

The Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018

Contents	
1.	Introduction
2.	Legislative framework and statutory responsibilities
3.	National policy agenda and Scottish Social Housing Charter
4.	Strategic links
5.	Equal opportunities and human rights
6.	Review of Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015
7.	Context of homelessness in Moray
8.	Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018 – aims and objectives
9.	Housing options and homeless prevention
10.	Provision of appropriate accommodation options
11.	Housing support and tenancy sustainment
12.	Key considerations and challenges
13.	Governance, Monitoring And Evaluation
Appendices	
I	Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 15 – Achievements
II	Homelessness Action Plan 2015/16

Introduction

The Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018 sets out how the Moray Council and its partners will continue to work together over the next three years to prevent and alleviate homelessness by responding to the needs of individuals and families that are facing homelessness. This is the third homelessness strategy and it remains consistent with the approach taken in previous strategies. It sets out the key challenges in tackling homelessness and translates them into priorities for action.

Homelessness is not always a lifestyle choice that people make; it can happen to anyone. It is the most extreme form of housing need. It is rarely just a 'bricks and mortar' problem - it is a complex issue. Many people who experience homelessness are vulnerable and have some support needs but a smaller proportion may have complex needs which require more intensive support. The solution to homelessness often requires involvement from a range of agencies including housing providers, professionals in health, social work and education, the voluntary sector and employers.

Legislative framework and statutory responsibilities

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a specific duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment of the extent and nature of homelessness and to prepare and submit a strategy for preventing and alleviating homelessness within their area.

Since 2007, local authorities have not been required to produce separate homelessness strategies. Guidance from the Scottish Government advises that homelessness strategies should now be integrated with the Local Housing Strategies. However, in recognising the importance of tackling homelessness, the Moray Council wants to retain a strong strategic focus which expands on and enhances our Local Housing Strategy.

The main legislation relevant to homelessness is the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003). Significant changes to the Council's duties on homelessness were introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness Act 2003. These changes have altered the way that Scottish local authorities respond to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. A key change made by the 2003 Act was that the priority need distinction was abolished. From 31 December 2012, the Council were required to implement legislation which states that all homeless households who are unintentionally homeless will be eligible for permanent accommodation.

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 came into effect in June 2013.

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014, supersedes the 2004 Order and continues to prohibit the use of Bed and Breakfast

as temporary accommodation for households with children or pregnant women. It includes an additional provision that accommodation is unsuitable if it is not “wind and watertight”.

The Council’s legal responsibilities to people presenting as homeless as laid down in the legislation differs depending on the outcome of a comprehensive homeless assessment. In summary, the Council has a legal responsibility to:

- Provide advice and assistance and prevent and alleviate homelessness wherever possible;
- Assess the circumstances of households seeking homelessness assistance;
- Provide suitable temporary accommodation;
- Assess the support needs of all homeless households and provide support; and
- Provide suitable settled accommodation to alleviate the homelessness.

National policy agenda

In recent years, homeless prevention has been high on the national policy agenda and was seen as a crucial factor in meeting the 2012 target (which provided all of those assessed as unintentionally homeless with the legal right to settled accommodation) and as a tool to work closely to meet the needs of households. The Scottish Government has encouraged prevention activities through funding to enable a “housing options approach” to homelessness prevention and provision of guidance. The Scottish Government have defined housing options as “a process which starts with housing advice when someone approaches a local authority with a housing problem”. This definition means that local authorities must look at an individual’s options and choices in the widest possible sense. Five regional Housing Options Hubs across Scotland received funding to carry out joint projects, which helped inform the development of housing options services within local authorities.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

In April 2012 the Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect. It sets out the standards and outcomes which all social landlords are expected to meet when carrying out their housing activities. The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting how well social landlords meet the Charter’s outcomes. The Charter outcomes in relation to homelessness are:

1. Housing Options and Homeless Prevention

To provide information and advice for those at risk of becoming homeless. To achieve this, the strategy will ensure that:

- Homeless people receive prompt and easy access to help and advice.
- People looking for housing receive information that assists them to make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.
- Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.
- People at risk of losing their homes receive advice on preventing homelessness, thereby leading to a reduction in homeless presentations.

2. Provision of temporary, resettled and permanent accommodation

- Homeless people are provided with suitable, good quality temporary or

emergency accommodation when this is needed, and are offered support to help them get and keep a home.

3. Housing support and tenancy sustainment

- Tenants and customers receive the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home.
- Ensure that tenants and customers (and where appropriate household members) are offered suitable support and continued support when needed, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

Strategic links

Homelessness is a complex issue that is rarely solved just by housing. The response therefore must take a holistic approach and come from the Council in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies. It is essential that the Homelessness Strategy is influenced by and has links to other relevant Council strategies, which will ensure the purpose of the strategy meets service, corporate and national aims.



