

West Dunbartonshire Homelessness, Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Strategy

2017 – 2020

October 2016

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1.0 Introduction

Homelessness and homeless people's rights have come a long way since the 1977 Homelessness Persons Act. The emphasis has turned from helping just families and single people deemed vulnerable, to helping all people who are homeless. The phasing out of priority need, and the introduction of the support duty has given anyone who is homeless the right to support and accommodation.

The experience of homelessness significantly impacts on an individual's life in a magnitude of different ways. People who have been homeless are more likely to experience mental illness, addiction issues and legal /debt problems. They are more likely to have limited training and employment opportunities. And they have greater potential for becoming homeless again in the future. Getting the correct temporary or supported accommodation suitable to the homeless households is vital.

The statutory responsibility for homelessness lies with local authorities who have a duty to provide a strategy for dealing with homelessness. Homelessness strategies are now incorporated within the Local Housing Strategy. However some local authorities will still have their own Homelessness Strategy to ensure a full action plan is implemented. West Dunbartonshire is one of these local authorities who still provide a separate homelessness strategy. West Dunbartonshire: Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2016 is the third homeless strategy to be published. Work on a fourth is currently underway.

The strategic aims for the current homeless strategy are based around four main themes and build on the success of the previous Homelessness Strategies.

The strategic aims are

1. To Prevent Homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire
2. Improved access to support services and increased tenancy sustainment
3. To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution
4. To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

This strategy will see the merging of the homelessness strategy with the Temporary Accommodation strategy. The clear purpose of the West Dunbartonshire Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2012-2016 is to ensure that West Dunbartonshire Council and its partners are able to deliver a range of temporary accommodation across the authority area to meet the divergent needs of the customer base. The outcomes of the current West Dunbartonshire Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2012-2016 are

1. We will ensure there is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households.
2. Temporary accommodation is accessible, affordable and well managed.
3. Support is provided where necessary, that meets the needs of homeless households in temporary accommodation.

4. The length of time spent in temporary accommodation is appropriate to the individuals needs, but that overall the length of time spent in temporary accommodation is reduced.
5. The views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation are considered, especially for service development.
6. We will ensure a consistent spread of temporary accommodation across West Dunbartonshire to avoid concentration and stabilise communities

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2.0 Legislative Background

The 1977 Act placed the responsibility for meeting homeless persons' needs on local authority housing departments subject to national guidance.

This Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 brought about a series of changes that included:

- Local authorities had to assess homelessness within their area and to submit strategies and approaches for its prevention and mitigation of homelessness.
- Local authorities had a duty to ensure advice and information is available in their area and free of charge.
- Rights of individual homeless people strengthened with the right to temporary accommodation even if in non-priority need.
- RSLs were given a duty to comply with requests from local authorities to accommodate unintentionally homeless households in priority need within six weeks.

The Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 brought about fundamental changes to homelessness in Scotland. One of these changes was the ambitious target of abolition of priority need by 2012. This meant that anyone who is unintentionally homeless will be given the right to temporary accommodation and a statutory duty to have permanent accommodation found by the local authority. In December 2005, the then Scottish Executive issued a Ministerial Statement on how the Act was to be implemented. The main requirements of the Act were;

- Priority need assessment is to be abolished by 2012
- The requirement of landlords and creditors to notify the relevant local authority when they raise repossession proceedings

The Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 took five of the Homelessness Task Force's recommendations into legislation. Local Authorities are monitored against the other 54; principally their performance against the 5 high level national outcomes designated by the Homelessness Monitoring Group in 2004:-

- No one need sleep rough
- Existing homelessness becomes more visible
- Sustainable resettlement is secured for people who become homeless
- Fewer people become homeless in the first place
- The duration of homelessness is reduced

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 placed a duty on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of homeless or threatened with homeless households where they believe that households are in need of a prescribed housing support service. It also states that local authorities must ensure that this

support is provided. This duty was enacted in 1st June 2013.

In 2012 priority need was abolished within Scotland. West Dunbartonshire Council was one of the first councils within the country to meet this target.

The Scottish Governments approach to homelessness has now taken the approach of homelessness prevention and housing options. In April 2014 the Scottish Government launched Prevent 1. Prevent 1 is a measurement tool developed to monitor and evaluate activity around housing options and homelessness prevention work undertaken by local authorities. The data capture and reporting statutory and local authorities return in quarterly to the Scottish Government in the same way HL1 is returned.

2.1 Temporary Accommodation Legislation

As a local authority West Dunbartonshire Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003. This is a duty to temporarily accommodate anyone who is believed to be homeless until an assessment decision has been made. Anyone found to be unintentionally homeless has the right to remain in temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation has been sourced by the council. For households found to be intentionally homeless, temporary accommodation is provided for a reasonable period of time for the households to source their own accommodation. The council should be in constant contact with them providing information and advice on how to do so.

In order to ensure households, especially those with children, were being placed in appropriate temporary accommodation the Government introduced the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in 2004. Under the regulations set out by the Unsuitable Accommodation Order 2004, temporary accommodation is assessed as unsuitable by looking at 3 main criteria:

- Physical standard - such as toilet and cooking facilities; and that the accommodation is within the local authority area.
- Proximity standard – such as the accommodation being near health and education facilities that households use.
- Safety standard – such as the accommodation being suitable for children and pregnant women. Only under exceptional circumstances, should such households be temporarily accommodated in a B&B.

