

Midlothian's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

Report by Allister Short, Joint Director, Health and Social Care

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1** The purpose of this Report is to provide an overview of Midlothian's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which will be submitted to the Scottish Government by 31st December 2018.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Scottish Government established a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) in 2017, which has made recommendations on ending rough sleeping and transforming the use of temporary accommodation through a Rapid Rehousing approach for homeless households, and also Housing First for people with complex needs.
- 2.2** The HARSAG recognises the fundamental role to be played by local authorities, housing providers, health and social care partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support. The HARSAG also recognises that in some localities the transition will not be straightforward and recommended a 5-year timescale for the transformation to rapid rehousing.
- 2.3** The final recommendations of the Scottish Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) were published in June, 2018. They recommended that:
- homelessness should be resolved through effective prevention wherever possible;
 - homeless applicants should be rapidly resettled in a permanent housing solution;
 - homeless applicants should have access to the widest range of housing options;
 - temporary accommodation should only be used as a stop-gap;
 - effective support should be available from day one to enable the homeless household to sustain their own tenancy, and
 - supported accommodation should be available for that small minority of applicants who are not able to sustain their own tenancy at the present time.

- 2.4** Each local authority has been asked by Scottish Government to prepare a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan by December 2018 which will be implemented from April 2019, demonstrating how they will move to a rapid rehousing model over a term not longer than five years. This will need to demonstrate not only how homelessness demand will be addressed, but also how any backlog of demand from homeless households currently in temporary accommodation will be addressed. The Scottish Government have allocated £21 million in funding to support the development of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans with the potential for funding to be allocated to specific projects put forward by local authorities.
- 2.5** For many local authorities in Scotland it will be challenging to implement Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. In Midlothian there are currently 1,079 homeless households and in 2017/18 a total of 248 homeless households were provided with permanent housing from the Council or another RSL. This means there is a significant shortage in the supply of affordable housing in Midlothian and the result is a significant length of time for many households in temporary accommodation. Midlothian Council reported the longest average number of weeks to close a homeless case in Scotland, with an average time of 105 weeks to close a case. The average time across Scotland was 34 weeks. The shortest average time to close a homeless case in Scotland was 17 weeks.
- 2.6** Section 3 of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan details the vision for the Plan by 2024:
“An increased number of homeless households will obtain permanent accommodation, no homeless household will be accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation, and the average time taken for the Council to complete its homeless duty will have halved from 105 weeks to 52 weeks.”
- 2.7** The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan also details an Action Plan for the next five years to support this vision. Key actions include:
- Increasing the supply of new build affordable housing in Midlothian
 - Reviewing Midlothian Council’s Allocation Policy to ensure homeless households are housed more quickly.
 - Actions relating to the acquisition of models of temporary accommodation to reduce the need for bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - Supporting homeless households to access a tenancy in the private rented sector.
 - Developing an approach to housing those with complex needs through a ‘housing first’ model.
- 2.8** Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans should also consider development of a Housing First approach to specific clients. The Housing First model, first developed in New York, is a successful method of helping people who are homeless and who have multiple and enduring support needs, to secure accommodation and be supported to live a sustainable way of life. Housing First uses housing as a starting point rather than an end goal – this is different from current practice which would normally require a homeless applicant to

live in supported accommodation until they are considered to be able to sustain their own tenancy. Instead, Housing First clients are provided with a permanent tenancy quickly and provided with a high level of support in order that they can receive support to maintain their tenancy and have other support needs, such as health needs, addressed. Housing First is particularly applicable to those that sleep rough and are likely to present as homeless repeatedly. Whilst there is a low incidence of rough sleepers in Midlothian there are some homeless clients with multiple support needs who could benefit from support through Housing First. This is estimated to be around 10 households per year.

- 2.9** Midlothian Council is already undertaking a range of activities which will support the development of rapid rehousing. This includes the ambitious new build programme set out in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24 and plans to use the upper floors of Jarnac Court as an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation. However, the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, shown in Appendix 1, details actions which could be taken forward to increase the pace of transition if additional funding was provided by the Scottish Government. If no additional funding is allocated for Midlothian projects then the vision of the Plan could be constrained or take longer to be achieved.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

It is intended that the transition to rapid rehousing can go some way to being achieved within existing resources and/or by additional savings creating through service redesign or refocus. However, a significant acceleration in transformation to rapid rehousing will require additional resources in excess of what can be resourced by Midlothian Council. It may be possible to release additional resources through effective partnership working particularly with regard to Housing First models of service delivery. The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan also specifies estimated cost requirements for each action with appropriate prioritisation and the allocation of grant funding for these actions will be considered by Scottish Government after submission of the plan on 31 December 2018.

3.2 Risk

The development of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan addresses risks identified in Audit Scotland's Local Scrutiny Plan for 2018/19 for Midlothian Council. This identified risks in relation to homelessness including the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, satisfaction with temporary accommodation and case durations.

4.3 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The themes addressed in this report impact on the delivery of the Single

Midlothian Plan outcome particularly in terms of priorities in relation to the delivery of affordable housing, homelessness and health and social care outcomes.

- ☐ Community safety
- ☒ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

4.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The recommendations in this Report impact positively upon achieving the following Local Housing Strategy outcomes:

- Households have improved housing options across all tenures.
- Homeless households and those threatened with homelessness are able to access support and advice services and all unintentionally homeless households will be able to access settled accommodation.

4.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan sets out initiatives which aim to prevent homelessness and preventative activities are important in order that the demand for homeless accommodation is reduced.

4.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Consultation with key stakeholders such as Health and Social Care, Children & Families, local RSLs, tenants groups and voluntary sector partners has been undertaken. Further consultation and engagement will take place with tenants and housing list applicants regarding the implications of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

4.7 Ensuring Equalities

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan has been subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment. The Impact Assessment ensures that the actions identified in the Plan will not lead to discriminatory practices toward any of the protected characteristics.

4.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not Applicable

4.9 IT Issues

Not Applicable

5. Recommendation

Council is recommended to:

- a) Note the actions being proposed to reduce the time it takes the Council to source permanent housing for homeless households.
- b) Note the actions being proposed to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- c) Approve the submission of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to the Scottish Government.

Date: 18th December 2018

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Background Papers

Appendix 1: Midlothian Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan