

Agenda Item	3.
Report No	CLH 55/18

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Care, Learning and Housing Committee

**Date:** 6 December 2018

**Report Title:** Homelessness: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

**Report By:** Director of Community Services

### 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a first iteration of a Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which is to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 31 December 2018.

### 2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to:

1. **approve** the first iteration of the Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and associated Action Plan as attached at **Appendices 1 and 2** for submission to the Scottish Government;
2. **note** that initial Scottish Government funding is anticipated as being between £30,000 and £40,000 to develop the Plan in 2019;
3. **agree** that this initial funding allocation to Highland should be used to appoint an additional temporary post to lead on the development of the Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan during the calendar year 2019; and
4. **note** that a further report will be presented to Committee with details of progress when further information on phase 2 funding is anticipated in early 2019.

### **3 Background**

3.1 The Care, Learning and Housing Committee received an update on homelessness initiatives in December 2017 and again on 15 March 2018.

3.2 The Care, Learning and Housing Committee Policy Development Group considered homelessness at their meetings on 19 September 2017 and on 11 September 2018. Key points arising from the discussion were:

- continuing the work to supply affordable houses in the communities where they are most needed;
- improving outcomes for households with a person-centred approach to their housing options to include use of the 'homeless at home' element of the allocation policy and converting temporary tenancies into secure tenancies where appropriate;
- managing the aspirations and expectations of the many households and organisations who lobby for a move to Inverness in preference to solutions in their existing area which may meet their needs; and
- further partnership working is required to develop a Housing First model appropriate to Highland and to ensure partner services can provide the intensive holistic support required to make this work.

3.3 This report provides an update on homelessness and temporary accommodation in Highland and on emerging national policy on homelessness. In particular it provides a first iteration of a Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) which is to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 31 December 2018.

3.4 The main areas of work on homelessness over the last two years have involved:-

- increasing use of Council houses / Housing Association stock as temporary furnished accommodation;
- re-tendering our temporary accommodation framework with private sector providers to try and achieve better value and improved quality; and
- developing our Housing Options approach to homeless prevention in line with national guidance.

3.5 In Highland the number of people presenting as homeless has been relatively stable at around 1,000 cases a year over the last 5 years, but the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased. This is largely due to the lack of suitable housing available to make offers of permanent accommodation.

3.6 Currently over 550 households are in temporary accommodation in Highland. The average time households spend in temporary accommodation is 9 months for families and 11 months for single people /couples without children. This waiting time increases to 12 and 18 months for the Inverness City area.

3.7 As previously reported, the Council provides temporary accommodation through a mix of our own housing stock, property leased from individual private landlords, or through a framework contract with a range of accommodation providers. Unlike most other Councils we use a high proportion private sector bed and breakfast type accommodation and Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) rooms with shared facilities as temporary accommodation.

- 3.8 Under the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 (amended 2007) bed and breakfast type accommodation (i.e. with shared facilities) is only be used in exceptional circumstances when temporarily housing families with children or pregnant women. There is a cap of one week on its use unless there are exceptional circumstances. Order breaches are reported quarterly. There have been no breaches reported in Highland since 2016. The efforts to minimise the impact of homelessness for children was detailed in a report to this Committee on 30 May 2018.
- 3.9 One of the main challenges for Highland Council in producing and delivering a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is the concentration of homelessness pressure in Inverness. In 2017-18 out of 1,038 homeless applications in Highland 396 (38%) were to Inverness. Each of these households was seeking permanent housing in Inverness. National modelling on Rapid Rehousing has been at the Local Authority level, assuming that homelessness pressure in one location can be addressed by increasing the proportion of housing allocations to homeless households in other areas where there is less homelessness pressure. Given the geography and in some cases the pattern of specialist service provision in Highland there are constraints on this approach.

#### **4 National Policy Objectives**

- 4.1 As previously reported the Programme for Government includes the following commitments to tackle homelessness in Scotland:
- set a clear national objective to eradicate rough sleeping, recognising that it requires more than just the provision of housing;
  - implement the recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) to develop responses on the actions and legislative changes required to transform the use of temporary accommodation; and
  - create an 'Ending Homelessness Together' Fund of £50 million over a five year period to support anti-homelessness initiatives and pilot solutions to drive faster change. This includes a fund of £21million in regard to RRTPs of which £2 million is specifically set aside for local authorities to develop their plans.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government accepted the majority of recommendations of the HARSAG in June 2018. This included the recommendation that all local authorities produce Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans to document how they would tackle homelessness.
- 4.3 Where homelessness cannot be prevented, Rapid Rehousing is defined as follows:
- a settled, mainstream housing outcome as quickly as possible;
  - time spent in any form of temporary accommodation reduced to a minimum, with the fewer transitions the better; and
  - when temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within a community.
- 4.4 For clients with multiple and complex support needs beyond housing, a Housing First model is recommended. Housing First is based on the following premises:
1. housing is a basic human right, not a reward for "clinical success"; and
  2. once the chaos of homelessness is eliminated from a person's life, clinical and social stabilisation occurs faster and is more enduring.

