

Guidance on Standards for Temporary Accommodation



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Introduction

In 2008 CIH Scotland produced an *Action Plan A Standard for Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households*¹ which made the case, and demonstrated support, for standards in temporary accommodation. Following on from this, in 2009 Shelter Scotland produced a briefing paper *Raising the standards of temporary accommodation*² which argued for the consolidation of existing standards and the development of new ones to ensure a consistent quality of housing and services for households placed in temporary accommodation.

This guidance sets out that whilst there is no single model for the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless households, local authorities should recognise that a certain level of good practice and consistency of approach should be applicable at all times. The quality of temporary accommodation should be of good standard and generally meet the everyday needs of the household.

Many of the standards in this guidance are not new, but build on and consolidate those set out in the *Code of Guidance on Homelessness*³ as well as existing standards covered by legislation.

The standards have been developed in consultation with housing and homelessness professionals from a range of organisations which currently provide or manage temporary accommodation, and also draws on the views and experience of people who have stayed in temporary accommodation⁴. This has led to the development of

¹ <http://www.cih.org/scotland/policy/APATemporaryAccommodationforHomelessHouseholds.pdf>

² http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/231324/Temp_Accomm_standards_Nov_09_Shelter.pdf

³ Code of Guidance on Homelessness: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366>

⁴ Pseudonyms have been used throughout the guidance when referring to quotes made by individuals

standards that are both realistic and achievable. The standards go beyond the physical standard of the accommodation to also cover service, management and location standards.

Who is this guidance for?

This is not statutory guidance, but is intended as a good practice tool for temporary accommodation providers which complements the self assessment and performance standards set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator⁵.

As well as applying these standards to their own accommodation, local authorities should also ensure that temporary accommodation from other providers, including bed and breakfast, also meets these standards where relevant.

Why do we need standards?

According to Scottish Government figures⁶, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation has risen year on year since 2002. This is likely to be driven by both increases in applications and the new duties placed on local authorities under the 2001 Act and the 2003 Homelessness Act. The decline in social lets available through councils and RSLs is also an important factor.

The current shortage of affordable housing solutions cannot in the short to medium term meet the demand for those experiencing homelessness. Consequently local authorities will continue to make use of temporary accommodation for some time to come. Whilst there are standards in place for families with children, the majority of those seeking assistance under the homelessness legislation are single people and therefore without any such protection.

Quality of temporary accommodation is of particular relevance given the fact that many homeless households are spending longer in temporary accommodation as they wait for a permanent home to become available. This pressure is likely to continue.

In 2008 CIH Scotland conducted a survey⁷ among housing professionals from local authorities and housing associations to determine views on a national standard for temporary accommodation in Scotland. The survey results showed that there was widespread support for a standard, with 97% in favour of standards covering the physical aspects of temporary accommodation as well as service delivery. Respondents to the survey were not in favour of introducing the standards via legislation, but instead wanted to see them brought in through guidance and the use of the regulatory framework for homelessness services.

The standards covered are intended to be realistic and achievable, yet meaningful to ensure a standardised level of quality. The aim is to make a difference to people's experience of temporary accommodation and ensure that they have the information and support required, and are ready to take on and sustain a permanent tenancy. For both local authorities and RSLs, higher standards should provide efficiency savings through a reduction in repeat homelessness and more sustainable tenancies.

⁵ The Scottish Housing Regulator: Performance Standard AS4.8 Quality of Accommodation
http://www.comunitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/shr_as4.8qualityofa_ia47f1e076.hcsp#TopOfPage

⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/08/31093245/26>

⁷ <http://www.cih.org/scotland/policy/TempAccomm-Survey-mar2008.pdf>



Policy and legislative context

The legislative framework for homelessness in Scotland is held up to be one of the most far reaching in Europe. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 amended the 1987 Act to require local authorities to provide temporary accommodation to all homeless applicants whilst either permanent accommodation is found or, in non-priority need cases, information and assistance is provided to secure alternative accommodation. This duty to provide accommodation also applies pending assessment or appeal in respect of homeless applicants.

The Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 removes the priority need distinction meaning all unintentionally homeless households will be eligible for permanent accommodation. It also includes powers to limit the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children.

Subsequently, this power was used to introduce the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004⁸, which requires local authorities to ensure that homeless households with children and pregnant women are not placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation unless exceptional circumstances apply. Unsuitable accommodation is defined in the order as accommodation which does not meet standards relating to the physical properties of the accommodation, its proximity to health and education services and its suitability to be used by children. Consequently the use of B&B accommodation for such households is deemed unreasonable. *The Homelessness Code of Guidance*⁹ also includes guidance on this Order and other regulations relating to local authorities' duty to accommodate homeless applicants.

Additionally, it is expected that all temporary accommodation should meet the nationally agreed performance standards (Performance Standard AS4.8) which states:

"When we arrange temporary or permanent accommodation, we treat homeless people fairly and appropriately in terms of tenancy provisions, quality of housing and location."

Where housing support is provided as part of a package of temporary accommodation, local authorities should ensure that the National Care Standards for Housing Support¹⁰ are fully recognised and implemented. These services are subject to monitoring and inspection by the Scottish Commission for Regulation and Care¹¹.

Standards across the UK

In 2003 the Labour Government published a consultation on *Improving Standards of Accommodation for Homeless Households Placed in Temporary Accommodation*¹². This signalled the Government's intention to issue guidance that would bring together and restate the existing minimum standards for all temporary accommodation. This included accommodation used by housing authorities to house homeless households and to make an order to end the long term use of B&B accommodation for homeless families with children or pregnant women. The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003¹³ came into force in April 2004 and provides that B&B accommodation is considered unsuitable for families with children or pregnant women unless no alternative accommodation is available. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities¹⁴ issued in 2006 includes more stringent standards for housing people in B&B accommodation and also states that accommodation is only considered suitable if it meets the needs and requirements of the individual homeless household including existing basic space and location standards and health and safety requirements.

In Wales the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Wales Order 2006¹⁵ addresses the standardisation of temporary accommodation, which is being implemented in stages, to target vulnerability, B&B standards, and length of stay standards. Since April 2008 any type of shared accommodation which is occupied in

⁸ <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2004/20040489.htm>

⁹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366>

¹⁰ National Care Standards: Housing and Support Services
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/02/10637/File-1>

¹¹ <http://www.carecommission.com>

¹² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/housing/homelesshouseholdstandard>

¹³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/3326/contents/made>

¹⁴ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode>

¹⁵ <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2006/20060650e.htm>

excess of 14 nights is subject to a higher standard, which addresses both physical and management standards. Any property managers are subject to a 'fit and proper person' test which will demonstrate they are capable of managing.

*Putting People First – a good practice handbook for homeless services*¹⁶ has been developed by the Homeless Agency in Dublin and is part of the Irish Government's goal of eliminating long term homelessness and the need for rough sleeping by 2010. The good practice handbook for homeless services is a guide to best practice quality standards for temporary accommodation and covers a range of other accommodation issues.

Types of temporary accommodation covered

This guidance on the standards for temporary accommodation applies to all types of temporary accommodation including:

- Stock owned and managed by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) (including furnished temporary tenancies)
- Self contained flats or hotels including B&B accommodation
- All local authority and non-local authority hostels, including those managed by external agencies (e.g. specialist accommodation for young people)
- Privately owned self contained housing
- Private rented sector housing including that accessed and managed via private sector leasing schemes
- Interim accommodation provided under the Homeless Person Interim Accommodation (Scotland) Regulations 2002
- Refuge accommodation including those for women and children.

