

**Angus Council**  
**Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24**  
**Year 4 Update Report 2022/23**

## **1. Background**

Angus Council's [Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20-2023/24](#) (RRTP) details how we will achieve our goal that people who experience homelessness reach a settled housing outcome as quickly as possible by:

- Increasing the focus on prevention to stop homelessness happening in the first place.
- Ensuring households get through the homeless system faster.
- Ensuring homeless households can access existing housing.
- Ensuring homeless households can access the right type of support at the right time.
- Increasing affordable housing supply to meet needs of homeless households.

The RRTP was approved by the Scottish Government in May 2019 and update reports for years one, two and three were previously submitted detailing progress and challenges experienced, along with a revised RRTP and activity and spend monitors. We have received confirmation from the Scottish Government that we have been allocated £122,000 to support Year 5 of the RRTP. This is in addition to £266,249 carried forward from previous years (£241,000 of this from previous year reserves).

Governance for the RRTP continues to sit with the Housing, Health and Social Care Strategic Planning Group who have responsibility for the ongoing development and delivery of the plan. This ensures participation and accountability of all partners and stakeholders in the transition to rapid rehousing in Angus.

## **2. Implementation of RRTP – Year Four**

Work has progressed against several actions identified within the RRTP – a revised RRTP action plan (Appendix A) details all actions.

We are experiencing a year-on-year increase in homeless applications in Angus and the number of households accessing temporary accommodation (both with and without children) has also increased in the last year. The average length of time in temporary homeless accommodation has increased from 174 days in 2021/22 to 209 days in 2022/23.

14 individuals are currently being supported by Housing First with good engagement and positive outcomes. An annual check-up was completed, supported by Homeless Network Scotland, which identified several areas of positive practice and some areas for development. Both support workers posts have now been made permanent however there is still a need to consider longer term funding and upscaling of the service. The future delivery of Housing First depends on the availability of funding to continue and the review of supported homeless accommodation where the aim is to redirect resources away from short term accommodation to longer term specialist supported housing and Housing First.

There remains a requirement for mediation and conflict resolution intervention in Angus however continuing with the delivery of this via the original contract with Relationship Scotland did not represent value for money and the contract ended on 31 July 2022. A new

approach to meet this requirement is being explored as part of the development of a Youth Homelessness Strategy.

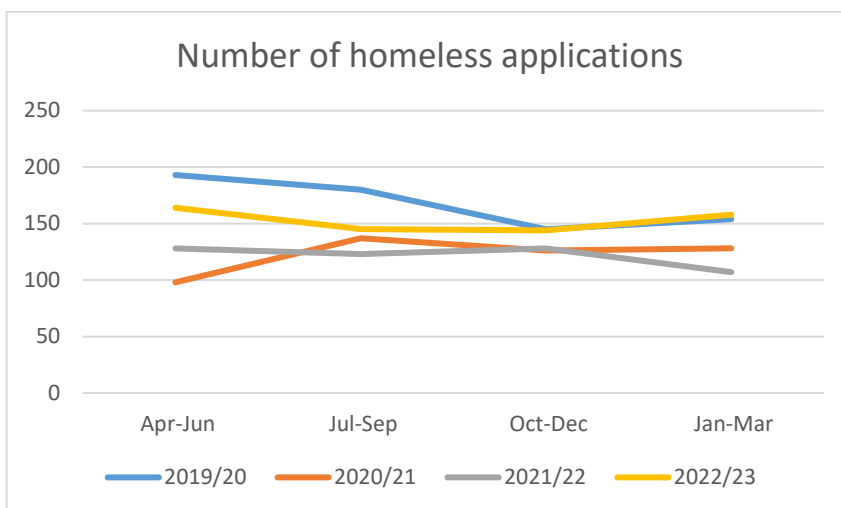
We have a new Housing Policy Officer in post to focus on Rapid Rehousing. This post is temporary for one year to help progress RRTP delivery in it's final year.

The service review to transfer the homelessness functions from within the three Community Housing Teams to a new team alongside the Homelessness Support Service within the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership is currently in phase 2. Full transfer of the service has been agreed for the end of October 2023.

There have been a number of challenges in progressing the delivery of the RRTP over the last couple of years, recruitment challenges and limited staff resources at both a strategic and operational level along with the service review has disrupted delivery of projects and the ongoing development of the RRTP. We are experiencing major strategic challenges which are being faced by all local authorities, specifically dealing with the significant number of people in temporary accommodation, maintaining supply and meeting demand and improving access to permanent homes.

As a result of these challenges, there is a large balance of unspent RRTP funding carried forward from previous years. To ensure effective implementation of the RRTP, there are requirements for sufficient resources to develop and implement the RRTP and responses to the cost of living crisis and longer term funding for the services and responses required to prevent and address homelessness. Mainstreaming RRTP activities beyond 2023/24 is dependent on the redirection of resources by reducing the capacity in temporary accommodation when we reach a position of rapid rehousing.