Equal opportunities and human rights

Homelessness is an area where prejudice and discrimination is common. Homeless people are themselves by definition disadvantaged and frequently experience more difficulty than others in accessing mainstream services. Therefore, all the actions proposed in this strategy are aimed at overcoming disadvantage and tackling the exclusion of groups of individuals experiencing homelessness. The Homelessness Strategy aims to ensure that in the development and implementation of services to tackle homelessness, we meet the needs of individual households whilst recognising the different needs of particular groups.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new public sector general equality duty which requires Scottish public authorities to pay 'due regard' to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; advance equality of

opportunity and foster good relations. These requirements will apply to the following 'protected characteristics':

• age	• disability
• gender reassignment	• pregnancy and maternity
• race	• religion and belief
• sex and sexual orientation	

The Human Rights Act 1998 - The human rights contained in Articles 6, 8 and 14 are those which are most likely to be relevant to provision of social housing:

- Article 6 - Right to a fair trial (an absolute right)
- Article 8 - Right to respect for private life, family life and the home (a qualified right)
- Article 14 - Prohibition of discrimination (a qualified right)

Review of the Moray Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015

There has been significant progress made during the lifespan of the last homelessness strategy. Its overall aim was “to prevent homelessness where possible, but when it does arise, to ensure that appropriate assistance and support is provided”. The strategic objectives set out in the strategy focussed on prevention, providing accommodation and providing support through sustainable solutions.

The main achievements of the Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015 include:

- ✓ The implementation of the Homelessness Policy and accompanying procedures;
- ✓ Since 2010, homelessness has reduced by 41.8%;
- ✓ 310 new Council houses have been built in the period;
- ✓ Temporary accommodation stock has been reduced and reconfigured which has resulted in significant budget saving and the eradication on the heavy reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation;
- ✓ 91.5% of new tenancies were sustained for more than 12 months by 2014/15;
- ✓ Housing support is offered to all homeless people and has further been extended to include all vulnerable housing options cases; and
- ✓ Repeat homelessness has reduced to 3.7%, lower than the national average of 5.8%.

Since 2010, the operational management of the homelessness service has been reviewed, transformed and streamlined. There has been a continued shift in focus on homeless prevention via the introduction of the housing options and housing support teams, which combined have transformed the context of homelessness in Moray.

Housing options starts with housing advice when someone approaches a local authority with a housing problem, 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, housing association housing and the private rented sector. This approach has been promoted by the Scottish Government and nearly all local authorities have now progressed to this.

Housing support services are structured around key homelessness themes which include homelessness prevention, transitional/tenancy sustainment and specialist support. Housing support enables vulnerable people to maintain their tenancies, avoid repeat homelessness and live independent, fulfilling lives in their community.

During the term of the strategy the homelessness service was subject to external audits and inspections:

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Housing Options Thematic Inspection

The Moray Council was chosen as one of the six case study authorities to participate in a thematic inquiry of housing options across Scotland which comprised an initial self-assessment exercise followed by an on-site inspection and survey. The final report on this inquiry was published on 9 May 2014. The report made a number of recommendations to the Scottish Government and local authorities which the Council has used to review its service.

Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers

The Scottish Government has developed a set of National Standards with the aim of improving standards in organisations which provide advice and information. In 2013, the Moray Council's Housing Needs Section achieved accreditation to Type I of the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers for housing specific competencies. This accreditation lasts until December 2017.

Continuing challenges

Although the progress that the previous Homelessness Strategy achieved has provided a sound framework to build on, a number of challenges in relation to homelessness remain. There is still a need to:

- improve housing options activities particularly for single people aged 25 to 59;
- continually reconfigure the supply of temporary accommodation to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation;
- work towards a continued reduction in the number of homeless applications following a small increase during 2014/15; and
- assess and manage the impact from the introduction of Universal Credit. Universal Credit will be rolled out in Moray in September 2015 so the impact is not yet known.