The unsuitable accommodation order is breached when a family with children or a pregnant female are in B&B accommodation for more than 14 days. The 2004 order was revoked by The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014, which came into force on the 21st November 2014. The 2014 order adds the additional requirement that the accommodation must be wind and watertight. West Dunbartonshire Council has never breached the unsuitable accommodation order.

2.2 The Scottish Housing Charter

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 included the requirement for a Scottish Social Housing Charter. The aim of the Charter is to improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide by setting outcomes that all social landlords should achieve. The Scottish Housing Regulator produced a set of indicators following extensive consultations with relevant bodies. From the 1st April 2013 all housing providers had to return the indicators as the Annual Return of the Charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator. However, the Charter Indicators will not be the only information the Scottish Housing Regulator uses to monitor landlords performance. In relation to homelessness the regulator will use the wide range of information that we currently provide to the Scottish Government.

Some key themes within this strategy are about homeless prevention, tenancy sustainment and housing options. The strategy puts the person seeking advice and assistance at the centre and helps them to make informed decisions. The charter outcomes 25 to 28 are;

- 25 Average length of time in temporary or emergency accommodation by type.
- 26 Percentage of households requiring temporary or emergency accommodation to whom an offer was made.
- 27 Percentage of temporary or emergency accommodation offers refused in the last year by accommodation type.
- 28 Of those households homeless in the last 12 months the percentage satisfied with the quality of temporary or emergency accommodation.

These charter outcomes also stress the importance of the person who is homeless through its monitoring of temporary accommodation, such time spent in accommodation and satisfaction levels. This can help the local authority ensure they are keeping their temporary accommodation at a decent standard.

3.0 Strategic Links

Homelessness is a complex issue and is rarely solved by housing alone. The council as a whole and all the statutory and voluntary partners must work together to prevent and reduce homelessness. With this in mind the homelessness and temporary accommodation strategy do not stand alone but rather links to and contributes to the council's strategic framework.

West Dunbartonshire Councils Strategic Plan 2012 -2017 sets out the vision, mission and values of the council. It also sets out the key priorities for the future:-

- Improve economic growth and employability.
- Improve life chances for children and young people.
- Improve care for and promote independence with older people.
- Improve local housing and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.
- Improve the wellbeing of communities and protect the welfare of vulnerable people

The **West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership Community Plan 2007-2017** is the overarching strategic plan for the whole of West Dunbartonshire and it reflects the close links between the council and a wide range of planning and service delivery partners from the public, private, and voluntary sectors. All other strategic plans prepared by West Dunbartonshire Council and its partners are linked to and integrated with the Community Plan to ensure that they complement and support community planning at all levels.

The Community Plan has several links to the Homelessness Strategy such as the aim to resettle homeless households in sustainable tenancies and minimise the level of repeat homelessness. This will be realised by developing a range of programmes and joint services to prevent homelessness and support households when and as required.

West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2015 -2016 is the Integration Authority's paper setting out their outcomes and priorities¹. The HSCP Partnership Board's :

- Mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of West Dunbartonshire.
- Purpose is to plan for and ensure the delivery of high quality health and social care services to and with the communities of West Dunbartonshire.
- Core values are protection; improvement; efficiency; transparency; fairness; collaboration; respect; and compassion.

Local Authorities are required to provide a Housing Contribution Statement to set out the role and contribution of the local housing sector in meeting the outcomes and priorities identified within the Strategic Plan. The West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership Board Housing Contribution Statement May 2016 provides the bridge between the Local Housing Strategy and the HSCP Strategic Plan and outlines the important part housing will play in the integration process

The Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (LHS) identifies the housing issues that affect communities of West Dunbartonshire Council and set out an action plan for tackling these over the period of the strategy. Homelessness strategies are now incorporated within the Local Housing Strategy. However

some local authorities will still have their own Homelessness Strategy like West Dunbartonshire Council. This LHS has been drawn up around the following 5 key themes:

- Housing Need and Demand
- Promoting Good Quality Housing
- Homelessness and Housing Options
- Sustainable and Supportive Communities
- Addressing Particular Housing Needs.

The LHS has highlighted some key priorities for the homelessness and temporary accommodation strategy. These include homelessness prevention and housing options, tenancy sustainment and housing support. The LHS also highlighted the impact homelessness has on young people and the need for more support and education of young people to help prevent homelessness.

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4.0 Equal opportunities

The planning and delivery of good quality housing and appropriate advice and information services in West Dunbartonshire embraces the principles of equal opportunities. The Councils Equality Statement 2013-17 sets out how the Councils commitment in relation to race, disability, gender, age, religion & belief, sexual orientation and transgender status.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act. The act came into force on 1 October 2010 and provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. It simplifies, strengthens and removes inconsistencies in the current legislation to provide Britain with a new discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

The act covers nine protected characteristics, which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. Every person has at least one of the protected characteristics, so the act protects everyone against unfair treatment. The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

It is recognised that homelessness is an area where prejudice and discrimination is common. Individuals at risk from homelessness include people with alcohol and drug issues, people involved with the criminal justice system and people with mental health issues. Homeless people are themselves by definition disadvantaged and frequently experience more difficulty than others in accessing mainstream services. It is recognised that some groups of individuals can be subject to 'double oppression' for example Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community and minority ethnic groups.