- 4.5 Each local authority is required to submit a first iteration of their 5-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan by 31 December 2018. Following review by the Scottish Government, finalised plans should be completed and ready for commencement at the start of April 2019.
- 4.6 The HARSAG recommendation is that plans will become an integral part of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) and be reviewed annually as part of the SHIP process. Highland's SHIP 2019-2024 was approved at the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 8 November 2018. This proposes a target of building 500 new affordable homes each year for the next five years.
- 4.7 The Scottish Government issued updated guidance for local authorities in developing Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans in October 2018. They also announced that £2 million of funding would be available nationally to allow each local authority to develop their plan. Highland is expected to receive between £30,000 and £40,000. It is recommended that this initial funding allocation to Highland should be used to appoint an additional temporary post to lead on the development of the Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan during the calendar year 2019.
- 4.8 The additional £19 million funding set aside for Rapid Rehousing will be allocated to local authorities following the Scottish Government review of the submitted plans. As yet there is limited information available as to the funding allocation process. The Scottish Government has indicated that local authorities are not being asked to set out how they would spend an allocated amount of money but that they should set out in their plans what actions they need to take to deliver rapid rehousing and the resources required to do so.

## **5 Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan**

- 5.1 A draft Rapid Rehousing Plan is attached as an **Appendix 1** to this report. The plan provides strategic context an analysis of homelessness in Highland and the capacity to deliver rapid rehousing within the current patterns of housing need and demand.
- 5.2 The Scottish Government has produced a template for recording baseline information and 5 year projections towards achieving a rapid rehousing approach. Highland's baseline position and main targets and actions are summarised in the plan at **Appendix 1**.
- 5.3 It should be noted that a number of the actions identified have been ongoing for some time and that others require significant support from other public bodies as well as the Third Sector.

## **6 Implications**

- 6.1 Resource - Delivering a Rapid Rehousing approach to homelessness will require significant resources in relation to: increasing housing supply; developing alternative models for accommodation services; increasing the input of specialist services; increasing in-house preventative and rapid rehousing staff resources. Delivering the Plan will be partly determined by the extent to which Highland receives resources via the Scottish Government's 'Ending Homelessness Together Fund'.
- 6.2 Legal - There are no immediate plans to change the legal framework in relation to homelessness. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

- 6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - Preventing and responding to homelessness has a significant impact on individuals and communities. Our overall strategy for homelessness aims to tackle current health and other inequalities. Although case numbers are concentrated in Inverness we recognise that there are different challenges in rural communities. As set out in the plan if rapid rehousing of homeless applicants is prioritised and a higher proportion of housing allocations are made to homeless applicants a lower proportion will be made to other housing needs groups, including people with medical issues. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken and submitted to the Scottish Government with the plan.
- 6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - There are no implications arising from this report.
- 6.5 Risk - There are financial and regulatory risks associated with delivering the Rapid Rehousing Plan and in Housing First approaches, which require to be managed during implementation.
- 6.6 Gaelic - There are no implications arising from the report.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 26 November 2018

Author: Brian Cameron, Housing Policy and Investment Manager

Background Documents: Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Group Report;  
Scottish Government Guidance on Rapid Rehousing  
Transition Plans;  
Data returns of homelessness trends

### The Highland Council

#### Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan: 2019-2024

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was established by the Scottish Government in October 2017. The Scottish Government accepted the majority of recommendations of the HARSAG in June 2018. This included the recommendation that all local authorities produce Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans to document how they would tackle homelessness.
- 1.2 The overall aim of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is to set out the Council's approach to achieve rapid rehousing where homelessness cannot be prevented. Rapid rehousing is defined as:-
- Providing a settled, mainstream housing outcome as quickly as possible;
  - Time spent in any form of temporary accommodation reduced to a minimum, with the fewer transitions the better;
  - When temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within a community.
- 1.3 For clients with multiple and complex support needs beyond housing, a Housing First model is recommended. Housing First is based on the following premises:-
- Housing is a basic human right, not a reward for clinical success; and
  - Once the chaos of homelessness is eliminated from a person's life, clinical and social stabilisation will occur faster and be more enduring.
- 1.5 This is the Council's first iteration of our 5-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. It is expected that following review by the Scottish Government, a finalised RRTP should be completed and ready for commencement at the start of April 2019.

## 2 Strategic Context

- 2.1 The Council's Local Housing Strategy was approved in December 2017. The main objectives are:-
- Increase the supply of housing in Highland so that we have enough homes in the right places to meet housing needs-
  - People are supported to live independently for as long as possible in their own homes and communities;
  - Prevent and respond to homelessness and make sure people have the right help to let them make decisions on their housing options; and
  - Improve the Quality and condition of the housing stock and minimise fuel poverty.

2.2 In relation to homelessness our strategic approach is:-

1. Prevent homelessness wherever possible;
2. Improve and increase access to housing advice and information services;
3. Enable access to the right type of housing;
4. Provide support to enable people to develop and maintain their capacity to live independently;
5. Ensure that housing support services focus on achieving positive outcomes and sustainable solutions for clients;
6. Work towards providing the majority of temporary accommodation in Council-owned properties;
7. Ensure rents in temporary accommodation are affordable for people on low incomes and within the welfare benefits system;
8. Reduce the time people spend in temporary accommodation;
9. Continue to implement a protocol on accommodation for looked after children to prevent homelessness;
10. Review partnership / interagency approaches to clients with complex needs;
11. Aim to minimise the use of large scale HMO accommodation for younger single homeless clients;
12. Review the future options for temporary accommodation; and
13. Review and considering future specialist accommodation models linked to consideration of Housing First type approaches.

