

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT

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| To: BELLSHILL AND DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE | | Subject: HOMELESSNESS AND THE ALLOCATION OF HOUSING |
| From: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES | | |
| Date: 24 May, 2005 | Ref: TMcK/AC | |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline to the Bellshill and District Area Committee, the Council's position in responding to its statutory responsibilities in meeting the needs of homeless people within North Lanarkshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide accommodation, advice and assistance under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003. The main implications of the legislation are set out as follows:
- 2.2 **Homelessness Strategy** – local authorities are required to carry out an assessment of homelessness in its area and prepare a strategy for preventing and alleviating homelessness. North Lanarkshire's Homelessness Strategy was subject to wide consultation and was approved by the Scottish Executive on 31st March 2003 and reviewed during 2004 outlining the progress and revised actions for 2005/06.
- 2.3 **Advice on Homelessness etc** – local authorities must ensure advice and information about homelessness, the prevention of homelessness and services, which may assist a homeless person or prevent homelessness, is available free of charge.
- 2.4 **Homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness.** Local authorities must provide
- **Temporary Accommodation for all homeless persons** who require it. In North Lanarkshire temporary accommodation is provided by larger unit type accommodation such as Airth Court in Motherwell, Walkerburn Drive in Wishaw, Manse Avenue and Old School Court in Coatbridge and Thrashbush Court in Airdrie. Furthermore, a total of

232 dispersed properties are used Council wide, 48 being located within the area committee boundary. This includes 2 private sector leased properties, and an agreement with Lanarkshire Housing Association will provide a purpose built wheelchair property at their forthcoming development in Mossend.

As a last resort, temporary accommodation may be provided by Bed and Breakfast facilities. However, councils can no longer use this type of accommodation for families with children or pregnant woman, following the introduction of legislation in December 2004.

- **Permanent Accommodation to applicants who are considered 'vulnerable' and in 'Priority Need'** which is set out in the legislation as:
 - Old age
 - Mental Illness
 - Personality Disorder
 - Learning Disability
 - Physical Disability
 - Chronic Ill Health
 - Having suffered a miscarriage or undergone an abortion
 - Having been discharged from hospital, a prison or any part of the regular armed forces of the Crown; or
 - Other special reason

Priority Need has been extended further to include

- A person aged 16 or 17 years
- A person 18 to 20 who runs the risk of sexual or financial exploitation, or involvement in the serious misuse of alcohol or drugs. This section now also includes person who were previously 'looked after' by a local authority.
- A person at risk of violence or harassment by reason of their religion, sexual orientation, race, colour or ethnic origin
- A person at risk of domestic abuse.

2.5 Ensuring the Council provides access to permanent and temporary accommodation to homeless people, is only one component of the Council's obligations. Local authorities must ensure that homeless persons are treated fairly and equitably in terms of both standards of accommodation and consideration of 'personal' needs i.e. to be near friends, relatives and other formal and informal networks.

3. TENANCY SUPPORT TEAMS

3.1 North Lanarkshire Council has created six Tenancy Support Teams to support clients, maximise their potential to access appropriate housing options and prevent homelessness. The teams provide advice, advocacy, information and

assistance to people who may be or are at risk of becoming homeless within North Lanarkshire and are designed to support and facilitate the provision and maintenance of permanent housing. The service provides an inter-agency approach towards homelessness and ensures that each client receives a full assessment of need, which forms the basis of a personal housing support plan. Each client is allocated a tenancy support worker who maintains contact with the client to achieve positive goals.

- 3.2 The Support Teams also work with people who may have difficulty sustaining their tenancy or coping with daily living. The Support Workers provide assistance to tenants by helping them to move in to their new home, fill out forms, secure benefits, obtain furniture, give advice on domestic chores, household budgeting and work closely with housing, social work and health to help individuals settle into community life.

4. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 4.1 Table 1 illustrates the growth in demand from homeless services over the past year

Table 1: Number of Homeless Presentations by Area Office 2003/04 – 2004/05

| Area Office | No. Presentations 2003/04 | No. Presentations 2004/05 | % increase/ decrease |
|-------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Airdrie | 544 | 561 | +3% |
| Bellshill | 335 | 510 | +52% |
| Coatbridge | 481 | 534 | +11% |
| Cumbernauld | 457 | 639 | +40% |
| Kilsyth | 96 | 137 | +43% |
| Moodiesburn | 58 | 138 | +138% |
| Motherwell | 395 | 558 | +41% |
| Shotts | 106 | 148 | +39% |
| Viewpark | 180 | 202 | +12% |
| Wishaw | 463 | 690 | +49% |
| Grand Total | 3115 | 4117 | +32% |

- 4.2 Homeless applicants are treated equally with other applicants in respect to the number, quality and location of houses they are offered. Protocols have been developed with partnering RSL's to deal with nominations under Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 in order to meet needs and maximise choice for homeless applicants. Table 2 indicates the number of homeless applicants housed by a Registered Social Landlord from April 2004 – March 2005

Table 2: Homeless cases housed by Registered Social Landlords

| Area Office | Section 5 Referral | Nomination | Direct from RSL waiting list | Total |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Shotts | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Bellshill | 7 | 2 | 0 | 9 |
| Viewpark | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Motherwell | 7 | 12 | 3 | 22 |
| Wishaw | 7 | 39 | 6 | 52 |
| Kilsyth / Cumbernauld | 9 | 14 | 11 | 34 |
| Moodiesburn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Coatbridge | 2 | 9 | 0 | 11 |
| Airdrie | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Total homeless cases housed by RSLs | 37 | 78 | 20 | 135 |

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The expansion of Homeless duties has impacted on the operation of the Council's allocation policy. If current trends continue, providing 100% of all available housing to Statutory Homeless applicants would clear the backlog in just over 3-4 months, however in practice this is not considered a realistic target.
- 5.2 North Lanarkshire Housing and Technical Services Committee have recently acknowledged an operational target of approx. 70% of lets to be allocated to statutory homeless applications, realising that from time to time this may require to be varied to ensure all other obligations are fulfilled.
- 5.3 In order to achieve this, it may be necessary to offer accommodation to applicants by accessing a wider range of areas beyond the applicants preferred area of choice. Options are discussed with clients during joint interviews with the client, Tenancy Support Team and First Stop Shop staff. This will ensure that the clients have a realistic picture of permanent housing solutions.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 Committee are asked to note:
- a) The increased demand being placed on the Council's resources from homeless applicants.

- b) The efforts being made to prevent homelessness and support vulnerable clients in the community

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom McKenzie', written in a cursive style.

Thomas McKenzie
Director of Housing & Property Services