### 3. Key Homeless Indicators – Trends and Analysis 2022/23

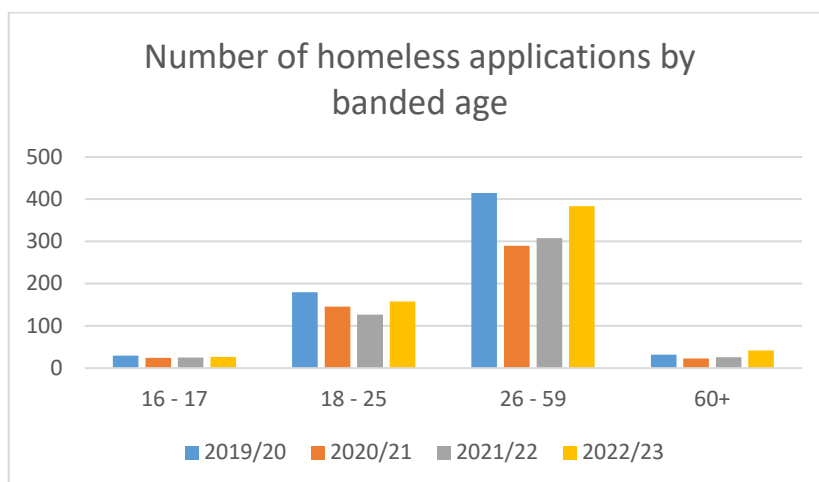


Source: HL1, Scottish Government

Homeless applications in 2022/23 increased by 25%, following a reduction in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. Latest Scottish Government statistics show that homeless applications are now exceeding pre-pandemic levels for all. This reflects the challenges in recent years with external pressures such as recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, housing supply and affordability, the

ongoing war in Ukraine and the economic climate. All of these have an impact on demand for housing and homelessness services and affect the delivery of RRTP.

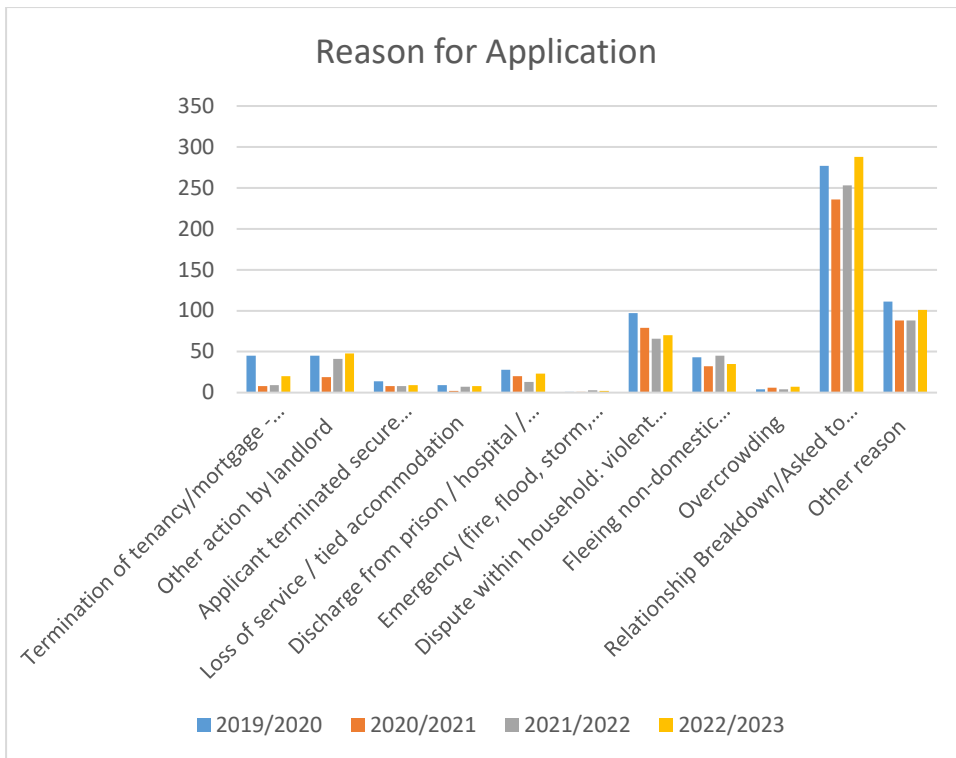
The profile of applicants is largely consistent with previous years. Single person households continue to make up the greatest proportion of homeless applicants, 82% of applications were from single person households, an increase of 8% from the previous year, and 14% of applications included children in the household – this is a reduction on the number of applications from families with children from the previous year (decreased by 11%).