2.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator published a national report on its enquiry into housing options and homelessness prevention services in May 2014. The Scottish Government published national guidance on Housing Options on March 2016.

2.4 The Highland Council undertook a review of our homelessness services in 2014 to ensure that they:-

- are person centred and focussed on achieving outcomes that meet peoples' needs;
- prioritise early intervention and integrate prevention and homelessness assessment rather treat these as separate functions / activities;
- provide balanced and appropriate case specific advice and information;
- focus on a person's needs rather than the homelessness process; and
- identify and respond to support needs.

2.5 We have undertaken an extensive training and development programme for our staff to establish a cultural shift in how we view homelessness services. We will continue to develop a housing options based, preventative homelessness service.

2.6 Even with the best trained and committed staff our ability to deliver on our homelessness objectives depends on an adequate supply of affordable housing. The Local Housing Strategy estimated housing need based on a "continued growth" scenario, with the housing need figures by Housing Market Area as follows:-

### Additional Housing Units by Tenure and Housing Market Area, Five Years

	Social Rent	Below Market Rent	Private Rented Sector	Buyers	Total
<b>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>	156	62	134	86	438
<b>Caithness</b>	89	41	35	89	254
<b>East Ross</b>	238	93	112	135	578
<b>Inverness</b>	1,096	378	727	703	2,904
<b>Lochaber</b>	193	68	65	112	438
<b>Mid Ross</b>	256	84	173	131	644
<b>Nairn</b>	138	44	79	87	348
<b>Skye and Lochalsh</b>	149	56	81	64	350
<b>Sutherland</b>	80	37	35	52	204
<b>West Ross</b>	75	33	54	31	193
<b>Highland</b>	2,469	895	1,494	1,491	6,349

Source: Highland Council Analysis using HNDA Tool, continued growth scenario

- 2.7 This indicates that over 6,000 new houses, across all tenures, need to be built over the next 5 years to house all those who will want to make a new home for themselves.
- 2.8 Forty five percent will be required within Inverness and the surrounding area. In terms of meeting housing need it has been established that there is a requirement for around 500 social rented houses a year over the next 5 years.
- 2.9 The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019-2024 was approved on 8 November 2018. The strategic targets for affordable housing provision contained in the SHIP tables are fully consistent with our current Local Housing Strategy targets of around 500 units per annum.

Housing Market Area (HMA)	Target % of Investment	Estimated Investment (£m)	Unit Approvals per year	Unit Approvals 5 years
<b>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>	<b>6</b>	9.9	30	150
<b>Caithness*</b>	<b>4</b>	6.6	20	100
<b>Inverness</b>	<b>44</b>	72.6	220	1100
<b>Lochaber</b>	<b>8</b>	13.2	40	200
<b>Nairn</b>	<b>6</b>	9.9	30	150
<b>East Ross</b>	<b>10</b>	16.5	50	250
<b>Mid Ross</b>	<b>10</b>	16.5	50	250
<b>Wester Ross</b>	<b>3</b>	4.9	15	75
<b>Skye and Lochalsh</b>	<b>6</b>	9.9	30	150
<b>Sutherland</b>	<b>3</b>	4.9	15	75
<b>Highland</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>165.0</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>2500</b>

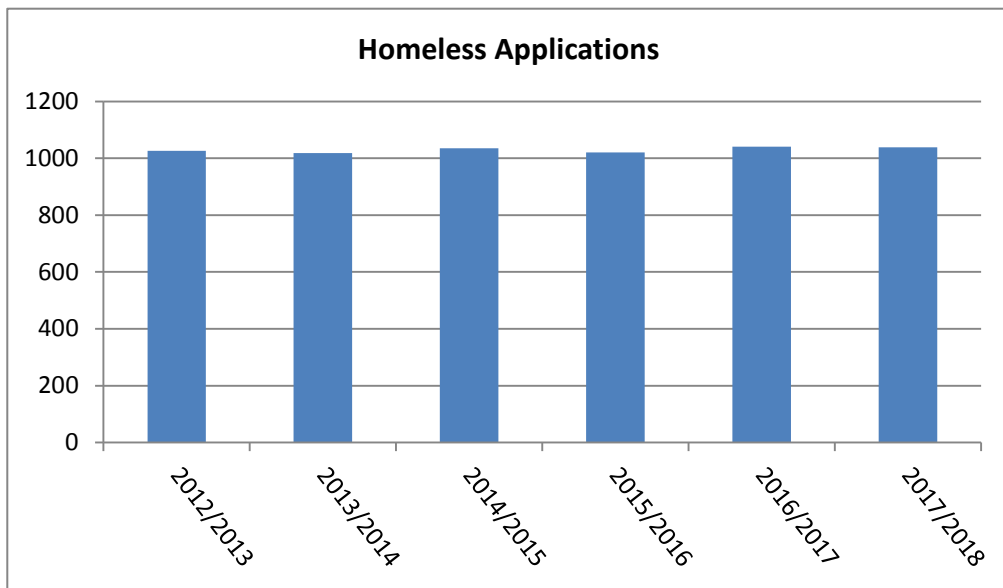
\* The target for investment in Caithness is based on the need for regeneration activities to address low demand e.g. using the existing stock.