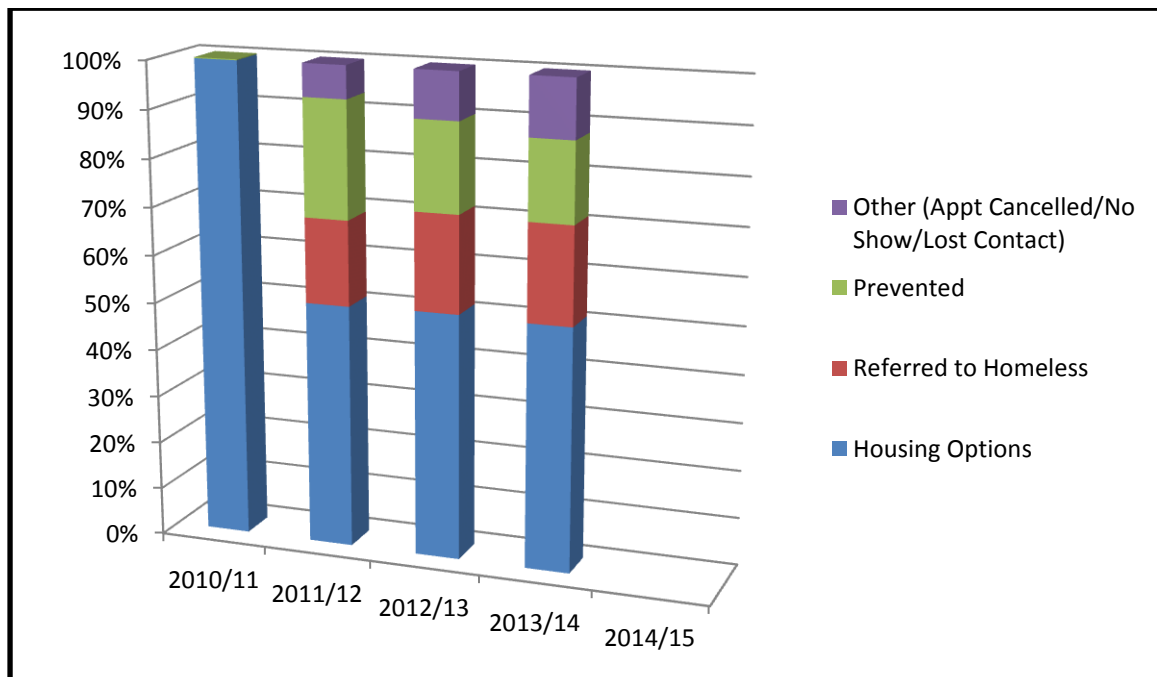
Context of homelessness in Moray

The achievements of the previous Homelessness Strategy have helped to change the context of homelessness in Moray. This section provides an overview of homelessness within Moray and sets out the local context in comparison with the national context. Generally, the profile of homelessness in Moray continues to be broadly similar to that across Scotland.

Scale of homelessness

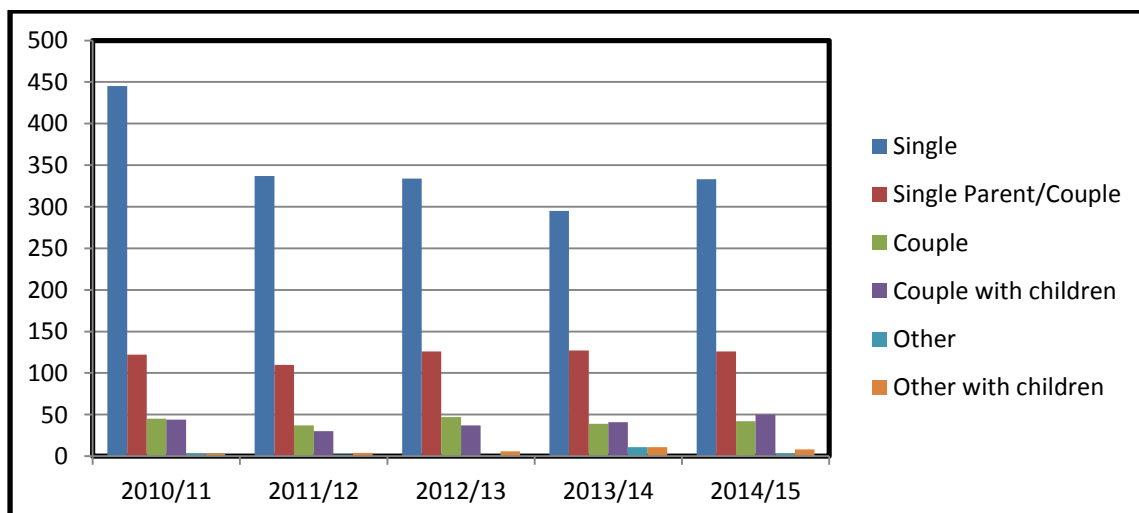
Since the introduction of housing options in 2010, the Council had experienced a significant decrease in homelessness applications - this is similar to most local authorities in Scotland. These reductions are attributed nationally to the impact of housing options and homelessness prevention work. A combination of good quality, accessible and consistent housing advice and information has been key to

preventing homelessness and has meant that an increasing amount of housing options cases choose not to submit a homeless application. More recently, however, the rate of reduction in homelessness applications has slowed. In 2014/15, the number of homeless applications has increased by 7%. This may in part be due to the current economic climate and a consequence of the financial pressures that many households are now experiencing. It may also be a reflection of the reduction in the effectiveness in housing options, with more complex cases having less scope for intervention and progressing to homelessness, which has also been experienced nationally.



Who is homeless in Moray?

Single people continue to be the highest household type who are presenting as homeless. This is consistent with the national profile of homeless, although Moray has experienced a gradual reduction in homeless applications from single people year on year since 2010/11. However, meeting the housing needs of single people continues to present the biggest challenge for the Council and its partners.