Therefore, all the actions proposed in this and related strategies are aimed at overcoming disadvantage and tackling the exclusion of groups of individuals experiencing homelessness. The diversity of individuals is recognised therefore the homelessness strategy aims to ensure that in the development and delivery of services to end homelessness in West Dunbartonshire, the needs of individuals and particular groups are addressed.

4.1 Minority ethnic communities

We continue to receive low numbers of homeless presentations from the minority ethnic communities as detailed below:-

Ethnicity	Homeless Unintentional	Homeless intentional	Not homeless	Applicant resolved homelessness	Lost contact	Withdrawn	Grand Total
White Scottish	773	67	11	62	19	106	1038
Other British	23	2	1	3	0	3	32
Irish	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other white ethnic group	5	1	1	0	0	1	8
African, African Scottish or African British	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Caribbean or Black	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other ethnic group	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Not Known	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refused	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gypsy/ Traveller	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Polish	4	1	1	1	0	0	7
Other African	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All	817	71	14	66	19	112	1099

Table 4.1: Ethnicity and homelessness decisions in West Dunbartonshire in 2015/16 (HL1)

From table 4.1 above it can be seen that 1038 (94%) of homeless presentations in 2015/16 were from households who were white Scottish. This is the same as the previous year 2014.15

4.2 Eligibility for assistance

The majority of homeless households who present to the council are eligible for assistance. There were 3 households who presented as homeless who were not eligible for assistance between 2013/14 to 2015/16.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
British, EEA, pre EU expansion in 2004, Swiss	1351	1235	1107
A8, A2 or joined the EU since then	7	8	9
Lawfully present	6	6	4
Not eligible	1	0	2
All	1365	1249	1122

Table 4.2: Eligibility status for homelessness assistance in 2013/14 to 2015/16 in West Dunbartonshire

4.3 LGBT community

National evidence suggests young LGBT are more likely to become homeless. At present homeless presentations from the LGBT community are not monitored. However, we recognise evidence that suggests that homelessness is a major issue, especially among the young LGBT population.

There is a lack of monitoring surrounding the LGBT community which can lead to a lack of awareness of the housing need of this particular community. We aim to improve on this and enable this community to access the appropriate help and support to prevent homelessness

4.4 Gypsies/travellers

In 2015/16 12 households who presented as homeless stated that they were a gypsy/traveller. Gypsy/Traveller communities are regarded by West Dunbartonshire Council as a minority ethnic group, and as such come under the protection of the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended in 2000 and the Council's Race Equality Scheme. This is an increase from the previous years. There is currently no explicit legal recognition of this in Scotland although there are strong arguments that Scottish Gypsies/Travellers are a racial group in terms of the RRA, with specific needs and aspirations.

In the West Dunbartonshire area there is one established Gypsy/Traveller community, based on a 20 pitch site in Dumbarton. The site is for permanent residents and is very popular with mainly long standing residents. There are also a number of families who travel through the area throughout the year, and we are aware that some Gypsies/Travellers have settled in housing in the area. A count undertaken in July 2007 showed 5 households in unauthorised encampments in West Dunbartonshire. As of 2007/08 we began collecting information on the number of Gypsies/travellers making homelessness presentations within West Dunbartonshire.

5.0 Review of current strategy

West Dunbartonshire Councils Homelessness Strategy 2013-2016 was structured around the following strategic aims:

1. To Prevent Homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire
2. Improved access to support services and increased tenancy sustainment
3. To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution
4. To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

5.1 Aim 1 - To Prevent Homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire

Prevention of homelessness and housing options has been high on the Scottish Governments agenda for a number of years. It is widely recognised that providing support to people to remain in the home they are in, or move to a new more appropriate home, then we can prevent a homeless from occurring.

Feedback from relevant officers and partners suggests that prevention of homelessness has not progressed as far as it should have and will be taken forward in this strategy.

Some achievements so far.....

- An 18% reduction in homelessness presentations since 2012/13
- Reduction of presentations of young people
- Introduction of subletting houses of tenants who are short term prisoners to prevent homelessness upon liberation
- Introduction of the mortgage to rent scheme to prevent homelessness
- Introduction of a number of discharge protocols
- Making effective use of Prevent 1

Although there has been a significant improvement in the number of young people (16-25 year olds) presenting as homeless the numbers are still significantly high and remains an area where we will continue to focus developments.

5.2 Aim 2 - Improved access to support services and increased tenancy sustainment

As a council we want to minimise the rate of tenancy failure, and possible homelessness, by identifying and responding appropriately to those whose tenancy may be at risk. Homeless households can lead complex lifestyles where it is not just housing that is the solution to tenancy sustainment but support in other areas such as mental health, addiction, income maximisation.

Some achievements so far.....

- 86.8% of council tenancies created in 2014/15 were sustained with 2015/16.

- The introduction of a Common Approach to Tenancy Sustainment between West Dunbartonshire Council and local RSLs
- The council opened its first support accommodation project Ashton View. Ashton View was opened to accommodate the increased numbers of homeless households with support needs;
- The council has worked closely with Alternatives to open up the Safe as Houses project. This project is designed to help people with a substance misuse problem develop new skills and develop a healthy lifestyle before returning to independent living;

5.3 Aim 3 - To improve the range of Housing Options available in West Dunbartonshire and ensure a sustainable housing solution

West Dunbartonshire has been developing a housing options approach to improve access to housing. It has been proven in the past that by providing a holistic person centred approach, providing advice and information that allows a person to make an informed choice about their housing options increases tenancy sustainment.