It will not always be possible to apply the detail of all the standards for every type of accommodation, but the principles behind the standards should apply to ensure a good quality level of service and good outcomes for the service users. Respondents to CIH Scotland's survey suggested that the cost implications might be too high for some accommodation. This will be of particular relevance given the changing form of the welfare state. The standards should be applied flexibly and take into account when accommodation needs to be provided on an emergency basis. If unsuitable accommodation has to be used, this should be reviewed on a weekly basis, and more appropriate accommodation sought based on the clients' needs.

Local authorities should also make careful consideration of when they use hostels or other short term accommodation. Hostels (irrespective of ownership) should be relatively small in capacity and it is preferable they do not accommodate households with dependant children. It is general good practice that hostels should target a specific client group in order to best facilitate the provision of support services.

¹⁶ <http://www.homelessagency.ie/Research-and-Policy/Putting-People-First.aspx>



Existing standards

A number of standards related to housing already exist in legislation, which are outlined in the table below. These current standards are of varying relevance to households in temporary accommodation as they are tenure specific and they relate primarily to the physical and safety standards of accommodation. Consequently there are noticeable gaps in the types of accommodation covered as well as inconsistency over when these standards apply.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance also sets out a number of standards that apply to temporary accommodation.

Standards	Type of standard	Accommodation included	Gaps in existing standards in legislation relevant for households in temporary accommodation (TA)
Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)	Physical	Local authority and registered social landlords to meet this standard by 2015	Relevant to all TA provided by the LA or RSL. Does not include hostels, bed and breakfast hotels or private rented sector
Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing	Physical and safety	Housing for 3 or more unrelated people, including bedsits, B&Bs, hostels and some supported housing Includes fit and proper person test for the landlord	Not relevant to TA for family groups or couples
National Care Standards for housing support services	Service and management	Supported accommodation such as hostel and scattered dwellings with floating support	Only relevant to TA services registered with the Scottish Commission for Regulation and Care
Unsuitable Accommodation Order	Physical and safety	Temporary accommodation for children and pregnant women if B&B accommodation is provided for more than 14 days	Only relevant to households with children or pregnant women Not relevant to refuges for women and children
Tolerable standard	Physical	All	Not particularly relevant as few homes fall below tolerable standard
Overcrowding	Physical	All	The overcrowding standard old and distant from contemporary expectations of housing. Of most relevance to larger households in TA



Suitable standard of furniture

The flat is very basic, it has everything but only has one change of sheets for example.There was a list of things that were meant to be in the flat but not all of the things were here.

(Alison lives with her son, age 2, in a temporary furnished flat)

Energy efficient housing

The windows are a problem. In the winter I have to spend too much money for the electric heating.... last week (September) I turned on my heaters and it's not even winter yet but I have to use the heaters to warm my home. In January I paid three hundred and something pounds for two months just because of the electric heating.

(Saleem lives with his wife and two children in a temporary furnished flat)

Clear policies on accessing a person's property or unit

There need to be rules on when staff can have access to your room. Staff shouldn't be able to go into your room for example to get someone to get up.

People need their privacy and need to feel safe and you don't feel secure if staff can come in whenever they want.

(Sarah lived in a hostel)

Physical standards

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) Order 2004 means that local authorities cannot place households with children and pregnant women in "unsuitable" temporary accommodation. The Code of Guidance on Homelessness sets out the minimum standards as defined by the order.

The following details the physical standards that should apply where appropriate across all tenures to ensure that the temporary accommodation:

- **Meets the physical or sensory disability requirements of any member of the household**

If these requirements cannot be met through temporary accommodation then the local authority should work closely with the household to facilitate a move into permanent suitable accommodation at the earliest opportunity.

- **Complies with relevant housing quality standards including health and safety, hygiene and fire legislation and regulations**

This includes identifying responsible person(s), written policies available for staff, volunteers and residents and clear procedures for risk assessments and dealing with incidents.

- **Provides units that are secure with individual locks so people feel they and their belongings are safe. The occupancy/tenancy agreement should include an agreed minimum amount of notice a landlord must give before accessing a person's property/unit and under what circumstances they would give such notice. This should be at least 24 hours**

The local authority needs to find the right balance between the health and safety of households and their right to privacy. Policies should be drawn up clearly stating when and how access will be arranged. This applies to all accommodation provided on behalf of the local authority including that provided by the private sector, such as B&B accommodation.