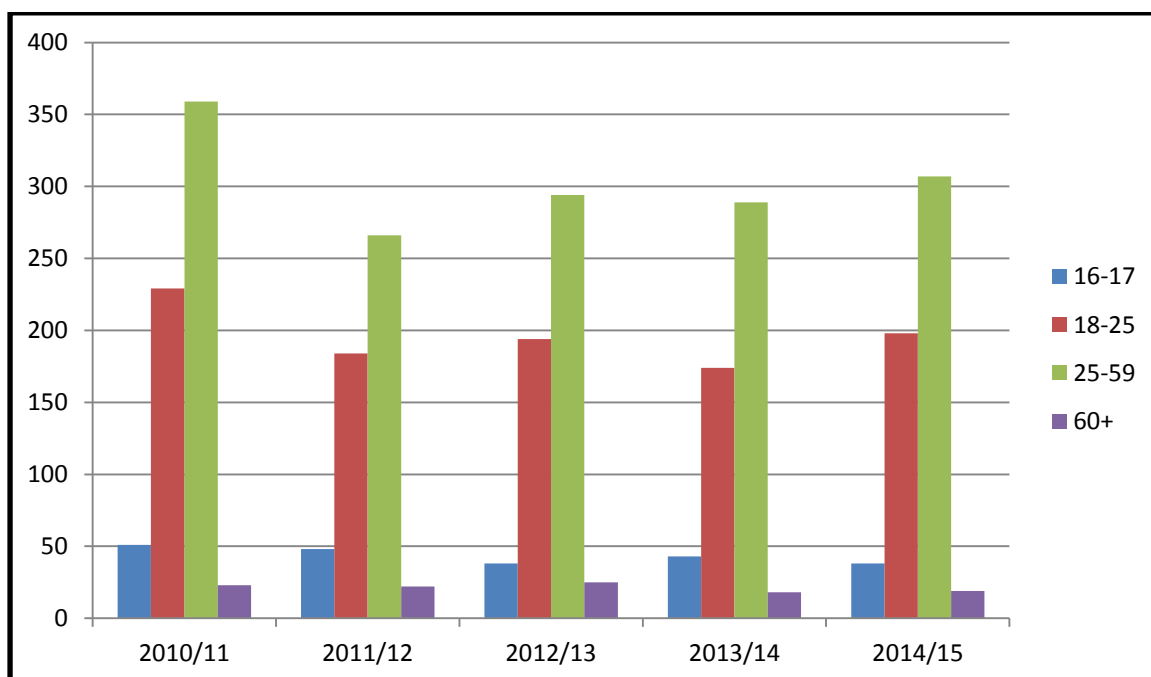


Gender of homeless applicants

Single men remain the largest group who submitted homeless applications followed by single women and combined accounted for 59.3% of all applications. This is slight decrease from 67.2% in 2010/11.

Age of homeless applicants

The two main age groups that homeless applications are received from remain those who are 18 - 25 years old and 26 - 59 years old. In 2014/15, these age groups combined accounted for 88.4% of all homeless applications received which is reflective of previous years and the national perspective.



Reasons for becoming homeless

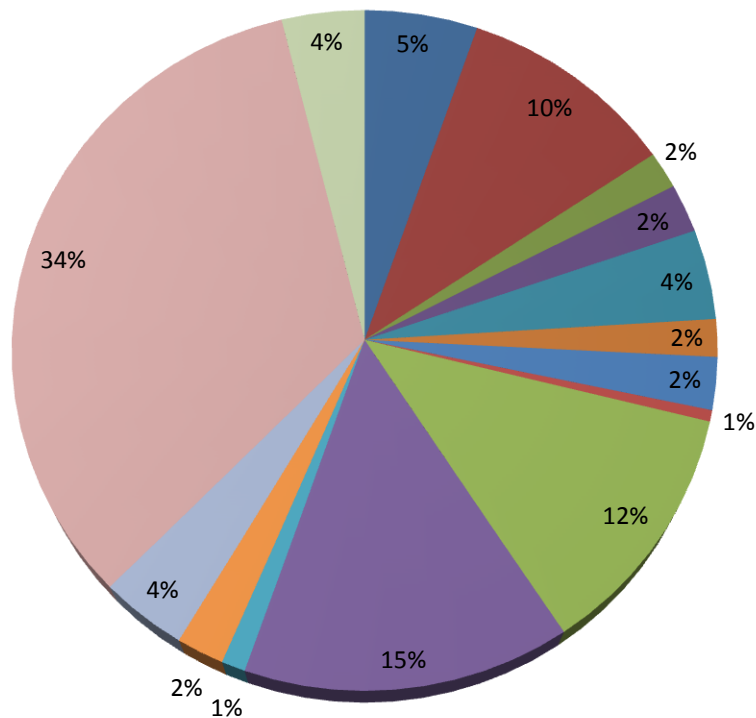
The table on the following page provides details of the main reasons given for making a homeless application which include:

- being asked to leave the home (37%),
- non violent disputes within the household (15%) and
- violent or abusive disputes within the household (12%).

Rent arrears or mortgage default account for around 5% of all homelessness applications while 4% of applications are from those leaving prison/ hospital/care or some other institution. Although this is broadly similar to Moray, there are some differences. The number of cases where action by landlord has caused the termination of their tenancy has increased steadily since 2012/13 which substantiates the need for reputable, registered landlords.

Reasons for homelessness

- Termination of tenancy/mortgage arrears/payemnts defaults
- Other action by landlord
- Secure accommodation terminated
- Loss of tied accommodation
- Discharge hospital/prison/care
- Emergency (fire/flood/disaster)
- Forced sale of matrimonial home
- Other reason loss of accomm
- Dispute within household (violent/abusive)
- Dispute within household/relationship breakdown (non-violent)
- Fleeing non-domestic violence
- Harassment
- Overcrowding
- Asked to leave
- Other reason for leaving



