SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL

Temporary Accommodation Strategy
## Contents

Introduction.................................................................................................................. 3  
Strategic Aims................................................................................................................. 4  
Legal Framework .......................................................................................................... 5  
Shetland Context .......................................................................................................... 6  
Temporary Accommodation – Needs Assessment ...................................................... 7  
Temporary Accommodation – Further Considerations .............................................. 9  
Monitoring .................................................................................................................... 12  
Engagement and Consultation ....................................................................................... 12
Introduction

The Temporary Accommodation Strategy sits within the context of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS), with one of its five main priorities being:

- Prevent homelessness through improved housing options, early intervention and advice and assistance. Where homelessness is experienced, provide a good quality service and support households as they progress to settled accommodation.

Although the service seeks to prioritise the prevention of homelessness, temporary accommodation must be available to fulfil statutory duties whilst we support households towards a settled housing outcome.

The Housing Service recognises that homelessness is a corporate responsibility and that a multi-agency approach is required to address the needs of homeless people in Shetland.

The Temporary Accommodation Strategy aims to ensure that there is an adequate supply of good quality temporary accommodation, with housing support where required, to meet the needs of homeless households in Shetland.

The strategy also recognises homeless households in Shetland can live in temporary accommodation for a longer period of time than the Scottish average, and seeks to minimise this through offering appropriate housing options wherever practical.

We recognise that provision needs to be made for the varied needs of those who find it challenging to access or sustain accommodation.

The strategy will enable a planned approach to the provision of temporary accommodation and ensure that its supply will take account of local factors, homelessness trends and relevant legislation. It also reflects the improvements recommended by the review carried out in 2005/06 by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and the report of the Communities Scotland Regulation and Inspection of 2007/08.

In developing this strategy we have considered equality issues and accessibility. We are committed to promoting equal opportunities and good community relations and to eliminating unlawful discrimination. We aim to ensure that applicants and tenants are dealt with fairly and that policies, procedures and services do not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital status, language, social origin or other personal attributes.

1 [www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/policies_housing_strategy.asp](http://www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/policies_housing_strategy.asp)
3 [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/find-and-compare-landlords/shetland-islands-council-0](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/find-and-compare-landlords/shetland-islands-council-0)
Strategic Aims

1. Increase Supply of Temporary Accommodation to meet assessed needs;

2. Provide good quality temporary accommodation;

3. Minimise time spent living in temporary accommodation;

4. Minimise the use of Unsuitable Accommodation to meet temporary accommodation needs;

5. Provide a temporary accommodation stock in line with particular needs;

6. Monitor and alter the stock used as temporary accommodation to meet needs and avoid stigma;
Legal Framework

Legislation covering the prevention and assessment of homelessness and the provision of temporary accommodation is contained within the:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987[^4]
- Homeless Persons Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Regulations 2002[^5]
- Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003[^6]
- Ministerial Statement on Abolition of Priority Need[^7]
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010[^8]
- The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014[^9]
- The Homeless Persons (Provision of Non-permanent Accommodation) (Scotland) Regulations 2010[^10]
- Code of Guidance on Homelessness[^12]
- Chartered Institute of Housing & Shelter Scotland Guidance on Standards for Temporary Accommodation (2011)[^13]

The local authority’s homeless service operates within these legal duties. We also make every effort to take account of voluntary guidance where it is practical and possible to do so in our policies, procedures and working practice.

[^7]: www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2012/3780111018187
[^12]: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/05/19432/38198
Shetland Context

Shetland Islands Council (SIC) is the most northerly authority in the UK and comprises more than 100 islands, 16 of which are populated. A previous Communities Scotland inspection recognised that “Shetland’s isolated location and dispersed communities presents particular challenges in delivering services”. The latest census figures indicate a population of 23,240\(^{14}\), approximately a third of whom live in Lerwick.

Shetland’s tenure profile is similar to the rest of Scotland. The Housing Service manages just under 2,000 council houses and the HNDA\(^{15}\) highlights a significant mismatch between the Council’s stock and the profile of applicants. There is a significant trend of depopulation from remote rural areas and migration to more central areas within Shetland. This further increases the fragility of rural areas alongside increasing the demand on central services.