## 3 A Profile of Homelessness in the Highlands

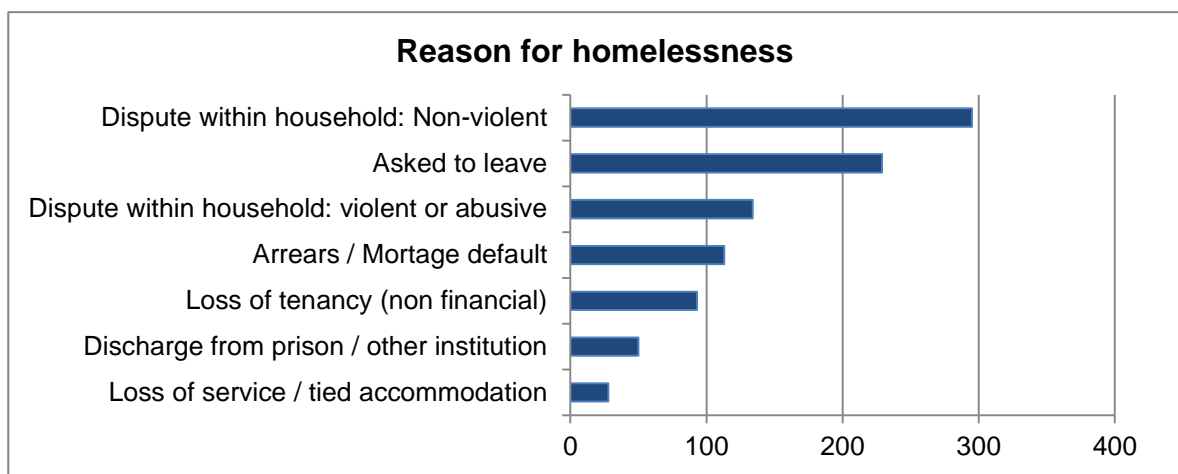
- 3.1 Since 2012/13 we have seen homeless applications at a relatively stable level of over 1,000 per year. There was a decrease in applications from 1041 in 2016/17 to 1038 in



2017/18.

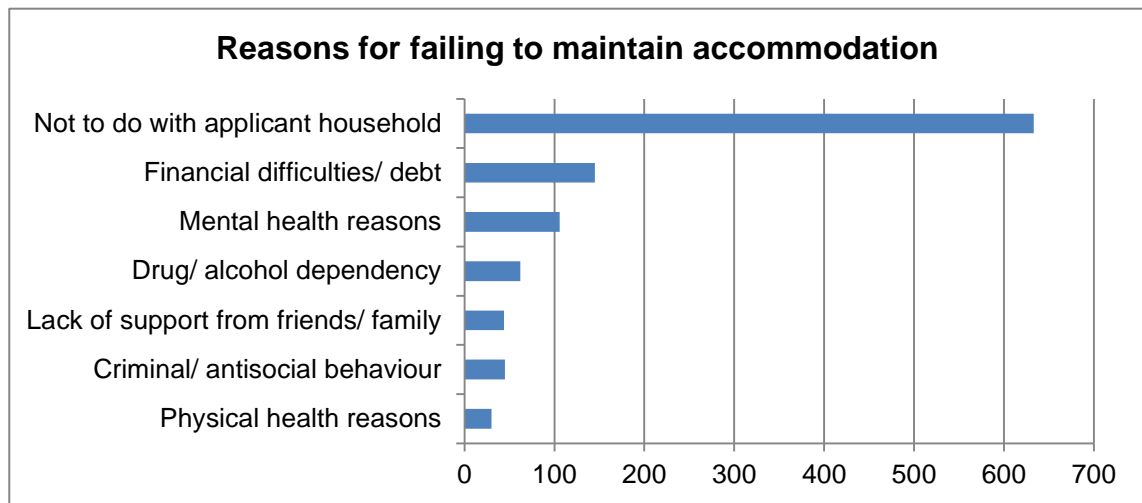


- 3.2 The age categories of homeless applicants have remained relatively stable since 2012/13. The single biggest group of homeless applicants are in the 26 – 59 years of age category and have accounted for around 60% of applicants on an annual basis. This compares to around 4% of applicants for the 16 - 17 years of age category, and 6% for each of the 18 – 25 years and and the 60+ years categories.
- 3.3 The gender mix of homeless presentations has been fairly stable since 2012/13 with the average proportion being around 45% female and 55% male.
- 3.4 The main reasons for people becoming homeless during 2017/18 are shown in the chart below:-



- 3.5 Most people become homeless due to being asked to leave current accommodation often due to relationship breakdown or disputes, whether with a partner or parent.
- 3.6 The main factors that applicants identify themselves as having contributed to their

homelessness are:



- 3.7 This shows that in most cases homelessness is not due to any specific factor / underlying issue. For most people homelessness can be resolved with a housing outcome without the need for additional support / professional intervention.
- 3.8 On average around 10% of people who present as homeless report having slept rough at some point in the last 3 months prior to presentation and around 5% on the night before presenting.
- 3.9 Around 8% of homeless applicants have been looked after children. In 2017/18, 62 people had left care 5 or more years ago and 21 within the last 5 years.
- 3.10 Around 4% of homeless applicants are ex-forces personnel. In 2017/18, 36 people had left the forces 5 or more years ago and 8 within the last 5 years.