Following on from consultation with the homeless teams, the housing teams and all internal and external partners a strong response was that we are failing people who are looking for housing advice or are homeless by not having a fully established and comprehensive housing options approach. Housing options is a strong theme within the Local Housing Options approach that has been approved by committee.

Some achievements so far.....

- Increased options of temporary accommodation by introduction of Ashton View and Safe as Houses
- Increased use of the private rented sector with the introduction of WDC Home Finder. This is a website where landlords can advertise their vacant properties to let for free;
- West Dunbartonshire Council has had no breaches of unsuitable accommodation order;
- Continued joint working through the West of Scotland Housing Options Hub. The hub is in the process of developing a training toolkit. Most councils in Scotland have since signed up to be part of it;
- The council recently launched WDC Homefinder – a website where private landlords can advertise their properties for free of charge. The council is going to advertise some of their properties from low demand areas on this website too.
- 121 council houses/flats have been built since 2013

There has been a lot of work put in to increasing options for people in housing need but there is still great pressure on the housing stock. This pressure will only intensify because of the impact of welfare reform.

5.4 Aim 4 - To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

Throughout the duration of this Homelessness strategy a partnership approach to homelessness has been adopted. It is recognised that a joined up approach to homelessness is key to preventing homelessness and increasing tenancy sustainment.

Some achievements so far.....

- Continued communication between partner agencies and council departments
- Development of joint protocols such as the Low Moss Prison Discharge Protocol and Housing & Homelessness Services and Addiction Services Partners Referral Pathway
- West Dunbartonshire have established a Homelessness and Housing Access Forum which meets on a regular basis and consists of internal and external partners;
- Continued joint working through the West of Scotland Housing Options Hub

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6.0 Profile OF West Dunbartonshire Council area

In 2014 the National Records of Scotland estimated that the Scottish population as 5,347,600 this was an increase of 19,900. At the same time the population of West Dunbartonshire was 89,730. This was a drop of 0.7% from 2013.

The median age for West Dunbartonshire was 42, for men it was 41 and women it was 44. A fifth of males and 16% of females were aged 16 and under, 66% of males and 61% of females were are of working age, and 16% of males 23% of females are of pensionable age. For every 100 females there are 91 males.

There is a rise in the older population across Scotland and this is mirrored across West Dunbartonshire. In 2014 there were 16,720 people aged 16 and under and 21,205 people aged 60 and over. The growing population will have economic implications as well as added pressure on our health and social care partnership.

Despite the growing population West Dunbartonshire has life expectancy rates that are statistically worse than the Scottish Average with the second lowest life expectancy at birth of all Scottish Local Authorities.

Housing Tenure in West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire is the 2nd smallest Local Authority in Scotland in terms of land, but the 8th smallest in terms of population size. Over half of the population in the area live in Clydebank.

The estimated number of dwellings in West Dunbartonshire is 44,734.

Table 6.1: Housing Tenure in West Dunbartonshire.

Tenure	Total Number	%
Council Housing	10,759	24%
Registered Social Landlords	5,856	13%
Private Rented Sector	3050	7%
Owner Occupation	25,069	56%
Total	44,734	100%

Source: Local Housing Strategy 2017 - 2022

The total number of dwellings in West Dunbartonshire is 44,734. Over half of the stock is owner occupied and over a third is social housing. West Dunbartonshire is mirroring Scotland with its growth in private rented properties.

7.0 The scale of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire

Homelessness in Scotland has continued to fall since the last LHS in 2012. West Dunbartonshire has mirrored this. In 2011/12 there were 1545 homelessness applications taken. This has slowly reduced to 1122 in 2015/16. The figures used in this chapter have been taken from the Scottish Government HL1 statistics and also from West Dunbartonshire's own computer system, AVD Computing.

In addition to the reduction in homelessness applications west Dunbartonshire Council has seen a reduction in number of homelessness assessments that are taken. This has reduced from 1570 in 2011/12 to 1101 in 2015/16.

The reduction in homelessness applications and assessments is in line with the council's homelessness prevention agenda.

Table 7.1: WDC homeless applications and assessments since 2011/12

Year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Homeless applications	1545	1364	1365	1249	1122
Homeless assessments	1570	1347	1342	1297	1101

Source: Scottish Government - West Dunbartonshire HL1 figures

7.1 Who is homeless in West Dunbartonshire?

Household Type, Age and Gender

Analysis of who presents to the council as homeless is looked annually by the council to determine any patterns of change and course of action to be taken. 75% of households who presented to West Dunbartonshire council in 2015/16 were single people. A fifth of the households had children in them, most of who were single parents. The majority of the households (75%) were single people.