Source: HL1, Scottish Government

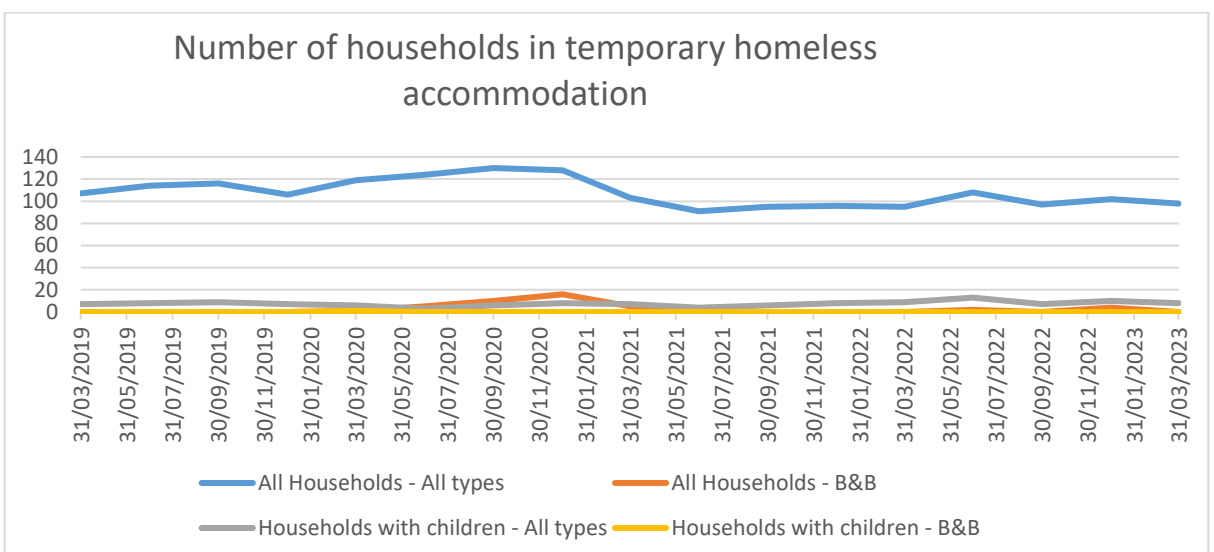
Applications from 26-59 year olds continue to make up the majority of homeless applications and the number of applications made by younger people under 25 is increasing on previous years in line with overall applications. The dominance of young single households applying as homeless needs to be considered as we develop approaches to both prevent and respond to homelessness in Angus.

Applications from households with White Scottish and Other British ethnic origin continue to represent the majority of homeless applications (89% of applications). There was one application from a household who were ineligible for assistance or had no recourse to public funds.



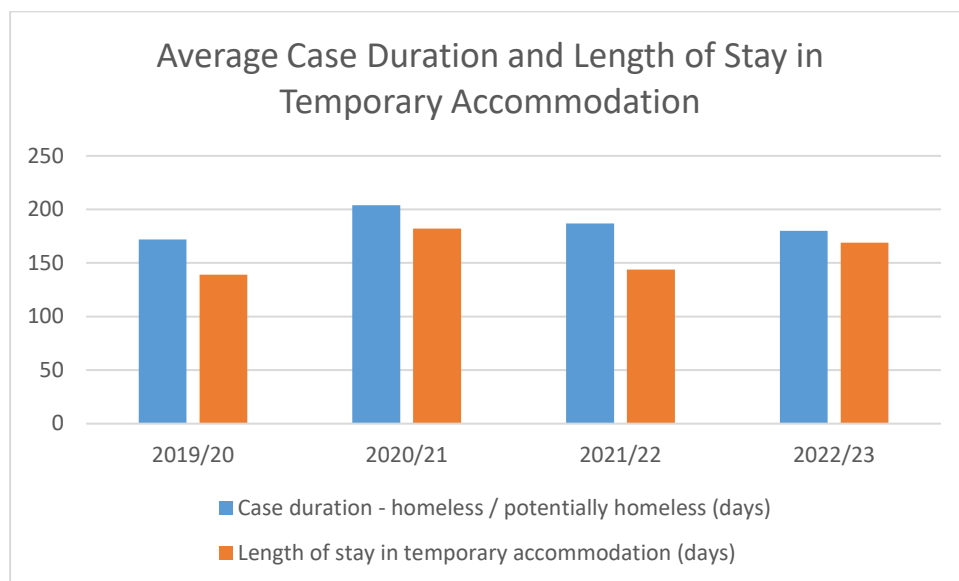
Source: HL2, Scottish Government

Relationship breakdown/ being asked to leave continues to be the most common reason for homeless applications in Angus and has continued to increase over the past 2 years. There has been a slight increase in applications following action by landlord or lender, but these are significantly lower than anticipated. The number of applications resulting from non-domestic violence or harassment has also reduced, whereas applications resulting from a violent or abusive relationship has slightly increased but is still significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels and prior to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Housing Policy, a reduction of 45%. There is also work ongoing to implement a policy with the aim to prevent homelessness arising from harassment or non-domestic violence, in line with the domestic abuse policy.