#### **4 Local housing supply and demand issues**

- 4.1 In an area as large and diverse as the Highlands, where there are local housing market and economic factors, it is not possible to present a single Council-wide analysis in relation to Rapid Rehousing. Patterns of homeless presentations, competing housing demands and the availability of social rented housing present different challenges in different areas. This section of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan set out some further context for these competing demands.

4.2 The table below shows the number of Homeless Presentations during 2017/18 for each Highland Council Area:-

	<b>Homeless Applications</b>	<b>% of applications</b>
<b>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>	55	5%
<b>Caithness</b>	38	4%
<b>Inverness</b>	396	38%
<b>Lochaber</b>	135	13%
<b>Nairn</b>	43	4%
<b>Ross and Cromarty</b>	252	24%
<b>Skye and Lochalsh</b>	105	10%
<b>Sutherland</b>	14	1%
<b>Highland</b>	<b>1038</b>	<b>100%</b>

4.3 These proportions have been relatively stable over the last 5 years. The greatest pressure is in the Inverness area, where nearly half of households making a homeless application present.

4.4 The table below provides information on the number of homeless cases as a proportion of annual housing stock turnover:-

	<b>Lets to Homeless</b>	<b>% lets to Homeless</b>
<b>Badenoch and Strathspey</b>	34	53%
<b>Caithness</b>	38	11%
<b>Inverness City</b>	238	63%
<b>Rural Inverness</b>	15	32%
<b>Lochaber</b>	81	35%
<b>Nairn</b>	22	39%
<b>Ross and Cromarty</b>	174	41%
<b>Skye and Lochalsh</b>	50	42%
<b>Sutherland</b>	9	10%
<b>Highland</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>37%</b>

4.5 The percentage of lets to homeless applicants is particularly high in Inverness City (63%).

4.6 There are also different pressures in different areas in relation to temporary accommodation. The table below shows the current number of cases in temporary accommodation by area:-

Area	Cases in temporary accommodation as 20.11.18	% of cases
<b>Badenoch and Strathspey</b>	<b>19</b>	3.4
<b>Caithness</b>	<b>4</b>	0.7
<b>Inverness</b>	<b>357</b>	63.1
<b>Lochaber</b>	<b>32</b>	5.7
<b>Nairn</b>	<b>17</b>	3
<b>Ross and Cromarty</b>	<b>106</b>	18.7
<b>Skye and Lochalsh</b>	<b>29</b>	5.1
<b>Sutherland</b>	<b>2</b>	0.3
<b>Highland</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 4.6 This distribution of cases has been relatively static over the last 5 years. This shows that 63% of the households in temporary accommodation in Highland are currently in temporary accommodation in Inverness while awaiting an offer of housing in Inverness.
- 4.7 Wider housing pressure also has an impact on the length of time people spend in temporary accommodation. The table below shows the average length of stay in temporary accommodation by area for tenancies that ended in the last financial year through re-housing through the Highland Housing Register:-

	Family		Singles & Couples	
	Number of Households	Average Months	Number of Households	Average Months
<b>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>	8	7	10	5
<b>Caithness</b>	4	5	16	8
<b>Inverness</b>	141	12	109	17
<b>Lochaber</b>	21	4	30	4
<b>Nairn</b>	12	7	6	9
<b>Ross &amp; Cromarty</b>	79	7	67	9
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	14	7	31	5
<b>Sutherland</b>	3	6	2	5
<b>Highland</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>11</b>

- 4.8 It should be noted that the above statistics do not include 111 households who did not spend time in temporary accommodation but were either able to be housed straight away, make their own arrangements for temporary accommodation or were classified as "homeless at home".
- 4.9 On average a household will stay for around a year in temporary accommodation. The lack of social rented housing where it is most needed remains the single biggest barrier to reducing the duration of homelessness.
- 4.10 Higher average length of stay in temporary accommodation is directly related to the availability of social rented housing. Generally the areas where we have the highest numbers of homeless cases and the longest average stays in temporary

