settled accommodation as a first option. During 2020/21, three properties were allocated through this agreement. The number of properties allocated through this arrangement will be monitored locally during 2021/22.

Tenancy support/sustainment

Fife's Innovation Fund has the highest RRTP funding (£623,043) of any project in the Activities and Spend Template. It supports the provision of starter packs to enable resettlement to new tenancies and ensure all measures are taken to improve tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention linking to other projects such as the Women's Health Improvement Research Project (WHIR), the Hospital Intervention Projects and anti-poverty work within the Area Communities Teams. During the pandemic, what had originally been the provision of a set up starter pack with essential items only moved to assistance with a full package of furniture and

fittings of all items needed to set up a house and also some provision to transport furnishings and belongings to new properties. Over the year, 795 households were assisted with a mix of furniture, carpets and household items. During lockdown this was around 90 each month as opposed to 10 per month under the original scheme to assist with flow.

Renfrewshire Council provides enhanced starter packs. The council had carried out a survey with service users to establish which aspects of the existing starter packs could be improved upon and used this feedback to provide enhanced starter packs which include a double bed instead of a single bed, and providing credit for utility costs when moving in. Service users' feedback on the enhanced starter packs has been very positive, and over 250 enhanced starter packs have been provided since March 2020. A total of £75,000 is recorded as having been spent in 2020/21 on starter packs, with £25,000 from Ending Homelessness Together/RRTP funding and £50,000 from the local authority.

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First provides permanent, mainstream accommodation as the first response for people experiencing homelessness who have multiple and complex needs, for example, experiences of trauma, addictions and mental health problems.

The Scottish Government/COSLA Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan and the Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2020/21 set out the objective to scale up Housing First across Scotland. Local authorities have been asked to consider and implement Housing First as a default approach to homelessness for those with more complex needs.

The Housing First Pathfinder programme started in August 2018 across six local authority areas with Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire working in partnership. Up until 31 March 2021, a total of 483 people had accessed Housing First tenancies and support through this programme. Over the course of the final year of the Housing First Pathfinder programme, which ends on 31 March 2022, each local authority is working on mainstreaming arrangements to deliver their Housing First programme.

In addition to the Pathfinder programme, 248 Housing First tenancies had begun across 15 local authorities in Scotland at 31 March 2021. A breakdown of Housing First provision at 31 March 2021 is as follows:

Pathfinder local authority	Housing First in place	Plans for Housing First in 2021/22
Aberdeenshire	Angus	Argyll and Bute
Aberdeen City	East Lothian	Dumfries and Galloway
Dundee	Falkirk	East Ayrshire
Edinburgh	Highland	East Renfrewshire
Glasgow	Midlothian	Fife
Stirling	North Ayrshire	Inverclyde
	North Lanarkshire	Moray
	Renfrewshire	Scottish Borders
	South Ayrshire	
	South Lanarkshire	
	West Dunbartonshire	
	West Lothian	
	Western Isles	

Delivering a similar but different programme	No plans to implement Housing First
Perth and Kinross	East Dunbartonshire
	Clackmannanshire
	Orkney
	Shetland

Challenges

There has been wide acknowledgement across local authority RRTPs that the pandemic has severely limited the start-up and scale up of Housing First. Impact has varied from reduced capacity to support increased numbers of Housing First participants to delays in the service being implemented altogether. A number of local authorities have stated that the scaling up of Housing First will now be accelerated as a matter of urgency.

Extracts from individual RRTPs included:

- *The formal implementation of Housing First has been delayed in part due to competing priorities and in part due to Covid-19, however, work on Housing First will be accelerated and scaled up as a matter of priority in 2021/22.*
- *Reduced availability of housing in the last year has impacted on timescales to secure settled accommodation, however, this will be a focus of the Housing First programme in the coming year.*

Practice

A number of local authorities have chosen to tailor their Housing First service for particular groups of vulnerable people with multiple and complex needs. This section provides an overview of practice, as well as outlining some plans for implementation during 2021/22. It will also provide evidence of outcomes experienced by Housing First participants, which will be developed through the Scottish Government's Housing First monitoring framework.