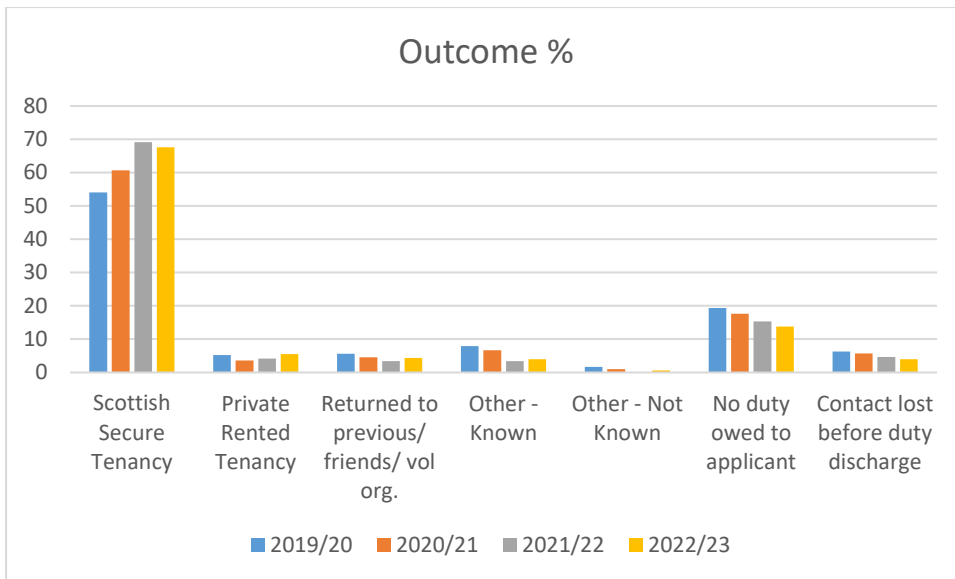
Source: HL2, Scottish Government

The number of households in temporary accommodation has remained steady this year, having peaked in 2020/21 following the first lockdown because of a temporary suspension of allocations during this period. The number of households with children in temporary accommodation remained relatively low and there have been no households with children placed into B&B in 2021/22 or 2022/23. We are continuing to monitor the use of unsuitable accommodation and breaches of the Order on a monthly basis alongside reporting on the impact of the recent changes to local connection.



Source HL1 & HL3, Scottish Government

Case duration has reduced on previous years having peaked during the pandemic as a result of restrictions on repairs activity and a temporary suspension of allocations during the first lockdown. This had reduced in 2021/22 however has increased in 2022/23 due to the increase in homelessness demand. The aim of the RRTP is to minimise the use of and time spent in any form of temporary accommodation, we will continue to aim to avoid the use of temporary accommodation and support people experiencing homelessness to secure suitable settled accommodation as quickly as possible. If a household is appropriately housed in temporary accommodation, content living there and there are no tenancy issues, consideration will be given to 'flipping' the accommodation to a Scottish Secure tenancy (SST). Where 'flipping' is agreed, a formal offer will be made to the tenant and the tenant will be able to keep the furniture if they wish. In 2021/22, 23 temporary accommodation tenancies were 'flipped' to a Scottish Secure Tenancy and 10 were 'flipped' in 2022/23.



Source: HL1, Scottish Government

The majority of homeless applications (67% in 2022/23) continue to be discharged into a Scottish Secure Tenancy however despite the good response from private sector landlords during the pandemic and the introduction of the Private Sector Officers in 2021 only 5% of households applying as homeless secured a Private Residential Tenancy in 2022/23.

Of the 260 Scottish Secure Tenancies offered to homeless households in Angus in 2022/23, only 37 (14%) of these were offered from housing association partners in Angus despite housing association stock making up around 33% of all social housing stock in Angus. This is a reduction on the previous year of 26% allocations from housing associations. Further engagement is required to ensure Housing Association partners maximise allocations to homeless households.

#### 4. Supply and Demand

The Scottish Government provided local authorities with a tool to calculate the gap between supply and demand to establish the percentage (%) of lets required to meet homeless demand and clear the backlog of existing homeless applications over the course of the RRTP. To be in a position of rapid rehousing we need to effectively clear the backlog of homeless applications by the end of the 5 year plan (2023/24).

It was estimated for 2021/22, that 52% of lets needed to be made to homeless households in order to meet homelessness demand. This target has not been met and work is ongoing to understand the barriers to this which will inform the current review of the allocations policy.