Assessment overview

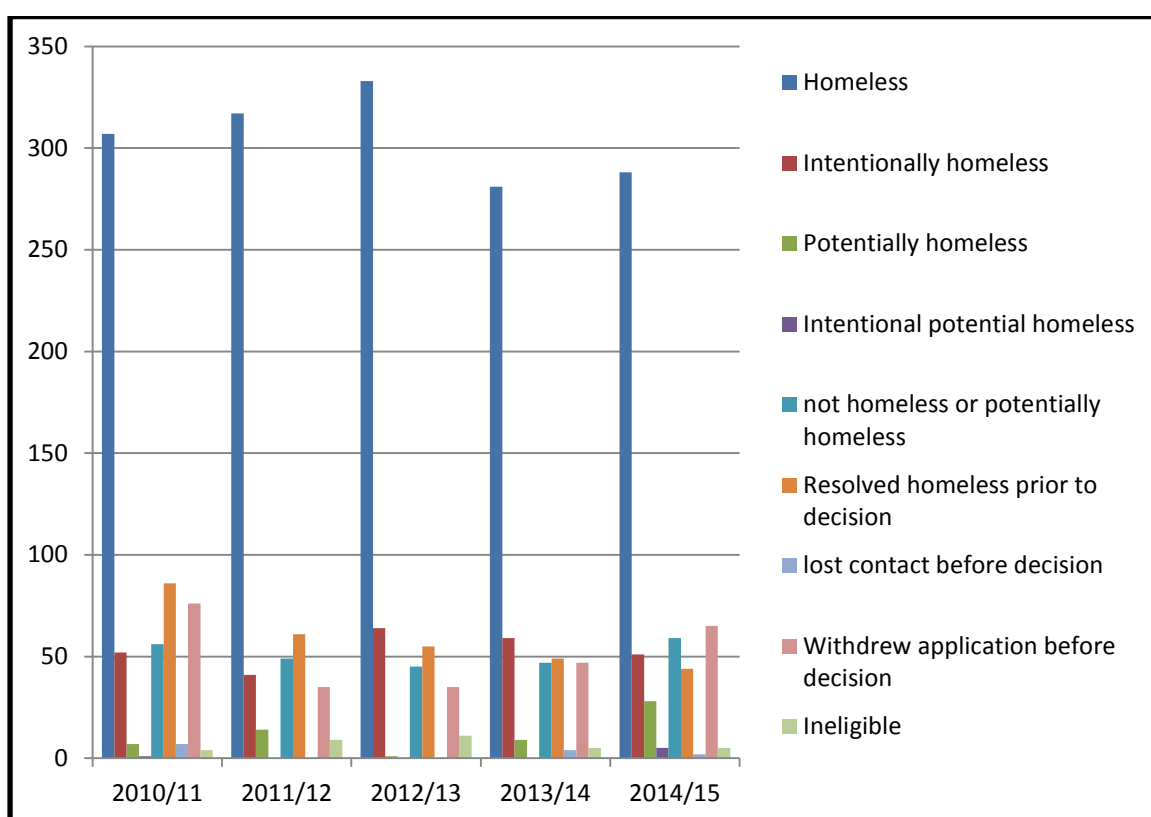
Legislative changes since the last homelessness strategy have had an impact on homelessness assessments. From 31 December 2012 onwards, local authorities no longer apply the priority need test to homeless households. As a result all

unintentionally homeless households in Scotland are entitled to settled accommodation.

Local authorities must investigate any homeless application to determine what action it needs to take. If it believes that an applicant is homeless they must provide temporary accommodation until further investigations are concluded. There are three tests of assessing homelessness:

Test 1	Is the applicant homeless or threatened with homelessness?
Test 2	Is the applicant intentionally homeless?
Test 3	Does the applicant have a local connection?

The outcome of each test determines the level of assistance that local authorities must provide to a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness.



Outcomes for applicants assessed

The duties of local authorities towards homeless persons differ depending on the outcome of the assessment of the homeless application, as summarised below.

Outcome of assessment	What must the local authority do/provide?
Neither homelessness nor potentially homeless	Provide appropriate advice/assistance relating to the housing circumstances of the household to be provided
Unintentionally homeless	Provide temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation is provided.
Intentionally homeless	Provide temporary accommodation until decision and then advice provided

The Council continually collates and scrutinises data relating to homelessness in order to establish trends and identify areas which may need addressed, require service improvements or identify good practice. More recently this has included:

Intentionality

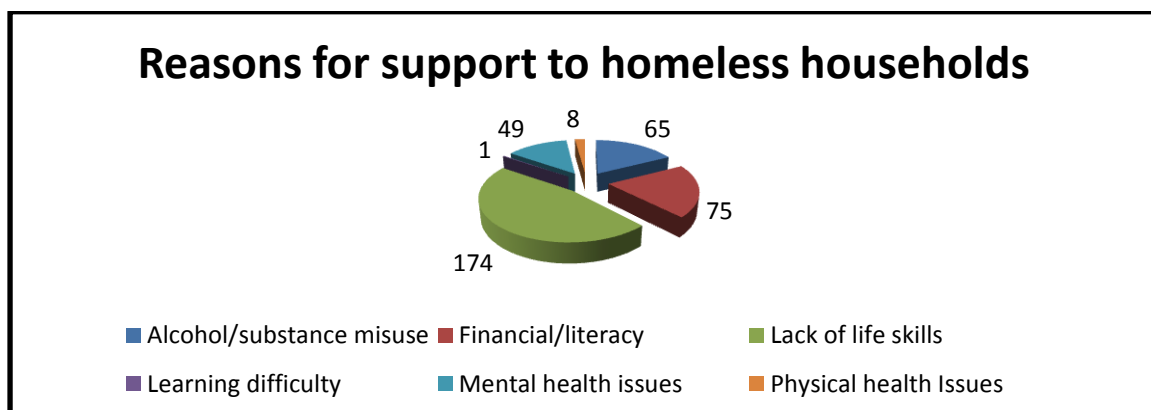
Across Scotland, the number of applications assessed as intentionally homeless has fallen back slightly from the highest level recorded since monitoring began (7% intentionally homeless decisions in July-September 2014). The overall increase may be a consequence of the abolition of the priority need test as all those assessed as homeless are now tested for intentionality. Prior to this, non-priority homeless households would not have been subject to the intentionality test. Although Moray continues to find more households intentionally homeless in comparison to Scotland, this has decreased from 11.8% in 2013/14 to 9.3% in 2014/15. Where an applicant is assessed as intentionally homeless, officers will work to assist those households. Officers have monitored and reviewed our existing processes and are confident that the homelessness legislation with regard to intentionality decisions is being applied consistently. This will continue to be monitored.