Housing First for young people

West Lothian's Housing First for Young People project has been delivered through The Rock Trust and Almond Housing Association since 2017. All young people involved in the service are allocated a dedicated project worker who provides youth specific, flexible and adaptable support for as long as is required.

Fife Council commissioned a Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) and support service for under 25s in partnership with The Rock Trust. The Fife model is a blended approach of Housing First for Youth and short-term Housing Support for young people. Fife Council intends to create a referral process and will ensure that 21 spaces on HF4Y programme are used by young people either already known to the homelessness service, or to help prevent homelessness if there is a threat of losing their accommodation.

Housing First for women experiencing domestic abuse

A project has been agreed in East Lothian, in partnership with Women's Aid East and Midlothian, East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association, for four Housing First tenancies for women experiencing domestic abuse. This project will be funded by the Scottish Government's Third Sector Homelessness Fund.

Midlothian Council has revised the delivery of Housing First, with membership of the multi-agency core-group being reviewed in March/April 2021, now including representation from services who provide support to women experiencing domestic abuse. This provides an additional route to accessing Housing First, and also helps maintain the safety of the victim/survivor by ensuring perpetrators are not knowingly accommodated in an area that would put a person at further risk.

Housing First for prison leavers

North Ayrshire Council utilises a post from within its homelessness service to work with Scottish prisons, to provide direct advice and support to North Ayrshire residents who are detained within Scottish prisons, and to identify people who meet the criteria for Housing First. The officer liaises with the Housing First Team to

ensure both accommodation and service provision is ready for people at the point of prison release.

East Renfrewshire's Housing First pilot, which began during 2020/21, has the potential to offer prison leavers tenancies if they are not subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or Sex Offenders Liaison Officer (SOLO) criteria. This will involve partnership working with criminal justice colleagues and East Renfrewshire HSCP to identify tenants and assess support requirements.

Housing First as a prevention method

West Dunbartonshire Council has made the eligibility criteria for Housing First support more flexible and extended it to include people who have not been assessed as homeless, but have complex needs and have contact with West Dunbartonshire HSCP and may be at risk of homelessness.

Digitally excluded Housing First participants

North Lanarkshire Council was able to obtain 20 tablets from Connecting Scotland to distribute to Homes First participants. This has allowed participants to access and update benefits claims online, carry out reviews of their support plan and access online viewing platforms such as Netflix. There has been positive feedback from participants regarding this via a recent satisfaction survey which was shared and completed online.

West Dunbartonshire Council also secured funding from Connecting Scotland to distribute 25 tablets and dongles to Housing First tenants and residents of supported accommodation.

Positive outcomes of Housing First

Aberdeenshire Council introduced a Housing First pilot in July 2017. Outcomes of the council's Housing First scheme were assessed up until October 2020 and have shown an overall positive impact on participant outcomes with improvements in health and wellbeing, and decreases in substance use, criminal activities, admission to prison and increased tenancy sustainment.

The biggest impact of its Housing First scheme was a reduction in the number of admissions into prison custody: from the 41 participants included in the sample, 10 participants had never been in prison custody, 28 had a reduction in prison admissions, one had an increase and two had the same number of admissions prior to, and since, starting Housing First.

South Ayrshire Council began its Housing First service in January 2019. Participants of the service have reported significant progress in improving their lives. Feedback from participants has demonstrated the benefit of the support provided, particularly helping them resolve situations that would have been triggers for housing crisis in the past, including experiencing anti-social behaviour, access to healthcare, and household maintenance issues. Two participants specifically noted that they would have 'just handed their keys back' and 'would have been in jail' had it not been for the support received through Housing First.

South Lanarkshire Council reported that Housing First participants saw positive life improvements as a result of their Housing First support across the spectrum of indicators such as emotional and mental health, physical health, money management skills and self-care and living skills. One example noted is a significant reduction in the number of presentations to A&E over the year amongst the client group, with 63.6% reportedly presenting during April 2020 reducing to 15.2% during March 2021.

Future Developments for Housing First during 2021/22

Policy Developments

To support the scaling up and mainstreaming of Housing First, the Scottish Government has been working in partnership with Homeless Network Scotland on a suite of tools to support local authorities and their partners:

- Publication of a [National Framework](#) which provides a comprehensive overview to all organisations involved in developing and implementing Housing First, e.g. local authorities, health and social care partnerships.
- A "check-up" process has been developed to support the scale-up of Housing First and enable measurement against the Housing First principles. The

check-up process involves self-reflection, peer input and includes a sounding board of experts to help local authorities improve their programme.