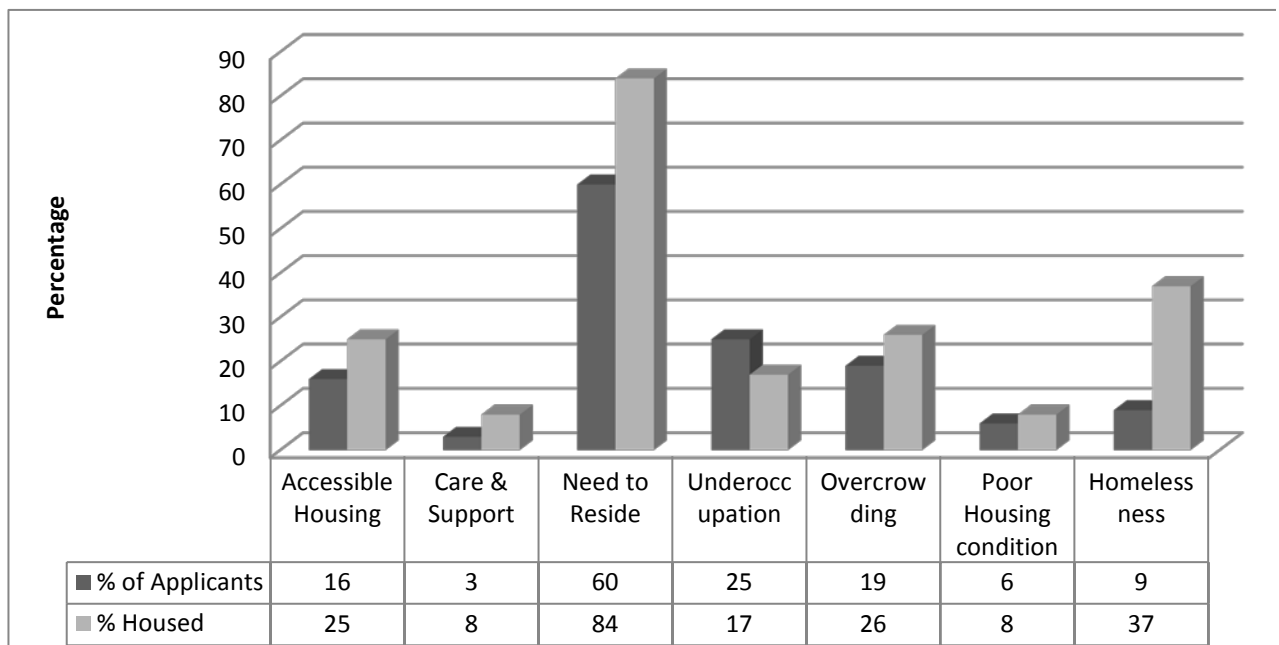
accommodation are the areas where we are allocating the highest proportion of social rented housing to homeless households.

4.11 It means that in Inverness City, households spend far longer living in temporary accommodation compared to other areas. In other parts of Highland, where there are more houses available, they are able to be helped out of homelessness much more quickly.

4.12 The Council operates a Common Housing Register and shared Housing Allocations Policy with the main Registered Social Landlords in Highland. This is called the Highland Housing Register.

4.11 We undertake an annual monitoring report on the Highland Housing Register. At the end of 2018 there were 7,890 applicants on the housing register. There is an upward trend in applications held. The Highland Housing Register allocations policy is needs based, with points awarded to applicants according to housing needs categories. We operate a choice based letting scheme in Caithness where there are specific low demand issues.

4.12 The table below shows the main housing needs points categories and the proportion of people housed last year with these needs:



4.13 In developing and implementing this Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan the Council needs to balance the needs of homeless households to achieve permanent housing outcomes as quickly as possible with the need to address other categories of urgent housing need, such as those relating to people with urgent medical conditions or those living in overcrowded or poor quality private sector housing. We also need to consider areas where we cannot achieve rapid rehousing for all cases within the current housing market.

4.14 The objective of implementing rapid rehousing in Highland cannot be achieved purely by increasing the proportion on lets to homeless households. We also need to address

the challenges involved in preventing homelessness; discharging homelessness outwith people's preferred areas.

## 5 Temporary Accommodation

- 5.1 Historically the Council has relied on privately rented single rooms or bed and breakfast type shared accommodation, with less than a third provided through the Council's own stock. The pattern of temporary accommodation has also varied across areas, with most private sector provision in Inverness.
- 5.2 Since 2014 we have had an active programme of shifting the balance of accommodation towards the uses of Council owned, self-contained furnished accommodation, with a target of increasing this provision by 50 units a year.
- 5.3 The table below shows our current temporary accommodation provision by area as at the end of Quarter 1, 2018/19:-

	Council	B&B / HMO	Leased	Total
<b>Badenoch and Strathspey</b>	17	-	2	19
<b>Caithness</b>	15	-	-	15
<b>Inverness</b>	111	169	91	371
<b>Lochaber</b>	5	12	20	37
<b>Nairn</b>	10	-	8	18
<b>Ross &amp; Cromarty</b>	71	24	17	112
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	21	-	12	33
<b>Sutherland</b>	1	-	1	2
<b>Highland</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>607</b>

- 5.4 The Council currently has two 'hostels' for use as temporary accommodation in rural areas, one in Skye and one in Badenoch and Strathspey. These provide emergency accommodation in high pressure areas, where it is very difficult to source alternative private provision. All hostel places have been upgraded to provide self-contained accommodation. We are intending to review the future options for this accommodation over the life of this Strategy.

## 6 Housing Support

- 6.1 Housing support is important to reduce homelessness and increase tenancy sustainment. There is a legal requirement to assess and provide access to housing support where needed for all homeless and potentially homeless people.
- 6.2 Support services for homeless clients in Highland are delivered through a framework of independent providers with a total budget of £1.5m annually.
- 6.3 There are, on average, around 450 households receiving short-term housing support. This includes around 40 people in specialist supported accommodation services.

6.4 We currently estimate that housing support needs fall into the following categories:-

<b>Estimated current and future support needs</b>	<b>Estimated % of current homeless cases</b>	<b>Estimated number</b>	<b>Estimate for next financial year</b>
No/low support needs	62%	648	648
Medium support needs	21%	222	222
Complex needs	5%	55	35
Residential/Supported Accommodation	12%	128	128

6.5 We are also developing our approaches to dealing with clients with multiple / complex needs. Homelessness strategy is now more closely aligned with NHS Highland through the Strategic Commissioning Group.

