

To: Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board

On: 17 August 2021

Report by: Director of Communities and Housing

Heading: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and Homelessness Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government issued guidance to all local authorities in 2018 on the production of Rapid Re-housing Transition Plans (RRTP).
 - 1.2 These 5-year plans were to be developed as a means of demonstrating how each local authority and its partners will ensure that those who are homeless are provided with a settled housing option (with the support they require) as quickly as possible, and minimise the time spent in temporary accommodation.
 - 1.3 A report providing an update on the development and implementation of an RRTP for Renfrewshire was approved by the Policy Board in August 2019, and it was agreed that progress would be reported to future meetings of the Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board.
 - 1.4 A further report detailing the progress made to date, and the allocation of funding from the Scottish Government to support the on-going implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan for Renfrewshire was approved by the Policy Board in January 2021.
 - 1.5 A Review paper summarising the progress over the first 2 years of the RRTP and challenges for the remainder of the 5-year period it covers has now been produced and is attached as Appendix 1 and a general update on homelessness in Renfrewshire and the impact of COVID19 is also provided in section 5.
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2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Policy Board:

- (i) note the progress made to date with the implementation of a RRTP for Renfrewshire, and the allocations of funding from the Scottish Government which are being used to support RRTP initiatives; and
 - (ii) note the update on homelessness in Renfrewshire and the impact of COVID19.
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3. Background

3.1 The Scottish Government established a Homelessness & Rough-sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) in October 2017. A key recommendation from the HARSAG, which was accepted by the Scottish Government, was that all local authorities would consult on and produce a 5-year Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan covering the period 2019 – 2024.

3.2 These plans detailed how local authorities would move to a situation where those who are homeless:

- are provided with accommodation more quickly
- spend less time in temporary accommodation
- have greater access to an up-scaled use of the Housing First model, and / or other support.

3.3 It was proposed that the Scottish Government's 'Ending Homelessness Together' fund may allocate resources to support and assist local authorities in the implementation of their RRTP's once they had been fully evaluated.

3.4 Key partners such as local and national Housing Associations, Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership and a range of 3rd sector organisations were fully consulted on the content of a RRTP for Renfrewshire.

3.5 The Scottish Government reviewed submissions made by local authorities and agreed with COSLA that funding for 2019/20 – 2021/22 would be allocated using a formula-based distribution model based on a 3-year average of homelessness assessments.

3.6 As noted in the previous Policy Board report, a full review of progress to date and the challenges for Renfrewshire's RRTP in 2022 - 2024 has been produced and is attached as Appendix 1.

4 Review of Renfrewshire's RRTP

4.1 The Scottish Government's guidance on RRTP's emphasised that the focus of RRTP's is to be on an upscaling of the Housing First approach and ensuring those who are homeless are provided with settled housing options – with appropriate support - as quickly as possible.

- 4.2 Funding for 2019/20 and 2020/21 was therefore used to increase the number of homeless applicants who are supported via the 'wraparound' support which is a key element of the Housing First approach, as well as the deployment of additional 'resettlement officers' to assist those moving from temporary accommodation in order to address the problems that can arise when settled tenancies commence. These were priority areas identified during the compilation of the RRTP for Renfrewshire.
- 4.3 There has been significant progress in implementing Renfrewshire's 5-year RRTP, and funding from the Council and annual allocations of funding from the Scottish Government have been deployed for measures which are in line with the priorities within Renfrewshire's 5-year RRTP. There is also substantial evidence of innovative partnership working, and a range of new measures in place to prevent homelessness and positively meet the needs of those who have nowhere to stay. This includes:
- the use of a Housing First approach in partnership with Turning Point Scotland and Blue Triangle H.A. being upscaled from 18 service users to 44, using both RRTP and Council funding.
 - launch of a 'shared living' initiative with Simon Community Scotland to support homeless applicants who want to share accommodation.
 - successful collective effort to resettle 400 homeless applicants from temporary accommodation to Council or RSL tenancies during COVID19 restrictions.
 - tenancy sustainment figures showing an increase in the proportion of homeless applicants who go on to sustain a Council tenancy for at least 12 months to 88.4% in 2020/21, from 80.4% the previous year.
 - Reduction in 'repeat homelessness' from nearly 10% in 2019/20 to under 8%.
- 4.4 COVID-19 has understandably had a significant impact on the implementation of RRTP's and local authorities' response to homelessness, particularly in relation to the number of lets to those who are homeless, the aim to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, and meeting support needs.
- 4.5 The full scale of the impact is likely to become clearer during 2021/22, and a stepped increase in the number of social rented lets to homeless applicants will still be required in years 3 – 5 of our RRTP.

5 Homelessness Update

- 5.1 With COVID19 restrictions being implemented in March 2020 and the closure of our Abercorn Street and George Street offices, initial access to advice, assistance and temporary accommodation for those in greatest housing need moved to being provided via telephone.

- 5.2 This telephone access has been provided on a 24/7 basis throughout the pandemic response, and over 5000 calls have been handled to date and 832 homeless applications made in 2020/21, which is broadly in line with previous years. The majority (over 80%) continues to be single person households.
- 5.3 Homeless Services and Housing Support staff ensure there is regular contact with homeless applicants, including face-to-face contact when required, whilst they are waiting for settled accommodation.
- 5.4 In line with almost every other local authority during 2020/21, the number of homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation increased particularly during the first 'lockdown' as lettings reduced, and B&B had to be used to augment the stock of furnished temporary accommodation.
- 5.5 However with a 'move-on' process being established, the subsequent resettlement of over 400 homeless households to secure Council and RSL tenancies from June / July 2020 onwards meant that the number staying in furnished temporary accommodation and B&B reduced from its peak in June 2020, and is currently at 199, which is almost in line with pre-COVID levels. We ceased using B&B in December 2020.
- 5.6 Despite the challenges in 2020/21, there were signs of some areas of further improvement in the delivery of services for those who are homeless, with satisfaction with temporary accommodation increasing to 94.7% from 90.2% in 2019/20, and the tenancy sustainment and repeat homelessness figures mentioned in 4.4, above.
- 5.7 There was an unavoidable overall reduction in the number of social rented houses let to those who were statutorily homeless, and there is a degree of caution about the potential for future spikes in homelessness during COVID19 recovery and the end of furlough arrangements. There will still be the need for a strong focus on letting Council / RSL properties to those who are homeless, in line with our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – funding from the Scottish Government will continue to be fully used to support the transition to rapid rehousing
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – any temporary posts to support the implementation of RRTP initiatives have been appointed in accordance with current HR procedures and are fully funded from Scottish Government allocations.
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
 - *Our Renfrewshire is fair - those who are homeless will be provided with settled housing options more quickly.*
 - *Building strong, safe and resilient communities – meeting the needs of those who are homeless and providing access to settled housing helps to support communities.*

- *Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all – those who are in housing need will be provided with settled housing options more quickly.*
 - *Working together to improve outcomes – RRTP's require local authorities and partners to work together to improve outcomes for those in housing need.*
4. **Legal – none**
 5. **Property/Assets – none**
 6. **Information Technology - none**
 7. **Equality & Human Rights**
 - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health & Safety - none**
 9. **Procurement - none**
 10. **Risk – none.**
 11. **Privacy Impact - none**
 12. **COSLA Policy Position – not applicable**
 13. **Climate Risk – none**
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List of Background Papers

- (a) Background Paper 1 'Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan – funding update' Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board on 19 January 2021.
- (b) Background Paper 2 'RRTP for Renfrewshire update' Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board on 20 August 2019.
- (c) Background Paper 3 'RRTP for Renfrewshire' Communities, Housing & Planning Services Policy Board on 30 October 2018.

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Communities & Housing Services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Tom Irvine, Tom.irvine@renfrewshire.gov.uk.



**Rapid Re-housing
Transition Plan for
Renfrewshire 2019-2024**

**REVIEW
2021**

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1. Introduction

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was established by the Scottish Government in October 2017.

One of the key recommendations made by HARSAG, which was accepted by the Scottish Government, was that each local authority should, in consultation with partners, develop and cost a 5-year Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan (RRTP).

The guidance on the development of RRTP's highlighted that where homelessness cannot be prevented, rapid re-housing means:

- a settled mainstream housing outcome, with support, as quickly as possible,
- time spent in any form of temporary accommodation is reduced to a minimum,
- when temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within a community.

The 5-year RRTP for Renfrewshire was produced in 2019 following extensive consultation with our partners, including service users and those with lived experience of homelessness.

This paper reviews the progress made in the first 2 years of the implementation of Renfrewshire's RRTP, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A summary and list of key conclusions are provided in Section 11, page 32.

This Review should be read in conjunction with our '*Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 – 2024*' and the associated costed action plan.

2 Summary of year 1 progress – 2019/20

During year 1:

- we upscaled our Housing First model - up to 30 individuals being supported at any one time from the previous total of 18 - see 5.1
- we recruited 3 x Resettlement Officers on a temporary basis to expand and develop the assistance provided to those moving from temporary accommodation – see 5.2
- enhanced ‘Starter Packs’ were launched, based around customer feedback. - see 5.3
- 6 of our temporary accommodation properties were ‘flipped’ from temporary accommodation to being settled tenancies for homeless applicants - see 5.4.
- we developed a unique Shared Living Initiative mobile phone App, and worked with Simon Community Scotland to roll this out to enable and promote shared living within Renfrewshire - see 5.5
- we appointed a RRTP Co-ordinator to ensure that all required agreements, initiatives, and ongoing monitoring arrangements were in place to oversee the successful delivery of Renfrewshire’s Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan within budget.
- we established a RRTP Steering Group with key stakeholders, and chaired by Head of Housing Services, to support the delivery and implementation of the aims and objectives of Renfrewshire’s RRTP.
- we established close working relationships with senior housing managers from Renfrewshire Council and Registered Social Landlords to regularly focus on and review key aspects of our RRTP and jointly agree their contribution in the delivery of the RRTP objectives.

Whilst the Scottish Government RRTP funding of £186,000 was allocated for year 1, the majority had to be carried forward to year 2 due to:

- the funding allocation being confirmed part way through the financial year,
- the lead-in time for projects to get underway / upscaled, and
- recruitment time for RRTP funded posts.

The table on the following page details what the Scottish Government RRTP funding was used for in year 1:

Table 1

RRTP Funding from Scottish Government YEAR 1 - 2019/20		
Action Plan Ref *	Rapid Rehousing Proposal	Annual Cost (£)
1, 2, 7	Upscaling of Housing First programme	£29,000 (1)
4	Tenancy Resettlement	£15,000 (2)
1, 3	Provision of Enhanced Starter Packs	£5,000 (3)
3	Temporary accommodation – ‘flip’ properties	£10,000
all	RRTP Coordinator post	£22,000
6	Shared Living Initiative	£12,000
all	RRTP Evaluation	£1,750
6	Evaluation of pilot Shared Living initiative	£1,250
TOTAL SPEND YEAR 1		£96,000

* Reference numbers are taken from original RRTP action plan submitted in 2019

- (1) The total annual cost of Housing First activity in Renfrewshire also included a further £100,000 from Renfrewshire Council, plus the final year of funding from The Big Lottery Fund to our partner Turning Point Scotland.
- (2) This funded an upscaling of the provision of a number of posts already deployed within the Council and RSL's to provide resettlement assistance. The 3 new temporary posts were only filled towards the end of the financial year.
- (3) This topped-up a budget of £50,000 already used for the provision of starter packs

3 Summary of year 2 progress – 2020/21

During year 2:

- we further upscaled our Housing First model to support 44 individuals via 2 different support providers, from 30 being supported in Year 1 – see 5.1
- we fully implemented our tenancy resettlement assistance initiatives using existing resources and 3 new temporary posts funded via RRTP funding – see 5.2
- 239 enhanced ‘Starter Packs’ were provided – see 5.3
- a further 16 temporary accommodation properties were ‘flipped’ from temporary to settled accommodation for homeless applicants – see 5.4
- we fully implemented our Shared Living Initiative with Simon Community Scotland to enable and promote shared living within Renfrewshire - see 5.5
- we funded 0.5 post via Say Women to provide emotional support for young women aged 16 to 25 who are survivors of sexual abuse, rape, or sexual assault - see 5.6
- we established an inhouse ‘matching and resettlement team’ to enable homeless applicants to better transition from temporary to settled accommodation during the Covid-19/ Lockdown restrictions.
- all homeless services and housing support frontline staff were deemed ‘essential workers’, and risk assessments and provision of PPE ensured these workers provided assistance and support throughout the COVID19 response. All these officers were also offered COVID19 vaccinations.
- we continued with one-to-one meetings with the housing managers of Renfrewshire Council and the Registered Social Landlords to discuss key aspects of the RRTP and highlight where their contribution can support and assist in the delivery of the RRTP – especially during COVID19 crisis and recovery.
- there was an increase in the number and proportion of RSL lets to homeless applicants
- number of Council tenancies let to homeless applicants which were abandoned within a year reduced to 14, from 69 in 2019/20.
- the satisfaction rate from service users with the temporary accommodation provided increased to 94.7%, a record level.

- the average number of days spent in different types of temporary accommodation decreased from 93 days to 72 days
- the tenancy sustainment rate for homeless applicants living in settled Council tenancies for more than 12 months, increased (see page 16)

The Scottish Government provided £187,000 of RRTP funding in Year 2, and there was an unavoidable underspend carried forward from Year 1.