- A dedicated monitoring framework to capture Housing First progress across Scotland's local authorities. The monitoring framework looks to collect data on the positive outcomes achieved through Housing First, support provided and rates of sustainment of all Housing First tenancies from 1 April 2021 on a quarterly basis.

Housing First monitoring reports can be found [here](#).

Mainstreamed Housing First Pathfinder Programme Delivery

As part of the transition of the Pathfinder programme into a mainstreamed service, the Scottish Government committed 50% of the programme costs from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 to ensure there was no cliff edge drop off to funding. This funding ended on 30 September 2021.

At 1 October, all six local authorities in the Pathfinder programme have mainstreamed their support provision and remain committed to delivering a Housing First programme. The mainstreaming arrangement for each Pathfinder local authority is as follows:

- **Aberdeen City Council's** Housing First service has been delivered by Turning Point Scotland since October 2021.
- **Aberdeenshire Council** began transitioning to their in-house Housing First service in May 2021. This programme had been running in parallel with the Pathfinder programme.
- **Dundee City Council's** main Housing First service is delivered by Transform Community Development (lead provider of the Housing First Pathfinder consortium) from October 2021.
- **City of Edinburgh Council** varied an existing procured housing support contract being delivered by Simon Community Scotland until March 2023 when the council will undertake a full tendering process.
- **Glasgow City Council's** Housing First service is continuing to be delivered by the consortium led by Turning Point Scotland.

- **Stirling Council** began delivering an in-house programme from October 2021.

An interim evaluation by i-SPHERE was published in [October 2021](#).

Dundee City Council is funding its mainstreamed Housing First Pathfinder programme service through savings from the reconfiguration of existing support services delivered across the hostel/temporary accommodation supply in the city. Dundee City Council has tailored its Housing First service to the needs of its client base. As such, the council has funded Dundee Women's Aid to deliver gender specific Housing First support, and Action for Children has received funding to deliver Youth Housing First. Both organisations will work in partnership with Transform Community Development, Dundee City Council's Housing Service and Dundee HSCP to deliver Housing First across the city.

Scaling up Housing First

RRTP returns received from local authorities indicate a further eight local authorities are expected to implement Housing First during the financial year 2021/22. Several local authorities also outlined plans for the scaling up of their Housing First Service.

Housing First for Youth

In West Lothian, through a combination of RRTP and social policy funding, The Rock Trust were able to expand their Housing First for Youth Service to support 17 young people in West Lothian in 2021/22. Fifteen young people have been supported to move into a permanent tenancy (the remainder are receiving support while they await accommodation). The project's overall tenancy sustainment rate currently stands at 93% with all but one young person sustaining their tenancy.

Similarly, Highland Council has indicated a priority to commence a Housing First for Youth model before 2024.

Housing First for Care Leavers

South Ayrshire Council confirmed that there are ongoing discussions with the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) regarding the expansion of Housing First to include young care leavers. If agreed and progressed, funding will be provided by South Ayrshire HSCP to cover the cost of this element of the service.

Housing First for women experiencing domestic abuse

West Dunbartonshire's RRTP outlines the potential use of the Housing First model for women experiencing domestic abuse, along with work with women's aid and violence against women and children partnerships, recognising that women may need different, specific services involved to resolve their homelessness.

Housing First for families

North Ayrshire Council has indicated that they are finalising a Housing First for families programme which will be in place during 2021/22. This follows a successful bid by a local RSL for funding from the Scottish Government's Homelessness Prevention Fund administered through the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

Scotland's Ending Homelessness Together action plan recognises that collaboration is essential to designing and delivering effective services. Importantly, this includes collaboration with people who have lived experience of homelessness. Furthermore, we have heard from people with lived experience that being able to access housing quickly, with the right level of support and security, is fundamental to moving on from being homeless. It is important, therefore, that input from people with lived experience of homelessness is seen as an integral part of the partnership working undertaken by local authorities in the continuous development of their RRTP.