- **Has sufficient bedroom space to meet the needs of the household as far as possible**

When applying these standards local authorities should refer to the overcrowding standard. Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) standards will apply for hostels and B&B accommodation.





- **Has adequate communal living space which includes, for example, space for children to play or do homework**

If the temporary accommodation is unable to provide space for children to do homework then the local authority should try and make contact with the school to arrange for space to be made available out with normal school hours.

- **Has individual bathroom/toilet facilities for a household**

This would be subject to a local authority's own HMO standards for certain types of temporary accommodation

- **Has access to on site laundry facilities. B&B should also provide an on site facility**

- **Has access to adequate cooking facilities**

As per HMO standards, lockable storage facilities should also be made available where requested in shared accommodation.

- **Has a suitable standard of furniture to meet the families needs**

An inventory of the furniture provided in temporary furnished accommodation should be agreed with the client on moving in.

- **Has a minimum standard of cleanliness**

This will be covered under hygiene regulations, but local authorities should ensure occupants are aware of their own responsibilities and also carry out spot checks to ensure compliance with this standard.

- **Has sufficient and affordable heating system at an acceptable efficiency rating**

Local authorities need to provide residents with information on how to use central heating systems as well as fuel poverty advice. In terms of energy efficiency, local authority and RSL accommodation should refer to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).

- **Is accessible 24 hours a day**

As per the Code of Guidance on Homelessness, residents should be able to gain access to their temporary accommodation 24 hours a day

With an increase in the use of Private Sector Leasing (PSL) schemes by local authorities, it is important to set a minimum standard in relation to private sector accommodation. Local authorities should ensure that PSL properties have full central heating and double glazing which would help improve the living conditions and quality of life for homeless households. This is particularly important given that PSL properties are not subject to and would be unlikely to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).



Location standards

When considering offering a household temporary accommodation it is important to consider the location of the property and its proximity to services and local amenities.

- **Accommodation provided should be located so that the main services used by a household can be reached by foot, by public transport or by transport provided by a local authority. Services to include supermarket or convenience store, doctors, dentists or other health providers, advice agencies (where applicable)**

This should be based on an assessment of the needs of the household. Households should be placed within the local authority area in which they became homeless unless there is a reason not to be, such as threats of violence or harassment.

- **The location of the property should also take into account the needs of all household members in terms of reasonable access to place of employment and formal or informal support networks. For families with children, there should be easy access to schools or nursery**

Where possible the local authority should arrange to provide transport and or bus fares to facilitate travel to schools.

- **Cultural or religious need should also be identified and met through the location of accommodation where possible**
- **The location of the accommodation also needs to take into account the social and economic needs of the household**

Location needs to be sensitive to individual circumstances and support needs. As part of the needs assessment, local authorities should consider the financial implications of placing a household in a particular type of accommodation, should they be employed or seeking employment. Ideally families with dependant children, or people with access to children, should not be placed in hostel or shared accommodation.

It will not always be possible to provide emergency accommodation to address all the needs of a household and in such cases the best possible solution should be sought and alternative temporary accommodation should be used when it becomes available.

Near good facilities

When I first got there I was scared....I just wanted to feel safe, and to be able to walk to a cheap supermarket. It's important to be near a supermarket, a GP, a bank, you need to be able to walk to places.

(Munazza, lived with her three children in a temporary furnished flat)

Taking into consideration the individual situation of a household

There were five people in there – they were all young boys only interested in drink and drugs...I got very low and depressed. I kept myself locked away – I was a prisoner...If it had been a self contained flat I'd have been happy there. It would've been ok as it was my own place and I could have had my grandchildren round.