Whilst this is less than what was required to fully implement our RRTP, Table 2 below details how this funding was used:

Table 2

RRTP funding from Scottish Government - YEAR 2 2020/21		
Action Plan Ref *	Rapid Rehousing Proposal	Annual Cost (£)
1,2,7	Upscaling of Housing First programme	£84,000 (1)
4	Tenancy resettlement	£85,000 (2)
1, 3	Provision of enhanced starter packs	£25,000 (3)
3	Temporary accommodation – ‘flip’ properties from temp accommodation	£15,000
all	RRTP Coordinator Post	£43,000
6	Shared Living Initiative	£29,000
8	Say Women – 0.5 post	£6,000
6	Independent evaluation of ‘Shared Living’	£650 (4)
TOTAL SPEND YEAR 2		£287,650

* Reference numbers are taken from original RRTP action plan submitted in 2019

- (1) The total annual cost of Housing First was £240,000. The Council contributed £155,000.
- (2) This funded an upscaling in the number of posts with a resettlement focus within the Council and RSL's
- (3) This topped-up a Council budget of £50,000 already used for the provision of starter packs
- (4) We commissioned an independent evaluation of our pilot Shared Living initiative prior to apportioning RRTP funding for a roll out in partnership with Simon Community Scotland

In section 9 of this Review, we have detailed how funding has been allocated in Year 3.

However firstly, in sections 4 – 8, we have outlined the impact of COVID 19 on our RRTP, provided an evaluation of the RRTP related initiatives to date, and detailed the impact this has had on our original RRTP aims.

4. Homelessness and the impact of COVID-19

Nature and Scale of Homelessness in 2020/21

Number

Our RRTP provided substantial analysis on the nature, context, and scale of homelessness in Renfrewshire in recent years.

In 2020/21, we dealt with 2084 housing advice cases, which resulted in 832 homeless applications.

This was broadly in line with the previous year, and there continues to be little variation from our 5-year average figures of 2011 and 838 respectively.

As before, the largest demand is still from single applicant households, which continue to represent more than 80% of all applications.

Reasons for homelessness

When comparing the recorded main reasons for homelessness between 2019/20 and 2020/21:

- 'Asked to leave' increased by nearly 7%
- 'Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent' increased by nearly 3%

These reasons for homelessness account for more than two thirds of all homeless presentations in Renfrewshire.

There was a reduction in repeat homelessness from nearly 10% in 2019/20 to under 8%, and a significant reduction in clients presenting where they advised that they had been sleeping rough at some point during either/or the 3 months or the night preceding presentation. The former reduced from nearly 12% in 2019/20 to just over 5% in 2020/21 and the latter from just over 6% to 2.5%.

Length of time to complete duty

The average length of time to conclude duty increased from just over 23 weeks in 2019/20 to 25.55 weeks, largely as we were unable to move households from temporary accommodation into settled accommodation as quickly as before due to the impacts of COVID-19 – especially during the first lockdown at the end of March 2020.

Temporary accommodation

At the height of the pandemic, there were 257 households in temporary accommodation in June 2020 which was 35% higher than the number we would normally accommodate temporarily at one time.

As in 2019/20, we were able to offer temporary accommodation to 100% of the homeless applicants who required it.

Whilst we had to make use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation in 2020/21, service users spent no more than 9 days on average in B&B as we ensured they were moved on to more suitable, fully furnished self-contained accommodation in the community, as it became available. This is covered in the following section on the impact of COVID19

Impact of COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 on the ability of the Council and partners to meet some of the aims and objectives of our RRTP was significant.

It particularly became more challenging to:

- achieve a stepped increase in the number of lets from both Renfrewshire Council and Registered Social Landlords,
- reduce the need for temporary accommodation,
- reduce the average length of time to conclude duty,
- maximise the benefits from initiatives like Housing First and Shared Living given the restrictions on face-to-face contact during 'lockdown'.

We had hoped to reduce both the number of temporary accommodation properties used for those who are homeless and the average length of time to conclude duty. However the pandemic required an initial increase in the provision of properties in order to meet the demand for temporary accommodation as we were unable to move service users on from temporary accommodation into settled accommodation, particularly in the early months of lockdown restrictions. This is covered in more detail in Section 5 of this Review.

The pandemic also meant reverting to using Bed & Breakfast accommodation on occasions between April 2020 until December 2020 - something we have not had to rely upon for several years. Bed & Breakfast was used on 331 occasions within this period.

In order to be able to move customers on from temporary accommodation and freeing up spaces for new service users, we developed an in-house 'matching and resettlement team' within Homeless & Housing Support Services to enable service users to be assisted to move from temporary accommodation into settled tenancies under the constraints of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns.

This involved a small team of officers dedicated to the 'matching' of properties to homeless applicants, and a resettlement team from Homeless Services, Housing Support and 3 new post funded via RRTP who dealt with everything from contacting utilities companies, carrying out 'virtual' property viewings and arranging the signing of tenancy agreements.

We no longer required the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation from December 2020 onwards as a direct result of the positive impact the new dedicated 'matching and resettlement team' (and the processes they developed) had on successfully moving service users out of temporary and in to settled accommodation.

Whilst the number of statutory homeless cases for 2020/21 was comparable with the numbers we have seen over the last 5 years, there was a reduction of nearly 20% in the number of social rented lets for 2020/21 when compared to 2019/20 (see section 6)

This has been due to a number of COVID-19 and lockdown related factors such as fewer properties being made available for let, unavoidable delays in repairing empty properties, and the restrictions which made it challenging to move people to settled accommodation.

We expect that we may not yet have seen the full scale of homelessness throughout the COVID-19 crisis due to the cross-sector ban on tenancy repossession, and we may yet see an increase in presentations from across all sectors when this is lifted, as well as an associated increase in demand for housing support.

5 Evaluation of key RRTP initiatives

Before moving on to detail the proposed expenditure in Year 3 of our RRTP, this section evaluates the impact of the RRTP initiatives to date.

5.1 Upscaling of Housing First

5.1.1 WRAP (Working to Reconnect and Achieve Potential)

Established in December 2019 in partnership with Blue Triangle Housing Association, WRAP is a short-term, flexible, wraparound Housing Support service for people who are homeless and wanting to engage with support staff in a person-centred approach to resettle into the community, sustain their tenancy, and achieve their own outcomes.

WRAP provides support along the lines of a Housing First approach, via 3 workers employed by BTHA.

WRAP has been funded jointly from the Council's Housing Support budget, (£26k pa) and RRTP funding (£84k pa).

A total of 58 referrals were made to the service in the first year, and 32 service users are currently being supported via WRAP and benefitting from the Housing First approach that is applied.

Initial outcomes showed a significant reduction in support requirements across multiple outcome factors including, but not limited to, mental health, accommodation and self-esteem.