When looking at all applications in 2015/16 just over half (56%) of the main applicants were male. However when you look more closely at the households type you can see that there are clear differences. Two thirds of the single person households were male, whereas 93% of the single parent households were female. This is a similar pattern to previous years. At the end of the year 2015/16 there were

Table 7.2: Household type of homeless applications 2015/16

Households Type	Number	%
households with children	43	4%
households without children	62	6%
single parent families	175	16%
single persons	846	75%
Total	1126	100%

Source: AVD Computing System

Over a third of people who presented to West Dunbartonshire as homeless were aged between 16 and 25. From the table below it can be seen that the number of young people aged 16 to 17 has decreased from 82 to 55 since 2011/12. The decrease is more significant for young people aged 18 to 25 in the same timescale. The number of young people who present as homeless in West Dunbartonshire is a concern for the council, and one which the council is working to address. Although overall the number of males and females aged 16 – 25 is split evenly, on closure inspection over 70% of 16 and 17 year olds who presented were female.

Table 7.3: Age of applicants between 2011/12 and 2015/16

Age	2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015		2015/2016	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
16 - 17	82	5%	59	4%	57	4%	55	4%	55	5%
18 - 25	500	32%	474	35%	422	31%	372	30%	326	29%
26 - 59	911	59%	790	58%	840	62%	768	61%	702	63%
60+	52	3%	41	3%	46	3%	54	4%	39	3%
All	1545	100%	1364	100%	1365	100%	1249	100%	1122	100%

Source: Scottish Government - West Dunbartonshire HL1 figures

7.2 Homeless Assessments

When someone presents as homeless they are assessed under the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 1987. Over the years there have been amendments to the act. Since 2012 applicants are no longer subject to the priority need assessment making it more fair and accessible to everyone. In 2015/16 1101 households underwent a homeless assessment. Of these households 81% were assessed as homeless or potentially homeless. 10% withdrew their application and 6% resolved their application. Only 1% was assessed as not homeless. There has been a reduction in the number of people assessed as not homeless and an increase in the percentage of households assessed as homeless. One reason for this is the prevention work that the caseworkers undertake to avoid a household becoming homeless. The number of cases lost prior to assessment has increased from 8 to 19 since 2010/11. At the end of 2015/16 there were 487 homeless households in temporary accommodation. Within these households there were 113 dependent children.

Table 7.4: Homeless assessment decisions 2015/16

Assessment Decision	Number	%
Homeless/ Potentially homeless	888	81%
Not homeless	14	1%
Withdrew application	112	10%
resolved homelessness	66	6%
lost contact before assessment	19	2%
Other	2	0%
Total	1101	100%

Source: Scottish Government - West Dunbartonshire HL1 figures

7.3 Why do people become homeless?

There are many reasons why people become homeless. A third of households assessed as homeless in 2015/16 in West Dunbartonshire were *asked to leave* their home. This resulted in the homelessness presentation. At a closer look it can be seen that 51% of those who stated their homelessness reason as being *asked to leave* were aged 16 – 24. Over half (61%) of these young people were male.

Just over a third of households stated their reason for homelessness as being a dispute within the household. Just over half of these were violent or abusive, in other words they were domestic abuse. 85% of these households were female.

7.4 Housing Outcomes

Almost half of all homeless applications resulted in a tenancy with either West Dunbartonshire council or a housing association. A third of these households had dependent children living with them. A fifth had no duty owed to them. In other words they were not homeless. There were a high number (16%) of cases where the contact with the applicant was lost before duty was discharged but an assessment was carried out. 45% of the lost contact cases were people aged 16 to 24.

Table 7.5: Housing outcomes of homeless households 2015/16

Housing Outcome	Number	%
Scottish Secure Tenancy	511	48%
Private Rented Tenancy	28	3%
Hostel	0	0%
Bed & Breakfast	0	0%
Returned to previous/ friends/ vol org.	83	8%
Women's Refuge	1	0%
Residential care/nursing home/shared supported	1	0%
Other – Known	37	3%
Other - Not Known	20	2%
No duty owed to applicant	213	20%
Contact lost before duty discharge	164	16%
All	1058	100%

Source: Scottish Government - West Dunbartonshire HL1 figures

7.5 Support Needs

Since June 2013 all local authorities must carry out a housing support assessment on all unintentionally homeless households who require it. They must also ensure that support is offered to that household. In 2015/16 54% of unintentionally homeless households had a support assessment carried out. Just over a quarter had support provided to them under the housing support regulations.

West Dunbartonshire provides an in-house housing support service to any homeless households who require it. When a household presents as homeless they will be asked questions relating to support needs during their homeless assessment. The case workers have a check-list. Depending on what that household scores they may be referred to out Ashton View project. The staff at this project are trained support workers and will carry out a full housing support assessment.

Table 7.6: Supports needs of assessed cases

	all assessed	Assessed as homeless	%	Young person 16-24 (assessed as homeless)	%
Mental health	234	204	25%	33	16%
Learning Disability	37	34	4%	17	8%
Physical disability	65	60	7%	9	4%
Medical condition	173	157	19%	27	13%
Addiction	147	129	16%	15	7%
Basic Housing management skills	280	244	29%	107	51%
Total	936	828	100%	208	100%

Source: West Dunbartonshire HL1 AVD system

From table 6 it can be seen 51% of young people had a support requirement for housing management skills. This figure is in line with previous years. A quarter of households assessed as homeless had a mental health support need and 16% had an addiction.

8.0 Temporary Accommodation:

West Dunbartonshire Council currently have 215 temporary furnished flats. These flats are managed by temporary accommodation officers within the Homeless team.