(Wendy, in her 40s, lived in a hostel)



Service standards

For some families a stay in temporary accommodation can be long term as they wait for suitable permanent property to become available. It is crucial that households receive a consistent standard of service delivery in order to sustain their temporary accommodation and facilitate a move into settled accommodation. Service delivery standards include providing:

- **An assessment of need**

Services should be shaped by an assessment of the needs of all members of the household, followed up with referrals and support to engage with relevant housing, health, education, social care services and independent advice services.

- **Flexible and needs led support**

Access to tenancy support services should be available based on household or individual need and referrals for support should be made to relevant agencies. A household's support needs will influence the type of temporary accommodation that is suitable for them and therefore the type of accommodation that should be offered to them.

- **A directory of appropriate services including counselling, addictions, mental health, medical, dental, optical and money/welfare advice**

This directory needs to be made available to all staff. A copy of the directory should be given to clients on request. Sign-posting residents to other services set out above should be available to all residents and is of particular importance to those who may be unfamiliar with the local area.

- **Periodic reviews of households needs to take into account any change in circumstances**

Periodic reviews should be on a case by case basis, agreed with the client and take into account the support needs of the household. These periodic reviews should then be used to find the most appropriate permanent accommodation for a household.

- **Regular and sustained home visits by allocated officers**

The purpose of regular home visits is to identify any unmet needs with the client in terms of advice and support required to find permanent accommodation as well as a review of the suitability of the temporary accommodation. The home visits should be based on an individual support plan and occur not less than every two weeks.

- **Communication**

Any information provided to clients should be available in different formats. This includes leaflets in different languages. When a household's first language is not English, an interpreter should be provided to explain the rules, regulations and procedures to the household.



Tenants' Service Charter

Link Housing Association and its tenants have worked together to develop a Tenants' Service Charter, recognising the right of both parties to be treated with respect and courtesy. The Charter applies equally to tenants in temporary accommodation through the private sector leasing scheme.

It sets out the minimum service standards against which performance can be measured – in the following areas:

- Communication – by telephone, email or letter
- Personal contact – in the home or at the office
- Estate management
- Repairs and maintenance
- Money matters and advice
- Equality and diversity
- Complaints
- Monitoring and reporting e.g. in tenants newsletters



Management standards

The following standards will ensure that a resident is aware of their rights and responsibilities during their stay in temporary accommodation, including any procedures that they need to follow. Providing a household with relevant information at the time of moving in or relocating to alternative temporary accommodation can help to ensure the best possible outcome for the household.

- **A written occupancy agreement needs to be provided and explained to the household**

A written occupancy agreement will clarify the household's expectation of the accommodation including the rules and regulations. It will also cover procedures including health and safety, hygiene, fire safety, access to other services, repairs, complaints procedure, outline of unacceptable behaviour and termination of occupancy. Communication of these procedures may need to be staggered to avoid overwhelming resident(s).

- **House rules**

Particularly relevant in B&B and hostel accommodation where each household should be issued with written 'house rules' which include details as to how sanctions will be applied. Local authorities should approve this document when placing households in B&B or hotel premises.

- **Repairs procedure**

The resident needs to be provided with clear procedures and timescales for dealing with repairs, including emergency and urgent repairs. This should mirror the repairs procedure for tenants in permanent accommodation to ensure consistency of service.

- **Provision of a resident handbook**

All residents should be provided with a resident handbook or relevant information leaflets appropriate for the household's requirements. Information needs to be available in different formats based on the household needs. Handbooks will usually be unique to each local authority area.

- **Notice periods**

A minimum agreed notice period to end an occupancy agreement is required. The notice period can be flexible and based on individual circumstances, but it is suggested that in most cases this will be between 7 and 28 days. In general a notice period should be sufficient to allow people to make other arrangements. There will be circumstances when a longer notice period is necessary and other times when it will be shorter, in cases of behaviour posing a risk to staff members and other residents. There should be clear procedures for staff and guidelines for occupiers on how a notice period is decided and when it is appropriate to apply. In cases of extreme behaviour, immediate evictions might be necessary, but should, where possible, occur during the day and not at night. This area should mirror behaviour for which possession would be sought under a Scottish Secure Tenancy. The relevant local authority staff must also be informed of any impending evictions to ensure re-accommodation and access to advice services. Households should also have the right to appeal a notice to the local authority, should they wish to do so.