Moreover, a high percentage of council stock, especially in rural areas, is three bedrooms or more. Our homeless statistics provide information to show the greatest demand is on smaller units, with 74% of homeless applicants being single person households.

To help alleviate this mis-match, there has been a greater emphasis on the provision of smaller units through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, whereby SIC & Hjaltland Housing Association work in partnership to provide new, affordable social housing. Provision of additional units for permanent relet will reduce the average length of time homeless applicants spend in temporary accommodation. Not only will there be direct allocations to homeless applicants, but there will also be allocations to transfer applicants, which will create further movement within the social housing stock.

\(^{14}\) www.gro-scotland.gov.uk
\(^{15}\) www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/policies_housing_need.asp
Temporary Accommodation – Needs Assessment

Placing an emphasis on homeless prevention work and housing options interviews has resulted in homeless presentation figures reducing year on year. In time, this should reduce the demand for temporary accommodation.

Table 1 documents the decline in homeless applications to Shetland Islands Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless presentation figures by reporting year</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – homeless application trends

Table 2 indicates the household make-up of homeless applicants remains steady, with single person households continuing to represent the majority of presentations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Person</td>
<td>74.40%</td>
<td>70.90%</td>
<td>73.80%</td>
<td>75.60%</td>
<td>74.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
<td>17.20%</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
<td>9.20%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>10.80%</td>
<td>4.60%</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with Children</td>
<td>6.40%</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other with Children</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total per year</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Homeless and Potentially Homeless Applicants by Household Type and year

However, whilst the number of applicants presenting as homeless are reducing, due to a lack of permanent move-on accommodation, there are still applicants in temporary accommodation who initially presented back in 2012.

The Housing Service currently uses 143 units of temporary accommodation for homeless households, which are spread throughout Shetland, and are a variety of sizes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 : Location of current temporary accommodation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lerwick</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mainland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Mainland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Location of Current Temporary Accommodation
### Table 4: Temporary accommodation by area and owner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>SIC</th>
<th>HHA</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lerwick</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mainland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Mainland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4 - Temporary Accommodation by Area and Owner**

Temporary accommodation is largely social rented stock and includes self contained flats and houses, as well as shared bed-sit accommodation.

We aim to offer temporary accommodation throughout Shetland, although supply is predominantly in Lerwick, as a result of both demand, and housing stock.

Limited transport, ferry links and services in many remote and rural areas has an impact on the locations where a homeless household will consider temporary accommodation. In addition to this, there is a high volume of staff employed in shift work with unsociable hours, most of which is located in and around Lerwick. However, we recognise applicant's needs and desires to say in rural areas, and look to accommodate this where possible.

Table 5 shows the split between shared and self-contained temporary accommodation.

### Table 5: Temporary Accommodation by location and shared/self-contained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Shared</th>
<th>Self-contained</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lerwick</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mainland</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Mainland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5 - Temporary Accommodation by location and shared/self-contained**

The use of shared accommodation enables us to work towards a better match between the stock we have available and the accommodation needs of our accepted homeless population.
Table 6 identifies a need to further increase the supply of single person accommodation, whilst also identifying a slight over-subscription of larger properties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Accommodation needs and stock</th>
<th>Live homeless applications - July 2016</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Current TA stock</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>shortfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One bedroom or bedsit</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two bedrooms</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three bedrooms +</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 - Accommodation Needs and Stock

However, there must be caution in reviewing the statistics. There are no temporary properties remaining void – the surplus three bedroom properties detailed above will be used to accommodate applicants who may require only two bedrooms (shortfall of 4 units).

In addition to this, it is important to retain a healthy stock of family sized accommodation to ensure the SIC does not breach the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

The conversion of larger properties into shared properties will be considered where appropriate, but this process will be measured and done through time.

**Temporary Accommodation – Further Considerations**

**Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

Whilst there are financial and management implications in creating HMO’s, they are a viable option, and one that may be rolled out to a greater degree.

HMO accommodation within Lerwick owned by the SIC and used as temporary accommodation is located at:

- 131b North Road (3 units with shared kitchen & bathroom facilities)
- 89 St Olaf Street (5 units with shared kitchen)
- 51 Burgh Road (8 units with shared kitchen & bathroom facilities)

**Shared housing**

A number of 2 & 3 bedroom houses have been converted to two person shared temporary accommodation in Lerwick and Landward areas. These conversions have enabled the Housing Service to make best use of available stock and maximise units for single homeless households. The conversion requires minimal alteration to the property and is cost effective. This also
makes it easy to return the property to a 3 bedroom house if demand changes.
We intend to continue to convert suitable properties for use in this way to better meet need, within available stock and budget constraints.

Homeless at Home

On occasion, it is possible for homeless applicants to present as homeless but be able to provide their own accommodation and be “homeless from home”. There are usually only a small number of applicants in this position at any one time and this can be an appropriate option where our preventative approach to homelessness and housing options advice have been considered. This would not be considered in circumstances where it would be inappropriate for the applicant to remain in the home.

Bed & Breakfast

It is nationally recognised B&B use is not an ideal alternative to mainstream temporary accommodation. However, due to the nature of supply & demand, B&B is used across all 32 Local Authorities as a means to accommodate homeless applicants. Applicants provided with this type of accommodation will be offered suitable alternatives as a priority.

Out of Hours

The Housing Service provides temporary accommodation 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This is managed in partnership with Out Of Office Duty Social Work services and Housing.
Temporary Accommodation - Priorities

1. Increase Supply of Temporary Accommodation to meet assessed needs

Our assessment highlights a need for an increase of self contained & shared units of temporary accommodation.

We will consider a range of options to meet this need, including property conversions, using larger properties as shared accommodation for single households, acquiring any vacant council buildings, progressing HMO licensing and working with partners or other housing providers to identify any further properties suitable for use as temporary accommodation.

2. Provide good quality temporary accommodation.

The Council’s Temporary Accommodation Policy\textsuperscript{16} outlines the standards and services provided in temporary accommodation.

The Void Assistant within the Housing Management Team arranges the turnover of temporary accommodation for relet. The aim is to keep the time taken for this turnover to a minimum, and property relet standards are detailed in the SIC’s Void Management Policy.

The Void Assistant completes a settling-in visit with all applicants moving in to temporary accommodation, and any actions required such as repairs required or replacement inventory items are actioned following the visit.

3. Minimise time spent living in temporary accommodation

The time spent living in temporary accommodation continues to increase and this is a priority area to be addressed in improving our homeless service.

The Housing Service has made a number of changes to its homeless service in recent years to help reduce the length of time households spend in temporary accommodation. This has been made more difficult by reductions in the number of properties available for let that meet our statutory duty to homeless households.

We have made a number of changes to our Allocations Policy to maximise access to housing options that included increasing the areas of choice an applicant can select as well as removing deferrals where an applicant wished to change their areas of choice.

4. Minimise the use of Unsuitable Accommodation to meet temporary accommodation needs;

The Housing Service does not generally breach the Unsuitable Accommodation order, and staff are acutely aware of the relevant regulations.

Bed and breakfast is used where there are no other feasible options for temporary accommodation. We aim to move any homeless household placed in B&B as soon as possible, and mechanisms are in place to manage this.

5. Provide a temporary accommodation stock in line with particular needs.

We work in partnership with other services, such as Social Work and Occupational Therapy, to assess specific housing need – such as level access, or a walk-in shower, and look to meet these needs where possible. This can on some occasions mean pursuing minor property adaptations, or, rarely, relocating an existing household from temporary accommodation that is adapted to meet specific needs.

6. Monitor and alter the stock used as temporary accommodation to meet needs and avoid stigma.

It is accepted as good practice that there should be a regular turnover of properties used as temporary accommodation and the Council considers at every property turn over whether the property should remain in use as temporary accommodation. Our considerations take in to account demand, the condition of the property and the length of time it has been in use.

There are some instances (ie properties with an HMO licence) where it is not cost-effective to review and change their use on a regular basis, however this would still be considered should the pattern of demand require it.

Monitoring

The Housing Service will continue to monitor its temporary accommodation needs and supply on an ongoing basis. Regular updates to this document will be made where they are required, using quarterly and annual returns to inform our understanding of changing demands.

Engagement and Consultation

Tenants in temporary accommodation are already asked for feedback on the quality of their accommodation and the services they receive from Housing. The strategy will look at ways of engaging them in developing and monitoring standards for the service.