6.6 We are aiming to develop a Housing First Pilot within the next year, which we hope will reduce the number of clients with complex needs who are currently in temporary accommodation by around 10. This will be subject to funding from the Scottish Government's Rapid Rehousing fund.

6.7 This Housing First Pilot will link in with joint existing work with the Highland Alcohol & Drug Partnership which is currently bidding for funding from the NHS for a Housing First project which will focus on tackling clients with addictions. The funding is anticipated to be released in February 2019 and this project is also targeted at reducing the number of clients currently in temporary accommodation by around 10.

6.8 We are also reviewing our approach to specialist accommodation. This is currently mainly provided through limited "support exempt" supported accommodation through the voluntary sector. We are currently reviewing and considering future needs, linked to consideration of Housing First type approaches.

## 7 **Affordability / Private Rented Sector**

7.1 Rent affordability is a critical factor in temporary accommodation. This generally has to be viewed in the context of rent subsidy available through the welfare benefit system.

7.2 Rents for current temporary accommodation in Highland are summarised below:-

<b>Type of accommodation</b>	<b>Average Weekly Rent (including service charges)</b>
Council Owned furnished accommodation	£96.00
Property leased from housing association	£136.00
Property Leased from private landlords	£147.00
Supported accommodation	£492.00
Private sector HMO / B&B	£186.00

7.3 Generally housing benefit is restricted to Local Housing Allowance rates which are set out in the table below:-

Property size	LHA 2015-2020	Broad Rental Market Area rents		Advertised rents
	per month	Lower quartile (monthly)	Median quartile (monthly)	Monthly
1 bed shared rate (applicable to <35s)	£236.00	n/a	n/a	n/a
1 bedroom	£367.00	£400	£475	£550
2 bedrooms	£443.00	£500	£550	£685
3 bedrooms	£520.00	£595	£695	£790
4 bedrooms	£641.00	£693	£825	£1,100

7.4 The Private Housing (Tenancies) Act 2016 introduced a new tenancy regime for private sector tenancies, providing much greater security of tenure. The duties on landlord have also been increased in relation to property condition. Unfortunately affordability and landlord / letting agent attitudes to tenants who rely on the welfare benefit system to pay rent remain key constraints in relation to the use of the private rented sector as a tool to achieve rapid rehousing.

## 8 Highland's Rapid Rehousing Baseline Position

8.1 The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is designed to be a working tool and it is anticipated that this plan will continue to evolve over the transition period. An Action Plan is set out at **Appendix 2** and this focuses on key priorities for Highland. It also provides resource assumptions required to meet the priorities.

8.2 It should be noted that a number of the actions identified have been ongoing for some time and that others require significant support from other agencies.

8.3 The main actions and targets contained in the Action Plan are summarised below:

### **Ensure households get through the homeless system faster**

8.4 The Council's long term strategy for temporary accommodation is to increase the use of self-contained, furnished Council or Housing Association property, and reduce the reliance on private sector property. This provides the best quality for clients at the least cost to the Council.

8.5 The Community Services Committee agreed in April 2016 that we should move to a model where the majority of temporary accommodation is provided in Council owned (Housing Revenue Account) properties. We currently have 251 HRA properties used as temporary accommodation, an increase of almost 40% since April 2017.

8.6 We aim to continue to increase the use of HRA furnished accommodation by 50 units a year over the next 5 years (total 250 units). This will eliminate the use of private sector shared accommodation for anything other than emergency / crisis response.

8.7 Given the shortage of 1 bed accommodation, we have been piloting an approach which enables 2 people to share temporary accommodation and which has been successful since its implementation in early 2018. We currently have 9 shared tenancies and our



target for this for the next 5 years is 30 overall.

- 8.8 Numerically the greatest pressure on temporary accommodation is in Inverness. With the aim of moving people out of homelessness onto positive solutions as quickly as possible, we are currently considering cases of homeless presentations in Inverness where we could meet our duties by providing accommodation (both temporary and permanent) within other areas of Highland. We are also reviewing staff roles, remits and workloads

### **Housing First in Highland**

- 8.9 The number of homeless cases with multiple and complex support needs who would benefit from a Housing First approach to rehousing is expected to be around 55. Currently there is no Housing First provision in Highland.
- 8.10 Introducing this model of intensive support will ensure households with complex needs can access personalised, open-ended, flexible support to end their experience of repeat homelessness and address their wider needs.
- 8.11 Further discussion is required at both an officer and provider level to ensure that the most appropriate Housing First model is adopted in Highland. Initial estimated costs would indicate that staff funding alone for the proposed Housing First projects will exceed £200k per annum. The funding required will also have to cover as yet unknown associated costs to identify and prepare housing stock for Housing First and any costs if the nature of the client group requires additional “wrap-around support”. We are working with NHS Highland on a funding model for a Highland pilot.
- 8.12 Where independent living within the community is not possible or preferable for whatever reason (safety, risk to self or others, choice) and where residential or supported accommodation is the preferred housing option, this should be in small, highly specialist provision in a psychologically informed environment.