Repeat presentations

It is important that the discharge of homelessness duties leads to a sustainable outcome that can be maintained by the applicant. Historically there have always been a number of people who present as homeless more than once within a reporting year. Nationally, the percentage of homeless assessments identified as repeat cases (i.e. where a previous application from the household had been closed less than 12 months before the current assessment) has increased for the second consecutive year, from a low of 5.6% in 2012-13 to 7.2% in 2014-15. In Moray, this figure has reduced year on year from 9.4% in 2011/12 to 3.5% in 2014/15. This may be attributed to the impact of the housing support service which has assisted homeless applicants to achieve a sustainable outcome and avoid any further housing crisis. This will continue to be an area where which the Council will continue to monitor and strive to make improvements, with the aim of ultimately reducing repeat homelessness.

Housing support needs

The Housing Support service provides invaluable support to allow and assist individuals to live independently to learn the skills needed to maintain a long term tenancy. 569 people were given support during 2014/15, 65% (372) of which were homeless households.



Temporary accommodation

Homeless applicants may be placed in temporary accommodation while the council assesses their application or while awaiting the offer of a permanent let. Also, non-priority applicants and those assessed as intentionally homeless may be placed in temporary accommodation and receive advice and assistance as the outcome of their application.

The Scottish Government figures show a continuing reduction in the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation as at 31 March 2015. Across Scotland, the total number of households in temporary accommodation reduced in each of 2012, 2013 and 2014 but it has seen its first increase in four years. Similarly, the number of households with children in temporary accommodation has increased for the first time in four years.

Moray was one of the 12 local authorities who experienced an increase (+9%) in the number of households in temporary accommodation in 2014/15. This increase may be substantiated by the availability of the supply of permanent accommodation in the locations needed, along with the size of available properties required. The highest proportion of homeless households are single people or childless couples, who typically require a one bedroom property. The available supply of one bedroom properties cannot meet this demand.

The Council will continue to monitor the use of temporary accommodation and reconfigure it to ensure that it is effectively used.

Permanent accommodation

The Council presents annual performance data on the operation of its Allocations Policy annually to its Communities Committee. During the period 2014/15, a total of 586 properties became available for let in Moray. This included 465 council properties (of which 68 were new build houses) and 121 housed by nomination to Registered Social Landlords (RSL). Of the total number of lets, 42.3% went to homeless households compared to 38% nationally.

The Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018: Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the Moray Homelessness Strategy is:

to prevent homelessness where possible, but when it does arise, to ensure that appropriate assistance and support is provided.

The objectives of the Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 18 will continue to focus on:

- **Housing options and homeless prevention**
- **Provision of temporary and permanent accommodation**
- **Housing support and tenancy sustainment**

These objectives have been developed in line with the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes related to homelessness. The actions required to achieve these

identified objectives are detailed in the Action Plan (**Appendix II**) which will be reviewed regularly. A revised action plan will be developed annually.

Strategic Objective 1 - Housing options and homeless prevention

As part of the previous Homelessness Strategy, the Council adopted a **housing options approach**, with the principle that early intervention should lead to improved, sustainable outcomes for homeless households. The Housing Options team aims to provide enhanced information and advice on housing options, delivered in a person centred way, to households at risk of homelessness.

In most cases, homelessness is complex; it usually is not the result of one single incident or event but part of a much wider issue in an individual's life. The strategy seeks to take a holistic approach and examine homelessness in widest sense and where possible address the reasons that cause the homelessness in the first instance to develop sustainable long term solutions while preventing repeat homelessness.

Central to this is ensuring that households know where to access advice and support that assists them to avoid or deal with issues that could lead to homelessness.

The Council and its partners will continue to monitor, review and enhance the housing options and homeless prevention activities already in place. A joined up approach will be essential to ensure continued success in alleviating and preventing homelessness.

Strategic Objective 2 – Provision of appropriate accommodation options

Facilitating access to appropriate accommodation is crucial in preventing and resolving homelessness in the short, medium and long term. For those who do become homeless, the Council and where appropriate, its partners, will offer good quality and affordable temporary accommodation, and assistance to find a sustainable home.

Temporary accommodation

The temporary accommodation budget is likely to continue to be under pressure for the foreseeable future. These include:

- changes to the basis on which the Hostel Deficit Grant is funded by the Scottish Government; and
- welfare reform – the introduction of Universal Credit, the Shared Accommodation rate for those aged under 35 years of age and the removal of the spare room subsidy.

To mitigate these pressures, Officers will continue to assess the Council's future temporary accommodation needs. It has developed and implemented a revised charging policy for temporary accommodation which aims to relieve this pressure, whilst making accommodation more affordable.

Officers will continue to monitor trends in homelessness and use these projections to anticipate the number of homeless applications and the future requirements for temporary accommodation to ensure that it is used most effectively.

Permanent accommodation

The Council will continue to reduce the incidence of homelessness through the new supply of permanent accommodation. It will also encourage and assist its partners to participate in other initiatives which will assist in providing solutions to housing needs.

