SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL

Temporary Accommodation Strategy

JUNE 2018
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Introduction

The Temporary Accommodation Strategy sits within the context of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS),\(^1\) 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\(^2\), 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\(^3\).

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.

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1. [www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/policies_housing_strategy.asp](http://www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/policies_housing_strategy.asp)
Strategic Aims

- Increase supply of single person temporary accommodation to meet assessed needs;

- Provide good quality temporary accommodation, taking into account particular individual needs;

- Minimise time spent living in temporary accommodation;

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

- 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**
- **Housing (Scotland) Act 2001**
- **Homeless Persons Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Regulations 2002**
- **Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003**
- **Ministerial Statement on Abolition of Priority Need**
- **Housing (Scotland) Act 2010**
- **The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014**
- **The Homeless Persons (Provision of Non-permanent Accommodation) (Scotland) Regulations 2010**
- **The Children (Scotland) Act 1995**
- **Code of Guidance on Homelessness**
- **Chartered Institute of Housing & Shelter Scotland Guidance on Standards for Temporary Accommodation (2011)**

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/2012/9780111018187](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2012/9780111018187)
12 [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/05/19432/38198](http://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\(^\text{14}\), approximately a third of whom live in Lerwick.

Shetland’s tenure profile is similar to the rest of Scotland. The Housing Service manages in the region of 1700 council houses and the \textit{HND}A\(^\text{15}\) 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 75% 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 re-let 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

Whilst homelessness may not be visible in Shetland, and rough sleeping is not commonplace, there are households being assessed in line with homeless legislation on a daily basis. However, with 0.55% of the population presenting as homeless on an annual basis, the statistics are not too removed from national statistics, at 0.63%.

Table 1 tracks the number of homeless applications in Shetland year on year. The general trend has seen a reduction in presentations annually, with only a busy quarter four accounting for a slight increase in 2017/18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeless presentation figures by reporting year</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
<th>2016/17</th>
<th>2017/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – homeless application trends

Table 2 shows the household make-up of those presenting as homeless. The figures remain consistent, with single persons and couples making up the large majority, emphasising the needs for smaller units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Person</td>
<td>73.80%</td>
<td>75.60%</td>
<td>74.40%</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
<td>9.20%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with Children</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other with Children</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total per year</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The Housing Service currently uses 113 units of temporary accommodation for homeless households, which are spread throughout Shetland, and are a variety of sizes. The high level of supply in Lerwick is simply due to demand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lerwick</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mainland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Mainland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Location of Current Temporary Accommodation
Limited transport, ferry links and amenities in many remote and rural areas has an impact on the locations where a homeless household will consider temporary accommodation. Those wishing to be re-housed in a rural location would also have a greater opportunity to receive a permanent allocation, without the need for presenting as homeless.

Table 4 shows the split between shared and self-contained temporary accommodation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Shared</th>
<th>Self-contained</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lerwick</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mainland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Mainland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - 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 5 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></th>
<th>Live homeless applications – June 2018</th>
<th>Current TA stock</th>
<th>shortfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One bedroom or bedsit</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two bedrooms</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three bedrooms +</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 - Accommodation Needs and Stock

However, there must be some caution in reviewing the statistics. The surplus three bedroom properties detailed above will be used to accommodate applicants who may require only two bedrooms, which allows greater flexibility.

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 use of larger properties for shared units will be considered where appropriate, but this process will be measured and done through time.

**Temporary Accommodation – Further Considerations**

**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.

**Hoofields Redevelopment**

There are 26 self-contained temporary units (24 x one bedroom, 2 x two bedroom) situated within an area of Lerwick due for major redevelopment. The site is divided into small communities of 8 units, and the Housing service will be required to plan alternative accommodation to coincide with their eventual removal.
Temporary Accommodation - Priorities

- **Increase Supply of single person 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.

- **Provide good quality temporary accommodation in line with particular needs**

The Council's Temporary Accommodation Policy16 outlines the standards and services provided in temporary accommodation.

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.

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.

- **Minimise time spent living in temporary accommodation**

Reducing the length of time an applicant spends in temporary accommodation continues to be an area of high priority.

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.

Increasing the quota of permanent lets to homeless households, and converting temporary tenancies into permanent tenancies, are two ways the Housing service can achieve this.

- **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.

- **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 into account demand, the condition of the property and the length of time it has been in use.

**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.