We recognised that applying an Angus wide target to all areas is not sufficient to meet demand due to differences in demand and turnover across the four Housing Market Areas (HMAs). The tool has therefore been based on locality data to establish the required % of lets for each HMA.

With only one year remaining of the RRTP, the gap between demand and supply is increasing and we must continue to focus on and consider alternative initiatives to prevent homelessness and increase access to alternative housing options.

## **5. RRTP Actions – Progress to Date**

### **Homelessness Service Review**

As a generic role, the housing officer has responsibility for a smaller patch area and has full accountability for everything, from first point of contact through to tenancy management, including the provision of the homelessness and housing options service across all tenures in their area. This approach aims to allow a much greater focus on early intervention and prevention and improved customer service, with an intended outcome of increasing tenancy sustainment. However, the results have not quite delivering as envisaged - resources within the housing teams are stretched and staff are under pressure to complete what have become competing tasks and priorities.

The Homeless Support Service sits separately within the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). The service works with individuals and families from age 16 onwards to support people who are homeless to access housing and/or the transition into their own home and support those who are struggling to maintain their tenancy to prevent homelessness. This is achieved through an agreed support plan that promotes independent living skills to enable people to live independently in their own home.

A support plan can include:

- advice on welfare benefits, budgeting and debt
- support setting up and sustaining the tenancy
- assistance to access training, education and employment
- support to contact other local authorities, health care and external agencies.

Engagement with Housing officers highlighted that the homelessness functions within their role is particularly challenging when balancing other services for housing tenants. It was agreed that homelessness responsibilities would be removed from the Housing Officer role and a central specialist team would be re-established to deliver this service.

Both housing and homelessness support services have a role in preventing and responding to homelessness in Angus, however the teams currently work independently from each other and their roles and activities are not closely aligned. Establishing a homelessness service alongside the homelessness support service within the Angus HSCP will make better use of resources to respond more effectively to homelessness and the additional homeless prevention requirements planned to be implemented from 2023. Sitting alongside other Angus HSCP services will also encourage better collaboration with other services, increase access to support for homeless households and help to deliver a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing homelessness in Angus.

The new Homelessness Prevention and Solutions team is now established with a full team compliment which includes a Team Leader, 5 Case Managers and admin support and is in Phase 2 of the transfer process with full transfer expected by October 2023.

### **Prison Protocol**

Angus Council has operated a prison housing protocol since 2010. The protocol was revised and strengthened in 2020, in line with SHORE standards and rapid rehousing guidelines. The focus is on partnership working to prevent homelessness on entry to prison, and to prevent homelessness on release. The Council has an information-sharing agreement in place with

the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and receives weekly reports on prison admissions and upcoming liberations. A central team of housing staff identify and cross-check housing and related issues, liaise with landlords, benefit agencies and any relevant support providers to prevent housing loss across all tenures - including Council, Housing Association and private rented sector (PRS) tenants, linking in with private rented landlords as required. In 2020, the Common Allocations Policy was revised to award the highest priority to applicants in institutions, including prisons, to whom the Council has rehousing duty. Housing staff aim to assess prisoners' housing needs early, avoiding a homelessness application and temporary accommodation, by securing a home in time for release. Prisoners are supported with furniture, utilities and benefits claims, where needed, through housing support and justice services. There has been a substantial reduction in homelessness applications from people previously in prison since introducing protocol. Since implementing the prison protocol in 2020, there has been a 30% reduction in people applying as homeless directly from prison highlighting the success of the protocol and work to prevent homelessness on release.

### **Review of Common Allocations Policy**

A revised allocations policy and Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system has now been in place since November 2020. As of 31 July 2023, a total of 2095 properties have been let by the Council and its Common Housing Register (CHR) partners through CBL and a total of 58,581 bids received on these properties. This is an average of 30 bids per property let, however the number of bids per property can vary quite significantly.

The allocations policy is now under review and consultation has been carried out in the form of a survey to staff and members of the public. The responses suggest that we need to consider changes to how we advertise our properties, how we support access to the system and how we prioritise applications.

### **Domestic Abuse Policy**

Angus Council's housing division made a commitment as part of the Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) Make a Stand campaign to implement a domestic abuse policy. The policy was drafted based on the recommendations from the research, the CIH Domestic Abuse Guidance for Social Landlords and following discussions with key stakeholders.

The policy supports the aims set out in the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan by focusing on preventing homelessness wherever possible and maximising other opportunities for women experiencing domestic abuse to access settled accommodation. It sets out how the Housing Division will provide a proactive housing response to preventing and addressing domestic abuse by:

- Providing a confidential, sensitive, and supportive response to victims/survivors, whether that be women, children, or men
- Working collaboratively across the organisation and with partners to provide a coordinated response to enable victims/survivors to access a range of housing options, advice, information and support;
- Holding perpetrators to account – domestic abuse is the responsibility of the perpetrator and action will be taken, where possible, to support victims/survivors to remain in the family home.