Approachable and supportive staff who understand client's support needs

It's important that when you first arrive the staff know what your support needs are....If things go wrong they need to be dealt with supportively and quickly. You shouldn't be scared of staff.

(Sarah)

Clear procedures when giving people notice

All staff need to follow the right procedures such as for evicting people and for people leaving accommodation. They need to make sure there is some follow-up support and advice if someone is threatened with eviction and if you are evicted then they need to be given help to go back to the council to find out what you're entitled to.

(Sarah)



Practice Example



Fife Council provides written occupancy agreements for their furnished flats and hostels. The occupancy agreements cover the start and end of the tenancy including notice periods and any charges related to the accommodation including service charges. The occupancy agreements also make it clear what is expected of the tenant and also of the local authority as landlord. Tenants are also provided with a condition of occupancy or a list of house rules in relation to hostel accommodation. As well as an occupancy agreement the tenant is asked to sign an inventory for any furniture in the property and is also provided with information on the heating as well as up to date meter readings. Should support be required, the tenant will also sign a tenancy support agreement.

Albion Lets

Albion Lets provides secure emergency accommodation for people who are either homeless or awaiting a homeless decision. Based on feedback from a focus group of service users, Albion Lets have produced a guide for residents. The guide helps residents to understand their rights in terms of homeless decisions and how to appeal a decision as well as information on how to engage with the homeless service. It offers practical information about the services they provide, details of local services and an outline of what Albion expect from residents staying in their accommodation. Albion will offer as much support as is required to assist residents into settled accommodation.

- **Moving in or relocating causing minimum disruption to the household**

Procedures should be in place regarding the handover of relevant information about the household and their needs to ensure any referrals are made for additional support services that could be required.

- **Protection of personal possessions**

For households provided with temporary accommodation, local authorities have a duty to protect any property belonging to the homeless households, and should, where required, provide storage for as long as necessary prior to them moving into settled accommodation. Local authorities can charge for this, but residents need to be made aware of any costs or charges associated with storage of belongings. For tenants leaving temporary accommodation, belongings may be stored for a period of time to allow them the opportunity to organise for the belongings to be moved. Support could also be provided to help them move into new accommodation. As part of a handover procedure, local authorities should specify a time period for which they will continue to store possessions after a client has moved into settled accommodation. After this specified period, and following communication with the former resident, local authorities may then be able to dispose of any belongings that have not been collected. Records (preferably photographic) should be kept when this is the case. This will avoid paying unnecessary storage costs.

- **Resident involvement**

Households need to be involved in all discussions surrounding their needs, where they are to be placed and what their priorities are. Except in emergency situations (flood etc), no decisions on relocation or changes to occupancy agreements should be made without consultation with the household.

- **Staffing levels and training requirements**

Staffing levels need to match those required to meet the services and support for individuals or households. Support and training should be made available to staff to ensure that they are equipped to do their jobs and can meet the requirements of the standards and understand the needs of homeless people. This applies to those staff directly employed by the local authority and those who are contracted to carry out the duties of the local authority.

- **Complaints procedure**

Residents in temporary accommodation should be made aware of the complaints procedure including how, where and to whom complaints should be made and how their complaint will be dealt with. For local authority and RSL accommodation this procedure should mirror the complaints procedure for permanent accommodation.



Practice Example



Effective housing support from LinkLiving's housing support service before, during and after temporary accommodation.

Isobel started receiving support at 16 whilst living with a violent partner. It helped her to build up the courage to leave and access temporary accommodation. Her support worker continued to provide emotional support, and to attend various appointments for housing, health and benefits.