Findings also showed a significant improvement in service-users uptake of assistance from wider services, a reduction in re-offending and offending behaviour, and enhanced understanding of personal money matters and budgeting. See Table 4

Whilst it is early days, there are clear signs that WRAP is having a positive impact on tenancy sustainment levels.

As a result of the scale of success in the first year of operation, WRAP is being rolled forward to 2021/22.

Criteria and Referrals

Table 3 - Summary of WRAP referrals

WRAP referrals	Totals
No. of referrals received	58
Age Range	19 - 53 yrs.

WRAP referrals	Totals
Male	35
Female	17
Primary Needs - People who are homeless, requiring assistance to sustain housing	58
Secondary Needs - misusing substances	25
Secondary Needs - mental health issues	23
Secondary Needs - fleeing violence	3
Secondary Needs - leaving prison	4
Secondary Needs - people with a disability	1
Secondary Needs - not given	2

Table 4 – WRAP outcomes to the end of March 2021

Service User's Outcomes	Total
Moved to settled tenancy from homeless temporary accommodations	22
Improved engagement with health, drug and other services	32
Service users with history of convictions not re-offending	17
Increased benefit uptake and negotiated financial payments	24
Accessed Community Care Grants and starter pack items	20
Improved mental health and access to relevant services	17
Improved physical health and access to services to address physical ailments	23
Improved budgeting and financial skills	26
Improved access to training and employment	8
Increased engagement with criminal justice system	9
Improved relationship and contacts with family and friends	25

As an additional measure of support, WRAP and Housing Support Services have provided clients with mobile phones during the COVID-19 restrictions to enable them keep in regular contact with support.

Thanks to a successful funding application from one of the WRAP workers, the service has also recently been awarded 6 iPads and 6 MiFi devices from Connecting Scotland.

These resources will help clients supported by the service to stay connected with family and friends, take part in college or training and be able to carry out online tasks including applications and forms for benefits, housing, health care and finance.

"I was contacted a little while ago by an Intensive Support Worker from WRAP whom I liaised with to enable their client to register with a GP Practice.

This case was not straightforward and related to many other factors. The Intensive Support Worker worked tirelessly to support their client. I was immensely impressed by their 'stickability' to meeting their client's needs."

Quote from Health, Homelessness and Housing Lead Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership, June 2021

WRAP Case Study

M has had 2 previous homeless applications since 2016 with the most recent application in 2019 after fleeing violence from where he was sofa surfing.

M was diagnosed with schizophrenia 4 years ago and had not been stable on medication until recently. M has previous history of childhood trauma which has resulted in him being hospitalised due to suicidal ideation and attempted suicide attempts.

M was linked in to WRAP service whilst staying in temporary accommodation to receive ongoing intensive housing first type support and get linked in with mental health services.

Since engaging with WRAP, M has moved out of temporary accommodation and resettled in a tenancy which is suitable for his long-term housing needs. WRAP workers were having daily contact to set up and assist M with resettling into his tenancy to help reduce the stress and anxieties he had.

Assistance was given to deal with any mail and encouragement and practical support to go shopping for items for the home, as well as support to apply for grants to furnish his tenancy.

M has developed the skills required to sustain settled housing independently and is confident now to go food shopping and paying bills. WRAP support with an outstanding Court Case which has still to be heard, will hopefully result in an alternative to a custodial sentence.

M now has contact with WRAP support reduced to 3 times per week which is varied in the form of face to face support, text, or calls. M has been referred to Impact Arts and has been supplied with an iPad and has registered for online courses on mental health. Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, a review of M's support has been carried out over Microsoft Teams, which was positive for M.

M continues to attend mental health appointments and is stable on medication.

He is still sustaining his tenancy.

*"My life before WRAP service wasn't a life, I didn't want to be alive.
WRAP has been a life saver and I'm very thankful.
I've been with WRAP for over a year when helps been needed.
I've had help with WRAP with going shopping, doctors, psychiatrist and making me feel wanted.
If I didn't have help from WRAP I'd be dead, it's been a life saver.
I've got some confidence now because of help and I go to college.
My life now is getting much better thanks to WRAP I'd be lost. I get other help from CPN and Charleston Centre. I have loved the help so thank you very much 10/10"*

Quote from M

Due to initial signs of success covered in this review, WRAP is being rolled forward to 2021/22.

5.1.2 Housing First - Turning Point Scotland

A Housing First model delivered in partnership with Turning Point Scotland was established in Renfrewshire 2013.

This was the first local authority funded Housing First service in Scotland.

The service was augmented by Big Lottery Funding, which ran out in February 2020.

The service has continued with funding coming exclusively from Renfrewshire Council, and continues to support up to 15 service users at any one time.

5.2 Tenancy resettlement

Our revised approach to tenancy resettlement was developed following customer consultation and is a proactive and practical approach to help those who are homeless to establish and maintain their settled tenancy.

It has been further developed in response to the relatively low tenancy sustainment rate for Council tenancies by homeless applicants, and the number of tenancies that were subsequently abandoned.

An enhancement of tenancy resettlement assistance is seen as a key principle in meeting the overall aims of Renfrewshire's RRTP, and it became a particularly important priority during our response to COVID-19

Since April 2020, and in line with the procedures developed in response to the COVID-19 crisis, 290 service users have been assisted to settle in their new homes using existing resources from within the Council's Homeless & Housing Support Services teams, as well as 3 new temporary posts funded via Scottish Government RRTP funding allocation.

This has built on the measures already in place which had already delivered substantial improvement in tenancy sustainment – those who were homeless and sustained a Council tenancy for more than 12 months increased to 88.4% in 2020/21 from 80.4% the previous year (this figure was at 72.1% in 2015/16).

We now :

- Assist households with the practical challenges of setting up a home
- Arrange 'video / virtual' viewings during lockdown, and sign leases with new tenants at the point when they move into their new home
- Help services users to better understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- Set up utilities in new tenancies and clear any debts on the meters and liaise directly with utility companies
- Co-ordinate the delivery of Community Care grant items and 'starter pack'
- Ensure all welfare benefits are in place and no rent arrears are accruing at the start of the tenancy
- Maintain regular access to advice and assistance for the service user
- Carry out tenancy 'health' checks on a quarterly basis for 1 year to help identify early warning signs
- Liaise with other agencies when concerns are highlighted
- Assist service users to engage in wider community support
- Liaise directly with local Housing Officers to support a positive working relationship and take a joint approach to deal with any emerging issues.

Feedback

When requesting feedback in the form of a satisfaction survey from service users who had been assisted via the new approach to resettlement, every one of the 28 service users who responded rated the process for 'moving on' as either 'good' or 'excellent'.

Below are just a few of the comments made about the service received:

“Just happy with the whole process. Always kept up to do date. Not one problem.. very easy and not stressful. Really straight forward and really pleased with it all.”

“Everyone was very pleasant; everything was fully explained. No issues. Nothing but good praise. Couldn’t have went any better and really couldn’t have asked for more. Really pleased.”