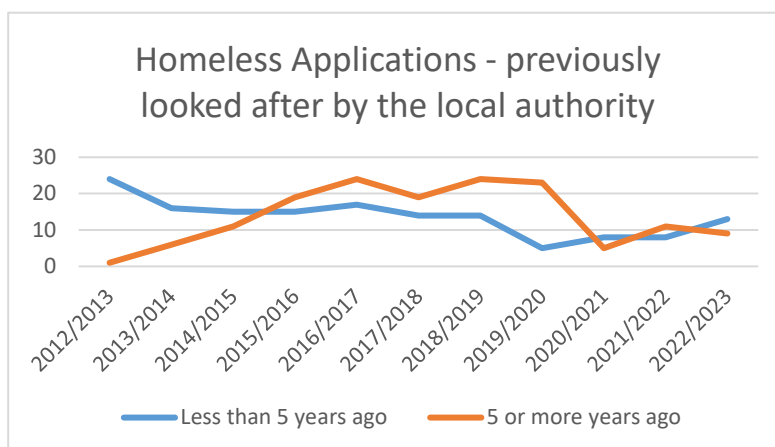
The policy was approved in September 2020 and has been implemented alongside guidance and training for staff. Since the policy and guidance was implemented, homeless applications resulting from people experiencing violence or abuse within the household have reduced by 45%. We have recently commenced a review of the policy and hope to involve women who have been supported by housing and other stakeholders.

### Care Leavers Housing Options Protocol

The Housing Options for Care Leavers protocol was agreed and implemented in 2013 and following a review in September 2020, now includes young people aged 16-25 involved with or on the periphery of offending who are working with the Horizon (through care aftercare) service.

Supported accommodation continues to be provided for young people leaving care, with a number of scatter flats created nearby to provide accommodation close by with intensive outreach support. Multi-agency panel meetings continue to be held on a bi-monthly basis where young peoples' housing and support needs are discussed, and actions agreed. The meetings also provide an opportunity to highlight other issues that will impact on practice and are attended by staff from the Horizon service, a Team Leader from each of the Community Housing teams, Hillcrest's Housing Manager (Operations), a representative from the Community Investigations & Resolutions team and the Team Manager of the Homelessness Support Service. Other service representatives are invited to attend when required.

Since the protocol was implemented in 2013, the number of young people applying as homeless who had been looked after as a child by the local authority less than 5 years ago has reduced by 46%.



Since 2019 there have also been significant reductions (62%) in the number of young people applying as homeless who had been looked after as a child by the local authority more than 5 years ago over the last 3 years. This coincides with an earlier review of the protocol to extend it to care leavers beyond the point of leaving care.

### Family Mediation & Conflict Resolution Service

Despite a reduction in homeless applications, relationship breakdown/ asked to leave continues to be the most common reason for homelessness in Angus.

A two-year contract for mediation and conflict resolution was awarded to Relationship Scotland (Family Mediation Tayside & Fife) and the service went live in August 2020. The service provided support to identify and address the root causes of relationship difficulties,

and used communication, conflict resolution skills and mediation to rebuild relationships and help the person remain in the family home. Where remaining in the family home was not possible, the family was supported to improve relationships to ensure that a move could be completed in a planned and supported way. As well as providing a mediation service, Relationship Scotland also employed a Family Support Worker to actively engage with families and address any additional support needs identified.

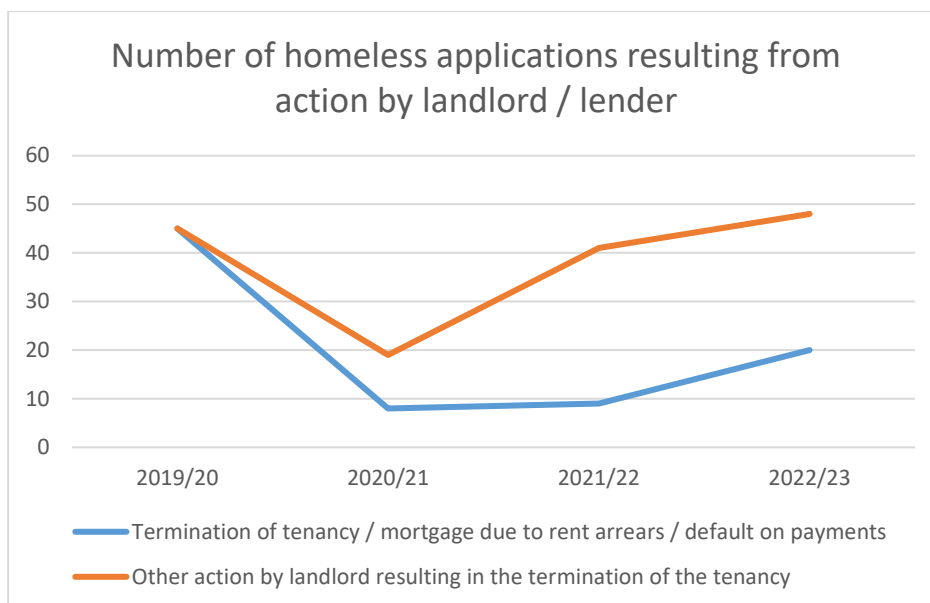
The service received 159 referrals involving 193 individuals. Due to a lack of referrals received from staff working in front line services, the vast majority of these referrals have been made using an automated weekly report from homeless applications received and only 40 families referred engaged with the service. Of those engaging with the service, only 11 engaged in mediation meetings. The small number of cases which went to mediation did however show a high success rate and agreed outcomes were achieved in 75% of these cases.