Challenges

The review of RRTPs has shown that the pandemic has created obstacles for local authorities across the board, which includes the extent to which they were able to involve people with lived experience in the development and delivery of homelessness services. The extent to which lived experience is referenced in RRTPs varies.

Practice

Falkirk Council reported that it had developed an engagement plan to ensure lived experience continued to inform its service delivery during the pandemic. While face to face engagement has not been possible, Falkirk used a variety of other ways to promote participation, including online, postal, phone calls and its tenants' magazine 'Tenants Talk'. Falkirk also developed a homelessness consultation register with a view to further developing a homelessness network in the area. The register was used to consult on the main reason for temporary accommodation being refused, which helped the council to better meet the needs of its individual client groups. Falkirk has committed £20,000 in 2021/22 to link its prevention strategy with its consultation register and has committed to co-produce its prevention aspirations with those who have experience of relevant homelessness services.

During 2020/21, East Renfrewshire Council recruited a homelessness service design officer to primarily lead on the user led redesign of homelessness service. This has included coordinating a 'corporate responsibility' approach to homelessness

prevention across the local authority and HSCP services, and developing and coordinating service user coproduction of service redesign. Each service user involved in the research received a £10 voucher for their participation from RRTP funding.

As part of Fife Council's Homeless Prevention and Housing Options pathways, a Business Change Manager and two Housing Professionals have been appointed to develop and restructure Housing Access and Homelessness Prevention to a more streamlined person-centred service. Between August and October 2020, a 'Homeless Sprint' programme was undertaken by all Housing Access and Homelessness Officers to gain insight from applicants, partners and colleagues on better ways of working, gaps in service provision and a lived experience view.

East Lothian Council commissioned an external agency to survey service users in temporary accommodation to consider how services could be improved and agree a revised approach to service user engagement going forward, potentially linked to peer mentoring.

Glasgow's Alliance to End Homelessness involves service users in the design and development of service provision which is central to the Alliance's activity and governance structures. GCHSCP funds Homeless Network Scotland to support people with lived experience to be fully involved in the work of the Alliance.

South Lanarkshire Council's Homelessness Team is liaising with Homeless Network Scotland on the development of a training course for service users with a lived experience of homelessness to train as peer support workers, to be developed further in 2021/22.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the clear challenges which the year 2020/21 posed for all local authorities across Scotland, there is evidence of progress being made as we moved into 2021/22. This report has identified planned activity for the year 2021/22, in recognition of the progression of RRTPs across local authorities.

Housing First has proceeded apace in the current year (2021/22). At 31 December 2021 a total of 1031 tenancies had begun across 24 local authorities. A further three local authorities have reported that they will begin their Housing First programme before 31 March 2022. The remaining five local authorities are not currently planning on delivering a Housing First programme due to scale or an existing support programme is in place.

The Scottish Government homelessness statistical publication for the six month period from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021 shows that there has been an increase in the proportion of people securing settled accommodation in 2021 (82%) compared to 2020 (78%), particularly for Housing Association accommodation. This is testament to the success of the rapid rehousing approach in Scotland despite the unprecedented challenges of the previous year.

The statistics show that the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation continues to be higher than pre-pandemic levels.⁵ Through Scottish Government engagement at Housing Options Hubs and RRTP Sub-Group meetings, it is clear that local authorities are working to reduce the use of temporary accommodation through RRTP activities.

Following considerable work across local authorities and partners, the first three modules of the Training Toolkit were soft launched on 31 January 2022 which included: introduction to housing options; accessing accommodation; and maintaining existing accommodation. A full launch of the remaining three modules will take place in April, which will cover: health and wellbeing; income and

⁵ [Homelessness in Scotland: update to 30 September 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-2021-22/pages/10-12.aspx)

affordability; and employment and training. Local authorities have attested to the quality of learning materials provided within the Toolkit, which will serve to further develop and improve the service which people experience when interacting with housing and homelessness services across Scotland.

Whilst the RRTP Activity and Spend templates completed by each local authority provides detail of RRTP policy and practice across Scotland, as outlined within this report, evidence of the impact which this has had on outcomes for the people the plans are designed to support is limited. In recognition of this gap in reporting, the Scottish Government has developed the Activity and Spend templates for 2021/22 to capture the overall impact of RRTPs across Scotland.