“I was happy with the whole process. I would recommend continuing with setting up the flats prior to signings as this allowed me to move in immediately.”

“I was really impressed with the whole process, made it so much easier that all my goods were in place for me when signing for the property, allowed me to move in immediately. A big thanks to all the staff involved in my case.”

Case Study

J is a 42 year old man who became homeless in April 2020

This was J’s fourth homeless application having been housed on each previous occasion. J never settled in any of his properties; abandoning one, not moving into the other as he had no furniture and terminating the tenancy of another when he received a prison sentence.

J suffers from anxiety, has addiction issues and has been in/out of prison since he was aged 16 years.

J was resettled in his current tenancy by staff using the new approach and comments:

“Everything was amazing. I suffer from depression, really bad mental health, and when I opened the door, it took a massive weight off my shoulders.

Everything was done, I didn’t need to worry about how or when I’d get this or that. So stress free. Was overwhelmed ...massive help.

Staff were amazing. Polite and friendly. Explained anything I didn’t understand. Others don’t have my mindset. Recommend this style for the future...usually don’t respond well to officials but didn’t feel like that, and from get go to now just been amazing, and just so thankful to everyone.”

Impact of Tenancy Resettlement Assistance

The positive impacts for service users and housing providers since the introduction and enhancement of the tenancy resettlement measures are:

- enabled customers to move from temporary accommodation into permanent settled accommodation during lockdown
- Pioneered the use of 'virtual viewings' of properties via videos
- prevented customers having to stay in bed and breakfast accommodation
- staff 'took up the strain' of dealing with utility companies
- fewer abandoned tenancies for homelessness applicants – down to 14 in 2020/21 from 69 in 2019/20
- reduction in new tenant rent arrears
- improved communication with local housing officers and other partner agencies
- improved engagement with wider community-based support services
- property in move-in condition for the service user
- practical assistance available to customers
- early warning signs of possible un-sustained tenancy

5.3 Starter packs

In 2018/19, we conducted a survey of homeless service users on what items they thought were the essential items to help them effectively maintain and sustain their tenancy.

We have since in years 1 and 2, provided 239 enhanced Starter Packs based around customer feedback. The packs now include a double rather than a single bed, a microwave, a kettle, a toaster, cutlery, and plates.

We also give service users the option of having their new home 'powered up' prior to occupation. This credit allows individuals to be able to use either gas or electricity immediately and further increases the chances of the tenant smoothly moving into their settled housing, and go on to sustain the tenancy (dealing with utility companies was regularly featuring as a 'stresser' by those who had moved to new tenancies).

5.4 'Flipping' Tenancies

We currently 'flip' furnished properties on occasion from temporary accommodation to secure tenancies, when the property has already been used for over 7 years as furnished temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.

In the first 2 years of RRTP, 22 temporary accommodation properties were 'flipped' from temporary to secure tenancies – 6 in year 1 and 16 in year 2, and we intend to continue this, where feasible, in partnership with housing providers.

'Flipping' is best applied when it forms part of a planned reduction in a stock of temporary accommodation – see discussion on the reduction of temporary accommodation in Section 7.

5.5 Shared Living Initiative

The Shared Living Initiative is a flat sharing initiative between Renfrewshire Council and Simon Community Scotland designed to allow service users to self-select or match with each other via a dedicated phone app.

This empowers customers to improve their circumstances and provides opportunities to find settled accommodation. It has been designed to mitigate concerns from a landlord perspective, as well as an opportunity for individual homeless people to have the option of flat-sharing, and is a meaningful response to the mismatch between the high proportion of single person homeless households and low availability of one bedroom accommodation.

COVID-19 and the associated 'lockdowns' have made Shared Living more challenging, however we are hopeful that this will be a viable option for some of our service users in the coming years, particularly those who struggle with loneliness and isolation. Strong links have been established with Renfrewshire's Invest programme which will be a valuable resource to assist service users into training and employment.

Since it launched, 20 service users have been supported resulting in 6 Shared Living tenancies being created.

5.6 SAY Women Project

Say Women offers emotional support for young women aged 16 to 25 who are survivors of sexual abuse, rape, or sexual assault and who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness.

Through our RRTP, we funded a 0.5 post via Say Women to deliver support to service users and provide key staff in homeless / housing services with increased capacity through SAY WOMENS specialised training and consultation.

To date they have assisted 8 young women over 43 sessions and 83 welfare calls.

With continued engagement, Say Women aim to prevent repeated cycles of homelessness and increasing tenancy sustainment for the young woman they work with, and a detailed plan has been established on how the service can develop.

Quote from service-user

' I find you (SAY WOMEN worker) easy to talk to, you are not judging me but listening to what I am saying.I am realising that my past has had an effect on how I am just now, and I want to get better '

5.7 RRTP Co-ordinator

We appointed a RRTP Co-ordinator to liaise with senior officers within the Council, partner organisations as well as the Scottish Government, in order to ensure that all required agreements, services and ongoing monitoring arrangements are in place to oversee the successful delivery of Renfrewshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, within budget.

Rapid Rehousing Steering Group

We established a Rapid Rehousing Steering Group with key stakeholders, which was chaired by our Head of Housing. The aim was to assist in the delivery and implementation of the aims and objectives of Renfrewshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

The initial meeting took place on October 2019 and it was agreed that in order to adhere to the Scottish Government RRTP guidance and Renfrewshire's 5-year Plan, there would need to be a focus on:

- an increase in the number and proportion of lets to homeless applicants
- an upscaling of Housing First and other tenancy resettlement and sustainment measures
- a reduction in the length of time homeless applicants stay in temporary accommodation

We committed to presenting an agreed 'dashboard' of all key performance areas that the steering group would monitor in order to track the impact of Renfrewshire's Plan.

It was highlighted that Renfrewshire has more than 80% of homeless applicants seeking 1 bedroom type accommodation, and agreed that some of the RSLs may need to review their allocation process in order to increase offers/lets.

Simon Community Scotland and Blue Triangle Housing Association delivered presentations to all stakeholders on their support services, and virtual meetings will continue in 2021.

Joint approach

We established one-to-one meetings with the senior housing managers of Renfrewshire Council and the Registered Social Landlords to discuss key aspects of the RRTP and highlight/agree where their contribution could assist in the delivery of the RRTP. This involved producing and sharing individual, tailored reports for each stakeholder.