### **Ensure homeless households can access the right type of support**

- 8.13 In moving to a position of rapid rehousing, a critical part of the shift will be to remove the “tenancy readiness” culture and language. The majority of households experiencing homelessness have no, or low support needs and will move into mainstream housing with day-to-day housing management advice and assistance.
- 8.14 We have identified an initial need for three Rapid Rehousing Officers to be recruited using the Scottish Government funding. This resource will be crucial in ensuring clients in temporary accommodation are “moved on” as quickly as possible and that person-centred permanent outcomes are identified in discussion with client and support/health providers. It is estimated that these officers would be targeted with achieving a 10% reduction in time spent in temporary accommodation annually.

Appendix 2: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24

Action Plan

Priority action	What actions are underway / planned?	When will this be completed?	Existing strategy / action plan?	Indicators	Baseline	2024 target	Resources required
Increase focus on prevention to stop homelessness happening in the first place	Re-focus on homeless prevention	Ongoing throughout plan period	Local Housing Strategy	Reduced homeless presentations	1038	986	Use of phase 1 funding and existing resources
	Maintain current levels of tenancy sustainment	Ongoing throughout plan period	Annual Scottish Social Housing Charter	% tenancies sustained for 12 months	89.4%	90%	Use of phase 1 funding and existing resources
	Review and implement a revised protocol for prisoners in line with the Sustainable Housing On Release for Everyone (SHORE) National Standards	30/6/2019	Highland Community Justice Plan	No of homeless assessments where previous accommodation was prison	50	Not applicable	Use of phase 1 funding and existing resources
	Review the delivery of services aimed at preventing homelessness for women and children experiencing domestic or sexual abuse	30/6/2019	Highland Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	% of homeless assessments where reason for homelessness is relationship breakdown (violence / abuse)	134	Not applicable	Use of phase 1 funding and existing resources
	Review partnership working arrangements to ensure correct focus on prevention	30/06/2019	Local Housing Strategy	Local Housing Strategy	Not applicable	Not applicable	Use of phase 1 funding
	Provide training and awareness raising on new tenancy regime and tenancy rights for Housing staff (including use of first-tier	31/6/2019	Local Housing Strategy	% of homeless assessments where reason for homelessness is	113	90	Use of existing Scottish Government funding for the

Priority action	What actions are underway / planned?	When will this be completed?	Existing strategy / action plan?	Indicators	Baseline	2024 target	Resources required
	tribunal powers)			action by landlord/ lender			North & Islands Housing HUB
Reduce Time Spent on Temporary Accommodation	Renew focus on housing options advice to make best use of existing housing stock	31/3/2019	No	Analysis of staffing resources and caseloads required	Not applicable	Not applicable	Use of phase 1 funding and existing resources
	Review households currently occupying temporary accommodation and provide intensive casework to achieve permanent outcomes more quickly	31/3/2020	No	Reduce length of stay in temporary accommodation	10 months	6 months	Scottish Government funding of 3 Rapid Rehousing Officers (approximately £150k per annum)
Identify making maximum use of existing housing	Review of staff guidance in relation to reasonable offers of housing – both temporary and permanent accommodation	31/3/2024	No	% lets to homeless households	37%	Not applicable	Use of phase 1 funding
	Review operation of Highland Housing Register in relation to allocations to homeless applicants.	31/12/2019	Local Housing Strategy	% lets to homeless households	37%	Not applicable	Policy review in 2019 through existing HHR partner funding
	Continue to shift the balance of temporary accommodation towards HRA units	31/03/2020	No	Increase in number of HRA temporary accommodation	251	501	Existing resources
Identify making maximum use of	Complete assessment of engagement with private rented sector	31/03/2019	Local Housing Strategy	% of homeless applicants able to source private rented accommodation	Not applicable	Not applicable	Crisis to commence engagement project with private landlords in Inner Moray Firth

Priority action	What actions are underway / planned?	When will this be completed?	Existing strategy / action plan?	Indicators	Baseline	2024 target	Resources required
existing housing (continued)							
	Roll-out of shared accommodation	31/3/2020	Pilots in Inverness and Ross-shire	Increase the number of shared tenancies	9	30	Additional costs of £150k annually for intensive housing management.
Ensure homeless households can access the right type of support	Review of housing support arrangement	30/9/2019	No	% tenancies supported for 12 months	89.4%	90%	Use of phase 1 funding and existing resources
	Implement Housing First initiative	31/3/2020	No	Number of clients supported	0	20	Initial funding estimate of £400k per annum from NHS and Scottish Government.
	Establish Business Case for developing Council owned Specialist Accommodation for clients with high support needs.	30/09/2019	Local Housing Strategy	Reduction in use of private sector HMO accommodation	Not applicable	Not applicable	Use of phase 1 funding and existing resources Subsequent revenue funding would be required to operate specialist accommodation. Further detailed costings to be developed.
Increase affordable housing supply to meet needs of homeless households	Deliver 500 new affordable homes per annum in the priority areas identified through the Local Housing Strategy / Strategic Housing Investment Plan	31/3/2024	SHIP/Local Housing Strategy	Number of new homes developed	500 per year	2,500 additional homes	Existing Housing Development funding totally estimated at £165m

Brian Cameron, Housing Policy & Investment Manager, 26 November 2018