An empty homes strategy has been developed in Moray which will establish the scale and extent of empty homes in Moray. It aims to prevent homes becoming empty long term in the first place and work with owners of empty homes to bring these properties back into use.

Strategic Objective 3 – Housing support and tenancy sustainment

The provision of housing support is fundamental to sustaining accommodation as well as during the transition to new settled accommodation, in both the short and long term. This assists in preventing homelessness and cases of repeat homelessness. The Strategy sets out how improvements will be made so that access to a wide range of housing and non-housing services is available to those who require support. The Council will ensure that housing support services achieve the following outcomes:

- ensuring that people can live as independently possible (either in their own home or in temporary accommodation); and
- reducing the risk of them becoming homeless again.

Key considerations and challenges

Health and homelessness

The previous NHS Grampian Health and Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan is in the process of being replaced. Homeless persons who have health issues will be dealt with under NHS Grampian's Inequalities Route Map as they experience health inequality through any apparent vulnerability.

The Scottish Government and The Moray Council believe that the link between health and homelessness, which has been evident over many years, needs to be investigated further to assist in tackling homelessness at its roots. Steps are being taken nationally to make more significant and robust links by joining homeless data sets with health data. This will assist in measuring the homeless population's access to health care and the subsequent outcomes that this may lead to. These steps would also allow comparison between the homeless population and the settled population in terms of access to health care.

This could potentially increase awareness of patients in unstable housing environments to healthcare staff who can then link with the housing support service and any other relevant key agencies to sustain their home during periods of illness.

Health care & social integration

The recent integration of health and social care services presents housing with challenges and opportunities. It is essential that the contribution that housing and homelessness services make is recognised and there is the opportunity to improve

links between services. There is a need to ensure that the role of housing, which includes homelessness services, plays a part in preventative work to provide information, advice and assistance through our housing options approach.

The integration will provide an opportunity to review discharge protocols to avoid, wherever possible, the use of temporary accommodation with the aim of identifying and addressing any potential housing need before a stay in hospital identifies a severe housing risk.

Welfare reform

In June 2010, UK Government spending reviews announced a series of measures that would be introduced to reduced expenditure on Housing Benefit. There have been a number of changes that have been introduced to housing benefit and local housing allowance. These include:

- Since April 2013 the removal of the spare room subsidy resulted in the housing benefit of claimants being restricted if the property size is larger than the family size (as determined by the DWP);
- 2015 will see the introduction of universal credits to Moray. Universal credit is a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring. There will be an overall capping on the full amount of benefits that claimants can receive. A family will be able to receive a maximum of £500 per week and a single person £350 per week.

These changes will also affect supported accommodation, the extent of which, at the time of writing, is not completely known.

Affordable housing supply

Moray along with most other local authorities has a shortage of affordable housing across all tenures. Despite the success of the new build Council house programme, there remains a significant shortfall in the availability of affordable housing throughout Moray. There is a mismatch between demand and house types, including their size and location. This is compounded by the relatively small size of the private rented sector which can only be a limited resource.

The continuing lack of affordable housing, in both the social and private rented sector, impacts on the ability to provide both temporary and permanent accommodation to homeless households.

Service User Involvement Framework

The service user involvement framework allows service users the chance to get involved in the management, development and delivery of the homelessness services. Service users can tell us what they feel is being done right and what can be done better. This provides us with valuable information to improve our service, and service users can feel (individually or as a group) that their opinions are making a difference.

It can prove difficult to obtain sufficient levels of feedback from service users. Methods for obtaining feedback can be resource intensive. The Moray Council is keen to improve the level of service user involvement and will explore further methods of obtaining feedback during the term of this Strategy in order to enhance service delivery across the homelessness service.

Governance, monitoring and evaluation

The Homelessness Strategy will be formally reviewed on an annual basis. The actions and measures set out in the action plan will be reviewed quarterly at the Homelessness Strategy Group and annually at the Council's Communities Committee. A revised action plan will be developed and consulted on annually.

2010-15 Homelessness Strategy Achievements

Year	Achievements
2010 – 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of housing support services; • Homeless prevention model agreed; • Homeless prevention team in place; and • Reliance on bed and breakfast reduced to zero.
2011 – 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of in-house/external housing support services; • Implementation of the information and advice module; • 100% compliance with the abolition of priority need target; • Training programme delivered to increase awareness of homelessness; • Improved housing options information for disabled people; and • A pre-tenancy “living skills toolkit” developed for vulnerable people.
2012 – 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Service User Framework completed; • Revised Section 11 procedures implemented to assist in preventing evictions/repossessions within the private sector; • Completion of revised drafts for all external protocols; • Review and implementation of housing options interview checklist; • Multi-agency planning to improve outcomes for chaotic homeless people; • Improved case management and recording of data; and • Review of housing needs team.
2013 – 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a revised Homelessness Policy and procedures; • Protocols for armed services; prisons; and hospitals updated; • Appraisal of a web-based housing options model; • Completion of review into lost contacts and repeat homelessness cases; • Financial appraisal of temporary accommodation completed; • Implementation of the Scottish Government’s Housing Support guidance; • Revised housing needs staff structure implemented; and • Monitoring of the impact of welfare reform.
2014 – 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Housing Support Services Policy; • Development and implementation of Housing Options Procedures; • Development and implementation of Housing Support Procedures; • Review of Housing Options Guide; • Accessible housing options information; • Implementation of a revised charging policy for temporary accommodation; and • Development of a website to advertise private rented sector properties.