6. Lets to those who are homeless

Introduction

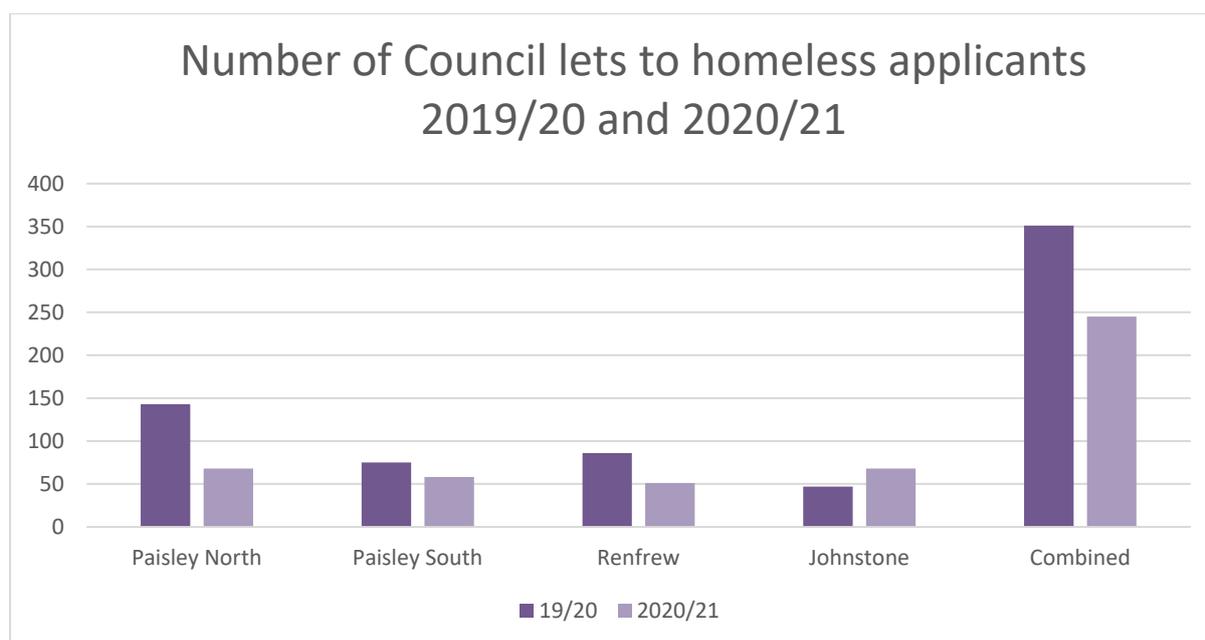
In the 5-year RRTP for Renfrewshire, it was highlighted that a **stepped increase in the number and proportion of social rented lets to those who were statutorily homeless** would be a key factor in meeting the objective of providing a settled mainstream housing outcome, with support, as quickly as possible.

Table 5 below compares the number of Council lets to homeless applicants in 2020/21 against 2019/20

In 2019/20, the Council made 351 lets to homeless applicants. In 2020/21 the figure was 245 - 106 fewer lets.

This reduction of 106 lets was due to the impact of COVID-19 / lockdown restrictions.

Table 5

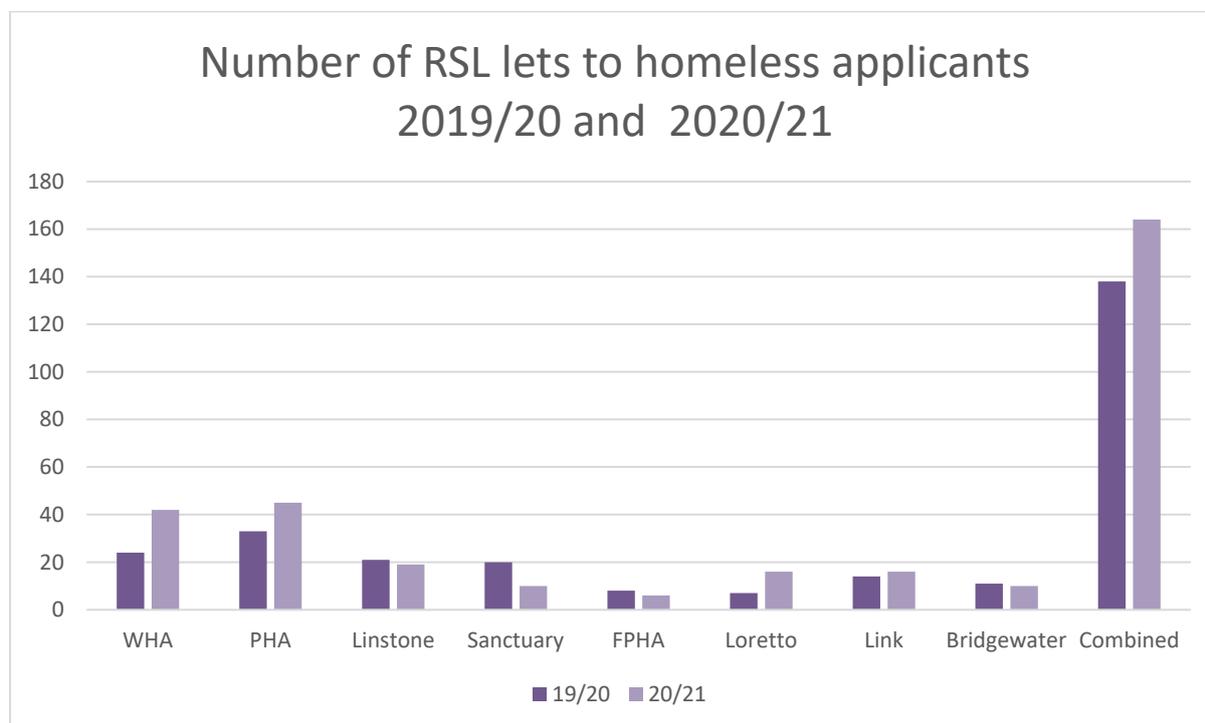


Source – Renfrewshire Council house allocation records

Table 6 compares the number of RSL lets to homeless applicants in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

In 2019/20, RSLs made 138 lets to homeless applicants, in 2020/21 the figure was 164 - an increase of 26 lets. Paisley Housing Association and Williamsburgh Housing Association were mainly responsible for this net increase.