The council recently opened Ashton View - a supported accommodation project for people who are homeless and have support needs. This project has been successful and is being extended this year. Ashton View also manage the support to other homeless households who are out with a supported accommodation project.

Blue Triangle Housing Association has 3 supported accommodation projects across the Council area for people of all ages and gender. Action for Children has a young persons supported accommodation project providing beds for 12 young people. There are also two Women's Aid projects in the council area. These provide a safe place for women fleeing domestic abuse in the council area and out with.

West Dunbartonshire council has a Temporary Accommodation Model that is uses on a regular basis to look at the stock of temporary and supported accommodation against who is homeless in the area. The model takes into account the type of households who are homeless, ages of applicants, gender, support needs, etc. The model is getting updated this year to include a more in-depth look at finances in light of the changes to the welfare state. This model will ensure we have the right type and number of temporary and supported accommodation. The outcome from the model will also influence the new Homelessness strategy.

The outcomes of the current West Dunbartonshire Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2012-2016 are

- 1) We will ensure there is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households.
- 2) Temporary accommodation is accessible, affordable and well managed.
- 3) Support is provided where necessary, that meets the needs of homeless households in temporary accommodation.
- 4) The length of time spent in temporary accommodation is appropriate to the individuals needs, but that overall the length of time spent in temporary accommodation is reduced.
- 5) The views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation are considered, especially for service development.
- 6) We will ensure a consistent spread of temporary accommodation across West Dunbartonshire to avoid concentration and stabilise communities

Some key achievements from this strategy

- A temporary accommodation model was carried out that resulted in the opening of Ashton View- a supported accommodation project
- Recording customer feedback through the charter outcomes

- Introduction of a new supported housing tool to assess for support needs and monitor the progress of the individual receiving support
- Introduction of a new set of standards
- Introduction of supported accommodation performance monitoring on a quarterly basis
- Written and signed agreements between West Dunbartonshire Council and supported accommodation provider

Moving forward West Dunbartonshire Council is undergoing a new temporary accommodation model. More information about this will be published in due course. The new model will take into account the changing and challenging priorities of temporary accommodation. This includes the increased level of support needs for some people who present as homeless. This also includes the changes to the welfare reform. The changes have affected the funding of temporary and supported accommodation. This model will be more financially viable.

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9.0 Key priorities for the future

9.1 Welfare Reform

Welfare Reform has increased stresses on already stretched housing and homeless budgets across the country.

- Temporary furnished flats are subject to the bedroom tax. West Dunbartonshire Council does not ask its homeless tenants to make up the difference when under occupying but rather pays for this out its own budgets.
- The rent for temporary accommodation has had to be decreased due to the benefits cap
- Under universal credit the local authority can only charge local housing allowance rates for temporary accommodation (that does not fit the supported exempt criteria). Universal credit was introduced in West Dunbartonshire in April 2015. At the end of 2015/16 there were 255 claimants of universal credit, 231 had the housing element. Although this figure is low at present it is going to increase over the years before the full role out in April 2018. For anyone in a temporary flat and on universal credit they will only receive local housing allowance rate for their temporary accommodation rent. Rents in this area are high and this will have a big impact on the homelessness budget. The council should receive some funding to go towards the support element of the rent. The Temporary Accommodation Modelling the council is undertaking should help to address this issue.

Some supported accommodation comes under the *Supported Exempt* category of specified accommodation. This means that it is not affected by the bedroom tax or the benefits Cap.

Welfare reform is a key challenge for the council as it is likely that the need for temporary accommodation may increase as increased number of households fall into debt. It is vital that the housing department works in partnership with internal and external partners to mitigate the changes.

9.2 Young People

West Dunbartonshire Council has produced a youth housing statement as a supporting paper to the Local Housing Strategy and this paper.

In 2015/2016 in West Dunbartonshire Council 23% of new lets were to young people ages 16 to 25. Of these 23% lets 6% were for young people ages 16 or 17.

Youth Homelessness

Who is homeless?

Over a third of people who presented to West Dunbartonshire as homeless were aged between 16 and 25 years. From the table below it can be seen that the number of young people aged 16 to 17 has decreased from 82 to 55 since 2011/12. The decrease is more significant for young people aged 18 to 25 in the same timescale. Although overall the number of males and females aged 16 – 25 is split evenly, on closure inspection over 70% of 16 and 17 year olds who presented were female.

Table 9.1: Age of applicants between 2011/12 and 2015/16

Age	2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015		2015/2016	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
16 - 17	82	5%	59	4%	57	4%	55	4%	55	5%
18 - 25	500	32%	474	35%	422	31%	372	30%	326	29%
26 - 59	911	59%	790	58%	840	62%	768	61%	702	63%
60+	52	3%	41	3%	46	3%	54	4%	39	3%
All	1545	100%	1364	100%	1365	100%	1249	100%	1122	100%

Source: Scottish Government - West Dunbartonshire HL1 figures

The majority of young people who presented as homeless were single people. 13% of young people presenting had children, most of whom were single parent families where the single parent was female.

Around a fifth of young people who presented as homeless had been in care, half of which had been in care within the last 5 years. Just over half of the young people who had been in care at some point were female. In addition a fifth of those who had been in care at some point were aged 16 to 17 at time of presentation.

Young people and Homeless assessment Decisions

Young people amounted 31% of all homeless assessments carried out, and 24% of households assessed as homeless. The figures for assessments are similar for both males and females, although more females resolved their homelessness and more males lost contact with their caseworker. 12% of young people withdrew their application. More information is required on why they withdrew their application.

Why do young people become homeless?

- 51% of young people were made homeless when they were asked to leave
- Over a quarter left due a dispute within the household
- Over half (58%) of these were violent or abusive
- 83% of young people presenting with a reason for homelessness as a violent or abusive dispute within household were female

What are the housing outcomes of young homeless people?

- Three quarters received tenancy from WDC (49%) or an RSL (27%)

- 6% returned to previous accommodation

Young people and support needs

- 50% were assessed as having a support requirement for basic housing management skills. This is higher than the 29% of everyone assessed.
- 16% had a support requirement for mental health, lower than the overall 25% who had a support requirement for mental.
- 13% had a support requirement for a medical condition, lower than the overall 19% who had a support requirement for mental

Temporary and Support Accommodation

West Dunbartonshire have a young person's supported accommodation project that is managed by Action for Children. This project accommodates young people who are homeless who are aged 16 to 21.

For young people leaving care we have dedicated supported lodgings provided and supported by Throughcare.

Welfare Reform

Welfare reform is creating a huge barrier to young people accessing housing. Not only are they affected by the bedroom tax but they will be detrimentally affected by the introduction of the local housing allowance (LHA) cap. The LHA cap will mean that people accessing social housing will have their housing benefit capped at the level of the local housing allowance. This will be the same as the private rented sector. This also means that single people aged 35 and under will only be able to access a shared room rate as opposed to a one bedroom rate in housing benefit. Young people will be expected to make the rest of the rent up themselves or look at alternatives such as flat sharing. Given the many support needs some young people have sharing a flat is not always an option.

10.0 Strategic Aims

The strategic aims for this new strategy take into consideration the previous homelessness strategy aims, the outcome of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and the charter outcomes. They cover homelessness prevention, housing options, tenancy sustainment, housing support and temporary accommodation. The strategic Aims for the Homelessness Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2017-2022 are

- 1) People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them;
- 2) People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness;
- 3) Homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice; are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed; and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.

Each aim will be looked at in turn.

Strategic Aim 1: Housing Options

- 1) People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them

The Scottish Government and the Convention of Local Authorities (CoSLA) 2012 Steering Group held a joint seminar where they discussed homeless prevention actions, particularly focusing on housing options approaches. West Dunbartonshire is part of the West of Scotland working group looking at a joint approach to housing options.

In March 2016 the Scottish Government published guidance on housing options for local authorities. The following definition was used.

- *a process which starts with housing advice when someone approaches a local authority with a housing problem. This means looking at an individual's options and choices in the widest sense. This approach features early intervention and explores all possible tenure options, including council housing, RSL's, and the private rented sector.*

The advice can also cover personal circumstances which may not necessarily be housing related, such as debt advice, mediation and mental health issues. Rather than only accepting a homelessness application, local authority homelessness services will work together with other services such as employability, mental health, money advice and family mediation services, etc, to assist the individual with issues from an early stage in the hope of avoiding a housing crisis.' (Scottish Government)

West Dunbartonshire is in the process of developing a holistic housing options approach and is keen to expand choices for all households within West Dunbartonshire.

Housing options is delivered with some clear common principles

- Appropriate links between Housing Options and Homelessness
- A supportive Organisational Culture
- Robust Policies and Procedures
- A well trained workforce
- Effective Partnership working
- High standards of customer service
- Preventative services
- Person centred Services
- Tenure- Neutral Services
- Links with housing support
- Fully Audible record keeping
- Appropriate
- Performance Indicators

Key Actions for meeting this aim

- We will introduce a housing options approach to ease access to suitable accommodation for West Dunbartonshire households that is in line with the Scottish Government Housing options Guidance;
- Continue to carry out the West of Scotland Housing Options Hub action plan
- Strengthen partnership with WD CHCP and Employability Services;
- Continue to work in partnership to tackle homelessness in West Dunbartonshire;
- Continue to make use of the private sector as a housing option. For example to increase the number of people who use the rent deposit scheme
- Continue to promote the use of Homeswapper
- Increase our housing stock
- Investigate the use of shared tenancies

Strategic Aim 2: Homelessness Prevention

- 2) People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness;

Prevention of homelessness is a sustainable and cost effective option and is a key priority moving forward. It results in a reduction in homelessness as people receive advice about sustaining their tenancy. Homeless departments now record their prevention activity through Prevent 1 that is sent quarterly to the Scottish Government alongside the HL1 data. From the table below it can be seen that 1122 households received prevention of homelessness assistance. 889 households had homelessness prevented as they did not make a homelessness application.

Table 9.1: Links between Homeless Applications and Housing Options Approaches

Prevent 1 activity	Number	%
No associated PREVENT1 approach found	889	79

Homeless application before PREVENT1 Approach	1	0
Homeless application on same day as PREVENT1 Approach	150	13
Homeless application after PREVENT1 Approach	82	7
Total (ALL)	1122	100

Source: Scottish Government - West Dunbartonshire Prevent 1 Figures

The Council has a number of discharge protocols in place for people leaving care, hospital and prison designed to prevent homelessness. There is also a new Health, Homelessness and Housing Protocol due to be signed off.