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

Housing Options / Homeless Prevention	Ensure the provision of good quality advice and assistance on housing options and where possible prevent homelessness occurring			
	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
Comply with legislation and guidance	Ensure that the service complies with the Scottish Government's Housing Options Guidance	Review of guidance	October 2015	
		Identify actions	November 2015	
		Actions implemented	February 2016	
Monitor and review housing options and homelessness data	Identify potential actions that may have better outcomes for those in housing need or at risk of homelessness and assess any service improvements	Monitor data to identify trends and issues	Ongoing	
		Identify actions	Ongoing	
		Actions implemented	Ongoing	
		Assess service improvements	Ongoing	
People looking for housing receive information that assists them to make informed choices and decisions, at an early stage, about the range of housing options available to them.	Develop a web based portal where residents can seek person centred advice and assistance on their housing options			
	Monitor and review sources of information and advice available and ensure that information is accurate and up to date – i.e. Housing Options Guide, information leaflets and website.	Information regularly reviewed and is up to date and accurate.	Ongoing	
People at risk of losing their homes receive advice on preventing homelessness	Review and further develop protocols for those leaving the Armed Forces, hospital and prison	Review of protocols	September 2015	
		Amendments identified	November 2015	
		Revised protocols agreed & implemented	February 2016	
	Investigate reasons for failing to			

	maintain existing accommodation and identify possible interventions			
Housing Options / Homeless Prevention	Ensure the provision of good quality advice and assistance on housing options and where possible prevent homelessness occurring			
	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
Homeless people receive prompt and easy access to help and advice.	Ensure that the Council does not intentionally gate keep/ screen households from Homelessness services	Monitor and analyse instances of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lost contact repeat homelessness multiple offers of temporary accommodation time taken to discharge duty 	Ongoing	
Review early intervention mechanisms	Encourage early intervention and homeless prevention through education at secondary schools	Review the homeless prevention material/presentation used in schools	December 2015	
		Increase the number of that schools engage with homeless prevention activities.	April 2016	
		Investigate additional avenues other than schools	April 2016	
Provision of accommodation				
	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
Maximise uptake of the Moray Keyfund	Review of the Moray Keyfund eligibility criteria to ensure that it can be used as a realistic housing option, enabling access to the private rented sector whilst posing minimal financial risk to the Council	Review of criteria	November 2015	
		Present recommendations to Committee	March 2016	
		Implement any agreed recommendations	March 2016	
		Uptake of Moray Keyfund maximised	April 2016	

Provision of accommodation				
	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
Homeless people are provided with suitable good quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed and are offered support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.	Reconfigure temporary accommodation to ensure there is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households	Annual temporary accommodation appraisal		
Homeless people are provided with suitable good quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed and are offered support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.	Temporary accommodation is accessible, affordable and well managed.	Appraisal of temporary accommodation charging policy	June 2016	
	The views of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation are considered, especially for service development	Review of service user activity	October 2015	
		Explore further methods of engagement and obtaining feedback	December 2015	
		Improved methods of engagement and obtaining feedback implemented	February 2016	
Ensure, where possible that length of time spent in temporary accommodation is appropriate to the individual's needs, but that overall the length of time spent in temporary accommodation is reduced.	Continually monitor and review the length of time that applicants are in temporary accommodation	Ongoing		

Provision of accommodation				
	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
	Transfer of the Council's data management for temporary accommodation on to iWorld to ensure HL3 deadline complied with	Identify data to be transferred	October 2015	
		Data transferred on to iWorld	January 2016	
		HL 3 deadline met	March 2016	
	Review of supported accommodation team			
Housing support & tenancy sustainment	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
Develop a shared tenancy scheme	Develop a "sharing scheme" and promote to those who are aged under 35	Evaluate and agree a sharing model	November 2015	
		Pilot a sharing model	January 2016	
		Sharing scheme implemented	March 2016	
Develop a better understanding of the outcomes the private rented sector can deliver for households who are in housing need	Review routes into the private rented sector	Develop and amend procedures in light of legislative changes and good practice (Housing (Scotland) Act 2014)	Ongoing	
	Continue to build good relations with private landlords	Ensure that we engage with landlords in the private rented sector and that they are kept up to date on legislative changes, and local initiatives	Ongoing	

Housing support & tenancy sustainment	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
Ensure appropriate housing support services are available to all who need it to prevent homelessness, and to break the cycle of repeat homelessness.	Encourage a partnership approach to address issues experienced by vulnerable homeless and potentially homeless people (complex and multiple vulnerabilities). Prevalent issues include mental health issues, debt management and financial advice, employment and support to enable vulnerable people to manage on their own.	Continue to develop and maintain partnerships with services and agencies identifying where agency involvement is necessary.	Ongoing	
		Analysis of repeat homelessness cases	Ongoing	
Other	What we will do	Key milestones	Timescale	Progress
Continue to research homelessness issues and identify good practice	Contribute to and carry out the North East Housing Options HUB Action Plan	HUB action plan progressed	Ongoing	
Welfare reform	Continue to identify and monitor welfare reform challenges for homeless households and households in housing need. Including but not restricted to Universal Credit, sanctions etc.		Ongoing	
Training of staff	Training Plan developed to ensure staff, partner agencies and service users have skills, competencies and awareness training.	Programme of training in place for 2015/16	September 2015	
		Training programme delivered	April 2016	