Relationship Scotland faced difficulties connecting and establish working relationships with frontline service providers. In between lockdowns, Relationship Scotland were able to meet with some agencies face to face, but most contacts we made over online services such as MS Teams or Zoom, which was not conducive to creating in a shift in referral practices. The project's base, The Cross in Forfar, enabled a level of networking and relationship building, however mainly due to the pandemic it was not possible to establish active working partnerships with the housing teams or other services and support providers.

There remains a requirement for mediation and conflict resolution intervention in Angus however continuing with the delivery of this via the existing contract with Relationship Scotland did not represent value for money and the contract was terminated in July 2022. There is need to review how mediation and conflict resolution interventions are delivered in Angus, how families are engaged in these interventions and how consideration of these resources is embedded in processes and referral pathways for frontline services working with families. This will be picked up as part of the development of a Youth Homelessness Strategy.

### **Review of Section 11 Guidance**

The number of homeless applications resulting from action by landlord or lender has seen a downward trend since 2019 and had fluctuated since the protection against eviction measures were removed following the pandemic and are no on par with levels seen pre -pandemic for other action by landlord.



Revised Section 11 guidance was implemented from 1 April 2021 and is based on findings and guidance developed from a project established and funded by the North and Islands Housing Options Hub and Scotland’s Housing Network. The lessons that were learned from the project, and were used to inform the guidance, were:

- intervene earlier when the situation can be more readily resolved.
- share more information, and information that will be more useful in terms of seeking to prevent homelessness.
- ensure that communication is between known, named contacts.
- act jointly to prevent repossession.
- standard letters sent in response to section 11 notices are of little practical use.
- keep each other informed of action taken after serving of the section 11 notice.
- actively involve other agencies in preventing homelessness where relevant.
- hold regular joint meetings to review section 11 caseloads, and
- ensure organisational resources are committed to prevention.

At the point a notice of proceedings is served by Angus Council or a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), the Homelessness Support Service is notified and completes system checks to confirm if anyone in the household is open to or has previously been open to services. This helps to identify any vulnerabilities or support needs and allows the landlord to work jointly with other services to engage with the tenant and prevent repossession.

### **Improve Housing Options and Support in the Private Rented Sector**

A number of actions were identified in the RRTP to increase access to the private rented sector (PRS) including introducing flat share initiatives; implementing a rent deposit scheme and establishing a grant for empty homeowners to bring back empty homes for letting to homeless households.

Work was completed in partnership with the national homelessness charity Crisis, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils to consider a range of options which will assist us to continue to build on the engagement with landlords and improve private sector housing options and tenancy sustainability. As part of this work, we sent an online survey to registered

landlords about working together with the Council to provide housing for people in urgent need and improve tenancy sustainment in the private sector. 1725 landlords completed the survey, many leaving useful comments and suggestions, and over half expressing an interest in hearing more about this area of work in future. Landlords who responded have made it clear they would value more support from the Council when they house someone in housing need and would especially value a single point of contact to access support for tenants who run into difficulties. The additional winter RRTP funding to support the recovery from the pandemic has been used to recruit two new officers to build engagement with landlords in Angus, support people to access the PRS and be a first point of contact for tenants and landlords to prevent homelessness from the PRS.

Progress in implementing these initiatives was accelerated because of difficulties allocating tenancies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rent deposit, rent in advance, and rent guarantee schemes were launched and the additional winter RRTP funding to support the recovery from the pandemic was used to recruit two new officers to build engagement with landlords in Angus, support people to access the PRS and be a first point of contact for tenants and landlords to prevent homelessness from the PRS.