Homelessness Prevention and Community Justice

Prisoners run a high risk of being homeless on liberation. This is especially true for short-term prisoners and remand prisoners who then possibly run the risk of re-offending, and living between prisons and temporary accommodation. In 2015/2016 42 people presented to West Dunbartonshire upon release. 79% were people aged between 26 and 59. The rest were aged between 18 and 25. It is difficult to know the true extent of homelessness upon liberation from prison as some prisoners sofa surf for a while before presenting as homeless then state that their reason for homelessness is that their friends or family could no longer accommodate.

The partnership approach between West Dunbartonshire Council and Renfrewshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Argyll & Bute Council, Inverclyde Council, Glasgow City Council, Falkirk Council Homeless/Housing Services, as well as HMP Low Moss is currently being updated. This protocol is for prisoners that are in danger of losing their tenancy, or are threatened with homelessness in Prison and upon release. The new protocol will look at preventing homelessness by giving appropriate advice and assistance to prisoners and helps reduce the cycle of re-offending by providing appropriate support and assistance within this multi-agency approach.

The Scottish government has acknowledged that the solution is not simply a matter of being offered a home although this is the first step. Ex-prisoners on liberation often find it difficult to cope with a tenancy, while facing up to debt, drug and alcohol problems. Reducing re-offending is not just the duty of the criminal justice system but also of other important bodies such as housing, health, benefits, education and training and employment. By these agencies making themselves accessible to offenders and working together in partnership, then the community is much safer and stronger and re-offending is reduced.

The Community Justice (Scotland) Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 11th February 2016, following the Stage 3 debate. The Scottish Government is currently working with stakeholders to develop a new model for community justice in Scotland.

The plans include establishing a national agency (Community Justice Scotland) to provide assurance to Scottish Ministers on the collective achievement of community justice outcomes across Scotland. The current Criminal Justice Authorities will be disbanded.

At a local level, strategic planning and service delivery is expected to become the responsibility of local community justice partners. There will be a statutory duty on statutory community justice partners to produce a local plan for community justice and will have a requirement to engage and involve the Third Sector in the planning, delivery and reporting of services and improved outcomes. The partners include housing, Education, National Health Service, children's services, Fire and Police, etc. There will also be National Outcomes, Performance and Improvement Framework for Community Justice in Scotland.

Key Actions for meeting this aim

- We will develop a housing options guide in line with the Scottish Government Housing Options Guidance.
- We will evaluate the true cost of homelessness
- Continue to work in partnership to tackle homelessness in West Dunbartonshire
- The homelessness and housing access forum will continue to meet quarterly
- Continue to mitigate the effects of the changes brought about by welfare reform
- Work with Criminal Justice Scotland to progress the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act
- Continue to develop and roll out the new Low Moss Prison Protocol in partnership with the other agencies involved
- Reduce the number of young people presenting as homeless
- Reduce the number of people or repeat homelessness presentations and increase tenancy sustainment
- Roll out the new Housing & Homelessness Services and Addiction Services Partners Referral Pathway
- Work in partnership to ensure children are not adversely affected by homelessness
- Develop in partnership an education package that can be rolled out across the local authority

Strategic Aim 3: Housing support and Tenancy Sustainment

- 3) Homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.

Tenancy sustainment is a key part of any local authority or RSLs homeless prevention. Just over half of households who presented as homeless had a previous homeless application. Over the last few

years the Scottish Government has seen tenancy sustainment be an important role of all housing providers.

It is well documented that by providing support homelessness can be prevented. The housing support regulations brought in by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 that places a duty on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of homeless households and to provide that support has been brought in as a homeless prevention method.

Throughout the strategy the council will be working to ensure that there are support services in place for a number of at risk from homelessness groups. These include

- Young people
- People experiencing domestic abuse
- People who have an addiction
- People in financial difficulty
- People leaving prison
- Once again a joined up approach to homelessness is key to ensuring that homeless or potentially homeless households have access to support services. This includes the council continuing to work with:-
- CHCP to achieve Homelessness and Health action plan. This ensures that all homeless or potentially homeless households have access to health services.
- Addiction services and the joint addictions protocol
- Criminal justice and the prison protocol
- Leaving care

Key actions to achieving this aim

- Appropriate support is provided to prevent homelessness and to households who are homeless
- We will develop capacity so that people who have experienced homelessness can access appropriate employment, training and volunteering opportunities
- We will carry out a review of Housing Support in West Dunbartonshire to plan for future service provision
- Ensure we have a recording mechanism for housing support
- Improve access to services and increased support to at risk groups

- Work closely with working 4 U to improve income maximisation
- Promote physical and social well being

Strategic Aim 4: Temporary Accommodation

- 4) Homeless people provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed

With the growing support needs of people who are homeless and welfare reform the current provision of temporary and supported accommodation is under pressure. The current provision is currently being examined through a modelling mechanism to allow the council to ensure they meet the needs of people who are homeless. The model will look at the need and demand for temporary and supported accommodation, the types of support needs of homeless households and funding of accommodation.

This section will be updated with the results.

Key actions to achieving this aim

- Ensure we are meeting the needs of all homeless households temporary accommodation needs
- Ensure the we have a good standard of temporary accommodation
- Mitigate against the affects of welfare reform