Isobel got a flat from the council, and housing support helped her to set up a home. All was going well and support came to an end. Isobel let her brother move in and this caused a chain of events which meant she had to leave this flat. Because she could go back and access housing support, Isobel was helped to secure a private rented tenancy which avoided another stay in temporary accommodation. Housing support continued and helped Isobel stabilise her health and her life once again. She moved to a permanent home and her life has been stable for the last eight years.

Monitoring and reviewing

All policies and procedures need to be reviewed in regular sessions to remind staff and residents of the correct procedures to follow and to reflect any policy changes.

This should happen in conjunction with staff as well as residents and should report on:

- Resident satisfaction rates
- Staff satisfaction rates
- Numbers of health and safety, hygiene and fire checks/drills/incidents
- In-house training programmes to ensure staff are equipped to do their jobs and can meet the registration requirements of the care commission
- Adequate support and supervision of staff
- Policy and practice reviews.

Further engagement with B&B owners and an expectation of a level of training and support is crucial to ensure that clients receive a consistent standard of service.

Community issues

The Homelessness Code of Guidance says that there should be regular turnover of properties used by the local authority for temporary accommodation to avoid the stigma of 'homeless accommodation'. Local authorities may wish to review their stock of temporary accommodation annually on a property by property basis. Local authorities need to consider whether engagement with the community is needed, and if so, how this can be done sensitively. Where accommodation is being provided by an RSL, or the private sector, local authorities should work closely with that provider to resolve any neighbourhood issues.



Affordability

The rent is £854.45 a month and it's only a two bedroom tiny flat so because I've just got a job I've now got to pay it. I'm going to have a good wage for someone of my age but I still need help. I can cover the rent but what about the food and bills, especially if they won't replace the window seals.

(Dave lives in a temporary flat provided through a private sector leasing scheme)

Affordability

It is important that temporary accommodation providers recognise the difficulties for those in, or seeking employment or training in terms of housing benefit payments. Advice should be provided to households in temporary accommodation to make them aware of the impact of employment on their housing benefit entitlement. This would also include service charges. Local authorities should look at the broad range of options available for temporary and permanent accommodation. Clients seeking employment should not, where possible, be placed in expensive temporary accommodation which makes it financially prohibitive to work.

Advice and support to access benefits and other financial services is crucial to avoid a client accruing rent arrears during their stay in temporary accommodation.

In appropriate cases, local authorities could consider providing unfurnished flats at a lower rent level. This could offer a more affordable solution for those in or seeking employment and reduce the burden of cost and resources of providing storage for furniture.

Moving on from temporary accommodation

The resettlement process for temporary to permanent accommodation is vital to ensure the client has the best possible chance of sustaining a tenancy. The support needs assessment should be communicated to the housing provider once a household has secured permanent accommodation. This is particularly important when property is secured through a referral.

Where support needs have been identified and support is in place, this support should, where possible, continue for a specified period of time based on individual circumstances.

Pre-tenancy visits prior to moving into settled accommodation should provide advice including:

- Advice on housing benefit and how to make claims for dual payments where necessary. This includes applying for relevant grants
- Information and advice on fuel poverty and utilities in general
- Referrals to and information on furniture projects
- Information on home contents insurance
- General tenancy advice and education
- Useful information about the area the client will be moving to.

Practice Example



Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) has launched a new furniture service offering tenants a range of packages most suited to their needs and circumstances. This includes an emergency package designed for homeless people moving out of temporary furnished flats. This package provides the basics to settle into a home including mattresses, headboards, a mini cooker and nets for windows. The package is provided for one year. There are various other packages designed to suit tenant's specific needs at a range of costs and term lengths. GHA believe that through offering furniture packages, tenants will settle into their homes quicker and are also more likely to sustain their tenancies.