Table 6



Source – Records provided by RSL's

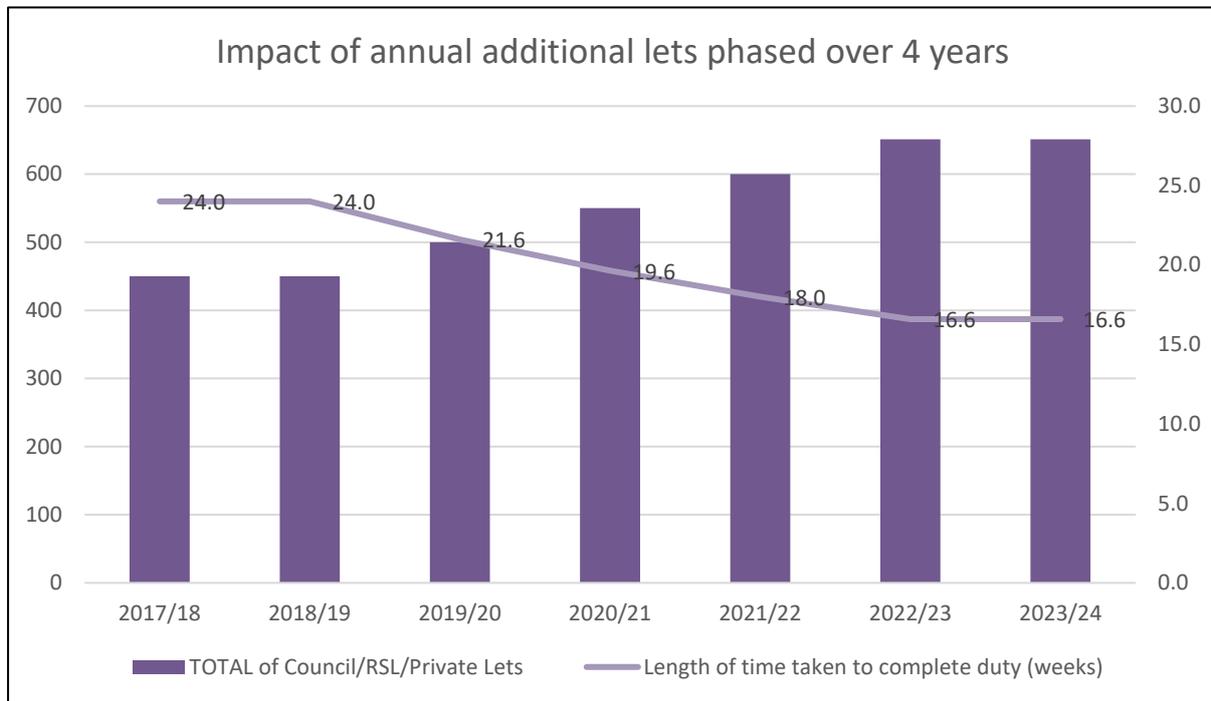
The combined total number of Council and RSL lets for 2019/20 and 2020/21 has been 489 and 409 respectively.

Our forecast via the RRTP Data and Analysis Template completed in 2019, was that 455 and 600 social rented lets in Years 1 and 2 would be required in order to deliver a noticeable improvement.

We also modelled in our original RRTP 2019 – 2024, how the relationship between a **stepped increase in the number of lets** could impact on a **reduction in the length of time to conclude duty**.

In the model, reproduced on the next page, we showed the impact of a gradual increase in the annual number of lets (approximately 10% each year) spread over the 5 years of the RRTP.

Table 7



Source : Renfrewshire's RRTP 2019 – 2024

The impact on the average length of time a household would be homeless is that it reduces gradually from **24 weeks** (which was already considerably below the Scottish average) to **16.6 weeks** by 2023/24.

The impact of COVID-19 in Year 2 (2020/21) has been covered in section 4 of this paper, and it will be challenging for the number / proportion of lets to those who are homeless to increase sufficiently to make up for the lower number of lets in 2020/21, however this will be closely monitored by the RRTP Steering Group.

Impact of Renfrewshire Council's Regeneration Programme in years 3 – 5

A substantial Regeneration Programme covering a large proportion of Renfrewshire Council's housing stock will commence in 2021/22.

This will include some demolition of stock and have an impact on the demand for accommodation for those who are moved / decanted.

Close liaison with the Regeneration team will help minimise the impact this may have on the implementation of this RRTP in terms of available Council lets.

7. Temporary accommodation

It was made clear in our RRTP how the fluctuating nature of the demand for temporary accommodation can present challenges.

It requires significant effort, planning and resourcing to meet the high standards we place on delivering on the duty to provide temporary accommodation for those who are homeless, in terms of the location, type, and quality of the properties, and how they are managed.

We have never used hostels in Renfrewshire, and all our temporary accommodation properties already met the vision set out within the RRTP Guidance, which was:

‘the optimum type of temporary accommodation is mainstream, furnished and within a community.’

At the time of producing our RRTP, we had a total stock of 233 temporary accommodation properties, and B&B had not been used for a number of years.

Table 8 Comparison of temporary accommodation type / number 2019 - 2021

Accommodation Type	Location	Accommodation provider	No. of properties 2019	No. of properties June 2020	No. of properties April 2021
Local Authority owned furnished flats	across R/shire	Renfrewshire Council	116	136	124
Households placed in B&B	Paisley	B&B proprietors	0	25 placements	0
RSL owned furnished flats	across R/shire	Various RSL's	24	30	31
Local Authority owned supported accommodation	1 location in Paisley	Renfrewshire Council	16	16	16
RSL owned supported accommodation	Paisley and Renfrew	Williamsburgh HA Sanctuary HA Loretto HA * Paisley HA	42	37	37

Accommodation Type	Location	Accommodation provider	No. of properties 2019	No. of properties June 2020	No. of properties April 2021
Local Authority owned staffed accommodation	2 locations in Paisley	Renfrewshire Council	33	33	33
Private sector leased – furnished	Paisley	Private landlords	2	2	2
TOTAL			233	279	243

* this supported accommodation no longer provided.

As can be seen in the table above, the current stock is 243 properties.

This overall increase of 10 properties is due to the increased demand for temporary accommodation at the commencement of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, and the associated drop in the movement of homeless applicants from temporary to settled accommodation at that time.

Indeed, we had to increase our stock to a peak of 257 properties by June 2020 and use B&B accommodation during the early stages of COVID-19.

Temporary Accommodation – Review of 5 Year Vision / Projections

At the time of submitting our RRTP, we anticipated that the **overall capacity for temporary accommodation could reduce from an overall stock of 233 units to 177 units by year 5** - and this would be achieved by a combination of:

- A phased increase in the number of lets to homeless applicants
- The introduction / enhancement of the range of support improvements and innovations detailed in the RRTP action plan

We believe that we can get largely back on track as regards a reduction in temporary accommodation, provided the recovery from COVID-19 proceeds smoothly.

Our projections for each of the temporary accommodation property types are now :

Local authority and RSL owned furnished flats

We propose a reduction in the number of properties from the current level of 155 properties to 121 by 2024, which was the Year 5 figure in our original RRTP.

All properties will remain at our existing high standard, continue to be fully furnished and spread throughout communities amongst mainstream social rented housing.

Supported Accommodation

This has already reduced from 58 properties to 53.

We estimated that this could reduce to 40 properties by 2024, and the 'flow' of applicants requiring this accommodation by year 5 could drop from 191 in 2017/18 to 133.

This was however based on a costed proposal to upscale our capacity for Housing First from 20 to around 65 - 80 individuals using RRTP funding. To date, the RRTP funding has not been sufficient to allow such an increase.

We are currently assessing what the need for supported accommodation may be by year 5.