Since the service launched in June 2021, the Private Sector Officers had a total of 316 contacts, most common reasons being: advice to help find a private let (135); Section 11 notifications (51); and Deposit enquiries (33). Other common reasons for contact were arrears advice, receipt of Notice to quit/leave and repairs. The Community Housing Teams have made the most referrals (112) with the remainder of contacts through tenants, other services such as welfare rights and social work, 3rd sector and landlords and their representatives. Since the service was launched 37 people have been supported to remain within their current accommodation and 42 supported in some capacity to move to alternative PRS accommodation.

Due to recruitment challenges and uncertainties relating to future funding, it was agreed to merge the role of the private sector officer with the new homelessness case officer role as part of the new Homelessness Prevention and Solutions Team. We will continue to deliver the PRS access schemes in 2022/23 and explore other potential incentives for landlords to help people in housing need.

### **Delayed Discharge Prevention Fund**

To support people from all tenures to be discharged in a timely manner, annual funding of £10,000 of funding has been committed from the Angus Health & Social Care Partnership in to create a 'prevention fund' to support hospital discharges for the following housing related issues:

- Cleaning costs of the property
- To clear utility bill debt
- Interim accommodation costs (rent, service charges, council tax)
- Essential furnishings
- Removal/packing costs
- Any other housing costs may be considered.

The applications for the fund and actions arising are coordinated by a central team in housing and involves close partnership working with the community housing teams, registered social

landlords and services within Health & Social Care. Last year saw an increase in referrals as the funding became more embedded into working practices across community care and housing teams. Twenty One individuals have been supported to return home from hospital by using the fund. The funding requests mostly related to house clearances and cleaning, interim accommodation costs, utility credits and the provision of furniture and white goods.

### **Tenant Hardship and Prevention Fund**

Angus was awarded £164k to support private and social rented tenants who have accrued rent arrears as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. An online application has been developed and can be completed by tenants, their landlord or other services supporting the tenant. They are able to upload supporting information and payments can be generated to the landlord if the application is approved. A panel involving members of the Sustainable Communities team in Housing Strategy has been established to review and determine the applications, a representative from Welfare Rights was added to the panel this year which has helped with the decision making process and signposting applicants to other sources of advice and assistance. The team are working closely with landlords and support providers in Angus to gather supporting information to evidence the applications and provide ongoing support to tenants to help address any other needs identified. Communication to promote the fund has been issued via social media and cascaded to partner agencies and a web page has been created on the angus.gov website.

A total of £144,133 has been approved for 93 households, this has prevented eviction action in all cases (31 council tenancies, 6 PRS tenancies and 56 RSL tenancies). 66 applications have been refused either because there was no risk of homelessness or there was no evidence that the arrears had arisen as a result of the pandemic.

£50,000 was allocated from the RRTP to extend the fund and create the Prevention Fund to allow us to support more households who are in financial difficulty to sustain their tenancies and prevent homelessness. The new prevention fund was launched in October 2022. The impact of the prevention fund will be evaluated after one year and a future plan for delivery determined then.

### **Implementation of Housing First**

For people with multiple complex support needs beyond housing, Housing First should be the first response. Housing First provides ordinary, settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs. It recognises a safe and secure home as the best base for recovery and offers personalised, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address their wider needs. The model separates the provision of housing and support, offers choice and control to tenants and works to the principles of harm reduction.

Housing First was launched in Angus in November 2020. Two support workers were initially recruited to sit alongside the Homelessness Support Service within the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership. A third support worker was recruited in November 2021 having successfully applied for an Improvement Fund grant of £33,555 from the Corra Foundation. Operational guidance based on the principles of Housing First has been developed and a multi-agency panel has been established and meets on a monthly basis to consider referrals

and provide monitoring and oversight of Housing First in Angus. The panel includes representation from the three Community Housing Teams, RSL partners, Homelessness Support Service, Community Investigations & Resolutions team, Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Services, and the Community Mental Health team.

Fifteen individuals are currently being supported by Housing First. Fourteen individuals are in settled permanent tenancies and one is currently in prison. We hope to continue to deliver Housing First in its current format, however this is reliant on funding being available and is one of the risks to our capacity to continue with Housing First. If we can continue in the current format, this will give the service capacity to support around twenty-one individuals. Capacity may be further increased if we can direct additional resources from temporary supported homeless accommodation to small scale settled supported accommodation and Housing First. A working group has been established to consider the requirements for small scale supported accommodation and Housing First so we can plan what is needed in each locality in Angus and a project plan is under development.

## **6. Planned RRTP Activities**

In addition to activities outlined above, several actions are planned as we progress with the final year of RRTP, namely:

- Continue to refresh the RRTP demand and backlog tool at a locality level to establish the required percentage of lets to homeless households for each Housing Market Area.
- Continue to review households occupying temporary homeless accommodation and convert to Scottish Secure Tenancy where appropriate.
- Development of a youth homelessness strategy.
- Continue to evaluate, explore, and develop initiatives to help increase access to the private rented sector.