Scottish Government note on management of temporary homeless accommodation

The 2012 Scottish Government/COSLA Joint Steering Group on homelessness has commenced a piece of work on identifying areas of good practice that it believes can help to inform local authority housing providers' management of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

The impetus for such work originally centred around a review of statistical data that suggested there was a wide variation in performance in the turnover of void properties in stock used for temporary accommodation in comparison with that of normal letting stock. The impact of this is lost rent due to temporary accommodation not being used. Two impacts of improving performance in this area are:

- Improved rental income; and
- Potentially reducing the number of temporary accommodation units required as their use is maximised.

The 2012 Scottish Government/COSLA Joint Steering Group intends to discuss the initial findings of this with local authority practitioners, to gain a better understanding of how issues specific to temporary accommodation such as higher turnover, furniture provision, repairs and utility checks can impact on service delivery.

The 2012 Group will also consider more recent developments in respect of changes to Housing Benefit, and in other areas such as the continuing use of Lead Tenancy Schemes and other private sector provision, and the feasibility of temporary to permanent options to create settled accommodation.

Providers of temporary accommodation are to be encouraged to look at their void management practices and see whether their performance can be improved.

Practice Example



North Ayrshire Council offer a resettlement package to every homeless person moving into a mainstream tenancy across all tenures and also identifies the referral process for ongoing support if required. This support includes:

- Accompanied property viewing
- Gas and electric checks
- Completion of forms for Grants, loans etc
- Advice on and help with HB claims
- Ongoing support referral where required to tenancy support services based on the support needs of the client
- Any other support providers will be alerted of new tenancy address

Ongoing support will be provided for six weeks regardless of landlord.

Next steps

Improving services in temporary accommodation based on these standards will help to achieve consistency the best possible outcome for the household regardless of local authority area.

CIH Scotland and Shelter Scotland are committed to engaging with the Scottish Government, Scottish Housing Regulator, COSLA and providers of temporary accommodation to ensure that these standards are embedded in practice.

CIH Scotland and Shelter Scotland would like to thank the following organisations and individuals for their important contributions in the development of these standards:

Link Group
Fife Council
City of Edinburgh Council
North Ayrshire Council
Glasgow Housing Association (GHA)
Scottish Refugee Council
Scottish Women's Aid
Albion Lets
Brian Capaloff

and all those who provided their views on temporary accommodation.



Shelter Scotland is the leading housing and homelessness charity supporting those in housing need across Scotland. We believe that everyone should have a home. We help people find and keep a home. We campaign for decent housing for all. Shelter Scotland's services and campaigns are mutually beneficial. Our services deliver tangible proof of the positive impact our projects and advice provision have on people's lives. We use this evidence to give Shelter Scotland an authoritative voice in the housing debate, influencing policy, practice and wider government-funded services.



Managing agents for the City of Edinburgh Private Sector Leasing Scheme

Link Group Ltd has been appointed as the managing agent for the City of Edinburgh Council's Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme which offers contracts to private landlords whose properties are then let by the Council to people who are homeless and in housing need.

It is the largest scheme of its type in the UK, having provided support for more than 4000 people through a network of 1600 properties. Link will provide the service for the next three years.

Link's extensive experience in housing management and commitment to making service improvements based on regular contact with customers is a firm foundation on which to deliver its objective of providing an excellent service to owners, tenants and the City of Edinburgh Council.

Founded in 1962, the Link group of companies (social enterprises, voluntary organisations and charities) has a long tradition of providing:

- good quality homes for rent or low cost home ownership
- factoring services for owners
- support and advice for individuals
- community regeneration in many parts of Scotland

Visit Link's website www.linkhousing.org.uk for further information about its varied activities and services or call 08451 550021.



The Chartered Institute of Housing

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the professional body for people involved in housing and communities. We are a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. We have a diverse and growing membership of over 22,000 people worldwide, with over 2,800 in Scotland. Our members work in the public, voluntary, educational and private sectors. We exist to maximise the contribution that housing professionals make to the wellbeing of communities. The CIH aims to ensure members are equipped to do their job by working to improve practice and delivery. We also represent the interests of our members in the development of strategic and national housing policy and aim to be the first point of contact for anyone involved or interested in housing.



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