Staffed Accommodation

Will reduce from 33 properties to 16 properties

In our original RRTP, we envisaged a reduction to 24 properties.

This will be delivered by a planned closure of one of our existing staffed accommodation units. In our original plan, we envisaged replacing this with a smaller 8-10 person project for service users with the most complex needs, however we now believe that this may not be required.

An increase in the number/proportion of lets to homeless applicants, and increase in the capacity of housing first initiatives, as well as the sustained enhancement of our resettlement service will reduce the number of repeat homeless cases that often rely on our direct access staffed accommodation.

Bed & Breakfast

We ceased using B&B as a form of temporary accommodation for a number of years however, in line with many other local authorities, the COVID-19 pandemic regrettably meant we were left with no option but to use this form of temporary accommodation for a period.

We have however once again ceased our reliance on B&B and remain committed to the position that it is not a suitable form of temporary accommodation and with the anticipated increase in lets over the coming years from housing providers and a joint effort to enhance services that prevent homelessness via this RRTP, we believe that we can return to the position that B&B is no longer used from Year 3 onwards.

Satisfaction with temporary accommodation

We continually seek the views of those who are placed in all forms of temporary accommodation.

In 2020/21, the proportion of homeless applicants satisfied with their temporary accommodation increased to 94.7% from 90.8% the previous year. The figure was 74.5% in 2015/16.

8. Support needs

Our 5-year RRTP provided an analysis of support needs, in line with the Guidance provided at that time.

The impact COVID-19 has had on homelessness has been considerable, as has been highlighted throughout this Review, and the impacts on support needs has similarly been significantly affected.

In many respects, we believe the scale of the demand for support may not become fully known until we are further into the COVID-19 recovery period.

As well as co-ordinating (and partly funding) the housing first related initiatives detailed in Section 5, and participation in the collective tenancy resettlement initiative, our Housing Support Team responded to COVID-19 crisis by carrying on meeting with those service users in greatest need (with appropriate risk assessments and provision of PPE), and making deliveries of food and essential items to those staying in B&B, as well as distributing food etc which had been donated.

The range of initiatives already in place, which were detailed in our original RRTP (eg Make it Your Own in association with Impact Arts) also continued throughout.

The transition to rapid-re-housing involves a crucial shift in focus away from 'tenancy readiness' for the provision of settled housing with support, and our experience from years 1 and 2 provides reassurance that we have moved some way to adopting this change in approach.

We are currently re-assessing our forecast of the scale and severity of support needs during the COVID-19 recovery period, whilst continuing to upscale housing first related projects, expand the range of housing support providers operating in Renfrewshire, and working with Renfrewshire's Alcohol & Drug Commission Programme Board throughout 2021 on measures which may help those who are homeless or in housing need.

9. Year 3 proposals – 2021/22

The Scottish Government funding allocation for year 3 has recently been confirmed as £190,000, and our unavoidable 'carry forward' from Years 1 and 2 is £148,850.

We anticipate we will be able to fully fund the initiatives set out in the table below:

Table 9

YEAR 3 - 2021/22		
Action Plan Ref *	Rapid Rehousing Proposal	Annual Cost (£)
1,2,7	Housing First programme	£147,000 (1)
4	Tenancy resettlement & RRTP Coordinator	£160,000 (2)
1,3	Provision of enhanced starter packs	£20,000 (3)
3	Use of temporary accommodation – 'flip' properties from temp accommodation	£10,000
6	Shared Living Initiative	£31,000
8	Say Women initiative	£17,000
5	Rough sleepers evaluation	£2,000 (4)
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST YEAR 3		£387,000

* Reference numbers are taken from original RRTP action plan submitted in 2019

- (1) The total annual cost of Housing First will be £250,000. The Council will contribute over £100,000
- (2) This will fund an upscaling of the in-house provision of a number of posts already deployed within the Council and RSL's
- (3) This topped-up a budget of £50,000 already used for the provision of starter packs
- (4) We intend to carry out a brief evaluation of rough-sleeping within the Renfrewshire area to determine the extent, and impact of Covid19.

Over and above this, we will in partnership with Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership offer COVID vaccinations to all homeless applicants living in emergency / temporary accommodation, and look to de-commission the staffed accommodation at Thrushcraigs (see page 25), as well as continue with a number of initiatives funded from mainstream Council budgets.

A stepped increase in the number and proportion of social rented tenancies allocated to homeless applicants is required in order to reduce the time those who are homeless spend in temporary accommodation.

10. Years 4 and 5 (2022/23 – 2023/24)

As highlighted in section 4, we expect that we may not yet have seen the full scale of homelessness throughout the COVID-19 crisis due to the cross-sector ban on tenancy repossessions and any impact following the ending of furlough arrangements.

It may well be the case that we will see an increase in presentations from across all sectors, as well as an associated increase in demand for housing support.

These unknown factors could adversely impact on our proposed plans, the ability to reduce average length of time to conclude duty and being able to reduce our stock of temporary accommodation.

There is the potential we could find ourselves in a similar or worse situation that we faced at the start of lockdown in March 2020 if homelessness, need for temporary accommodation and demand for housing support all increase.

This is something that will obviously be very closely monitored.

Regardless, there is a strong belief that the original RRTP plan remains relevant and the full range of costed initiatives within the 5-year plan are still required.

11. Summary and conclusions

- 1 There has been significant progress in implementing Renfrewshire's 5-year RRTP.
- 2 Funding from the Council and annual allocations of funding from the Scottish Government have been deployed for measures which are in line with the priorities within Renfrewshire's 5-year RRTP.
- 3 There is substantial evidence of innovative partnership working, and a range of new measures in place to prevent homelessness and meet the needs of those who have nowhere to stay.
- 4 The use of Housing First has been upscaled from 18 service users to 44, using both RRTP and Council funding.
- 5 Collective effort to resettle homeless applicants from temporary accommodation to settled tenancies during COVID19 restrictions was successful.
- 6 Tenancy sustainment figures show an increase in the proportion of homeless applicants who go on to sustain a Council tenancy for at least 12 months to 88.4% in 2020/21, from 80.4% the previous year. This figure was 72.1% in 2015/16.
- 7 Reduction in 'repeat homelessness' from nearly 10% in 2019/20 to under 8%.
- 8 Temporary accommodation is still being provided in the form of furnished mainstream flats in the community – the optimum type according to the Scottish Government RRTP Guidance. The recorded satisfaction level has increased to 94.7% in 2020/21 from 90.2% in 2019/20.
- 9 Average number of days in all types of temporary accommodation has reduced from 93 days to 72 days.
- 10 A stepped increase in the number of social rented lets to homeless applicants is required in years 3 – 5 of our RRTP
- 11 COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the response to homelessness, lets to those who are homeless, the provision of temporary accommodation and meeting support needs. The full scale of the impact is likely to become clearer during 2021/22.

10 Contact us

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