

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL



Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

Contents:

- Context
- Baseline
- Vision

Consultation

Vision

Our vision for the period to 2024 is both bold and ambitious.

We will work together as a City to end homelessness.

Aims and objectives

In short, we need to change a number of elements of how we do business, as already reflected in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Local Housing Strategy, the detail of which follows.

In summary:

- We will completely eradicate homeless presentations which repeat within a 12 month period
- There will be no incidence of previously homeless households who do not sustain their tenancy for at least one year, unless for positive reasons
- We will reduce the homeless and support assessment periods to 14 days
- We will ensure that Housing First is the first response for people with multiple and complex support needs
- We will cease using hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation
- We will reduce use of hostel accommodation by retaining only one hostel, and in the longer term assessing it's use and appropriateness
- We will reduce the use of temporary properties by 150 by winding down the Private Sector Leasing scheme and building stronger partnerships with the private rented sector
- We will reduce the homeless journey from a 164 day average to a 50 day average
- We will launch an online self serve portal with all housing options from all providers and private landlords operating across the City and potentially beyond
- We will ensure that our new build programmes in Aberdeen across the social rented sector are fully reflective of the demand demonstrated by the urgent and mainstream housing waiting lists
- We will ensure that all partners with housing stock are allocating a minimum 50% stock to homeless clients
- We will work closely with Locality based staff to ensure early intervention, tenancy sustainment and therefore prevention of homelessness

How Aberdeen plans to change in order to move towards rapid rehousing.

Those with low or no support needs will move straight to a rapid rehousing route as of April 2019. This will reduce the length of time that temporary accommodation is required for these people. Individuals with low or no support needs accounts for approximately 55% of all homeless presentations.

Where people have been in temporary accommodation in the long term, we will seek to “flip” the property back to mainstream, where this is desirable by the tenant and mutually agreeable.

During the five year period covered by the RRTP, we will cease using Bed and Breakfast accommodation as well as Private Sector Leasing. We will also close one of our hostels.

The Housing Market and Homelessness Context

The Local Housing Market

Aberdeen is located in the north east of Scotland and is the country's third-largest city. It is the regional centre for employment, retail, culture, health and higher education. It is also the region's transport hub with road, rail, sea and air links. The city extends to 185.7 km² (71.7 square miles) and shares its boundaries with Aberdeenshire.

Aberdeen is part of the Aberdeen Housing Market Area which includes part of Aberdeenshire. The housing market area includes Aberdeenshire towns, extending to Banchory, Westhill, Stonehaven, Oldmeldrum, Inverurie and Ellon. Scottish planning policy defines a housing market area as a "geographical area where the demand for housing is relatively self-contained."

The Aberdeen Housing Market Area housing needs have been identified through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA 2017). The HNDA was developed through collaboration between Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and the Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority. At a strategic level, the HNDA informs the Strategic Development Plan, the Local Development Plan and Local Housing Strategy of each local authority.

The Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2018-2023
<https://aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/local-housing-strategy>

provides the strategic direction to respond to housing need and demand and informs the future investment in housing and housing related services across the city. The LHS identifies an indicative affordable housing target of 342 homes per year in 18/19 and 19/20 and 385 per year in 20/21, 21/22 and 22/23.

Figure 01: Indicative Housing Supply Targets – Aberdeen City Council

18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
342	342	384	384	384	1,836

Source: Aberdeen City Council (2017)

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan
<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/strategic-housing-investment-plan>

provides the strategic direction in relation to the supply of affordable housing across the city. The Aberdeen City Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019 – 2024 has the potential to provide up to 2,037 new affordable housing units which will make a significant contribution towards meeting the affordable housing supply targets identified in the Local Housing Strategy.

If the additional homes identified in the plan were to be delivered, there would be a requirement for grant subsidy of circa £119.789 million. Through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Scottish Government has confirmed the Resource

Planning Assumptions for 19/20 and 20/21 and for planning purposes, Scottish Government has advised that local authorities should use their 2020/21 RPA as the basis of funding for the final three years, but it has not yet been confirmed if these sums will be available.

Figure 02: Resource Planning Assumptions for Aberdeen City Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019-2024

Year	RPA £ m
2018/19	17,120
2019/20	18,133
2020/21	19,436
2021/22	19,436
2022/23	19,436
2023/24	19,436

Increasing supply of affordable housing is a strategic priority for Aberdeen City Council.

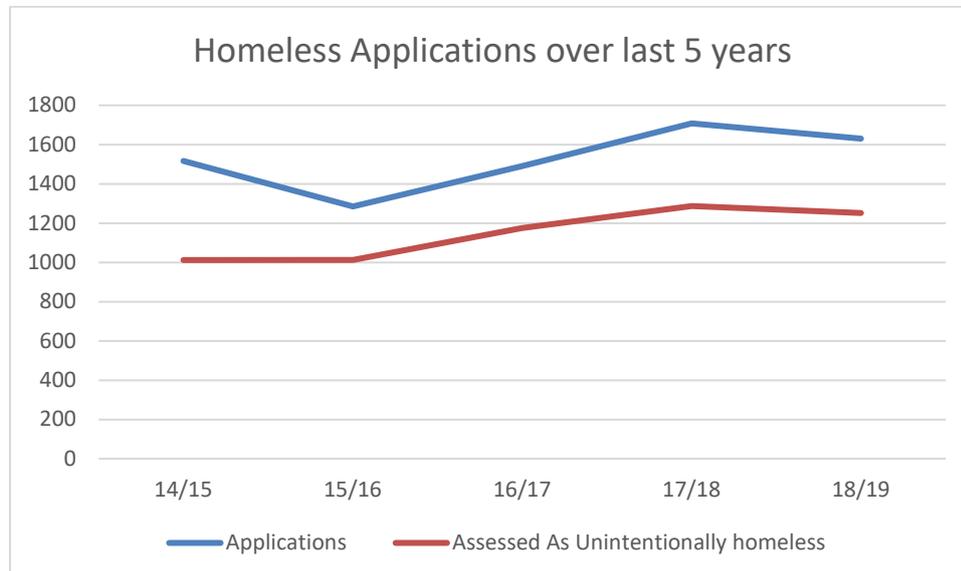
Aberdeen's housing stock is predominantly owner occupied. (57% or 66,601 properties) 23% (26,817) is social housing and the private rented sector makes up the remaining 20% (23,034) which means the private rented sector plays a key role in the provision of housing across the city. Figure 03 below shows the Local Housing Allowance for Aberdeen City from 01 April 2018 to 01 April 2019 in comparison to recent average private rented sector rates. Currently Aberdeen's private rental market is in decline and as a result many of the properties advertised are below the average rental figures and the rate of local housing allowance. However, not all private landlords in Aberdeen will accept those in receipt of benefits which means that private renting is not an option for everyone. This creates particular challenges for those who are may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and in receipt of benefits.

Figure 03: Local Housing Allowance Rates

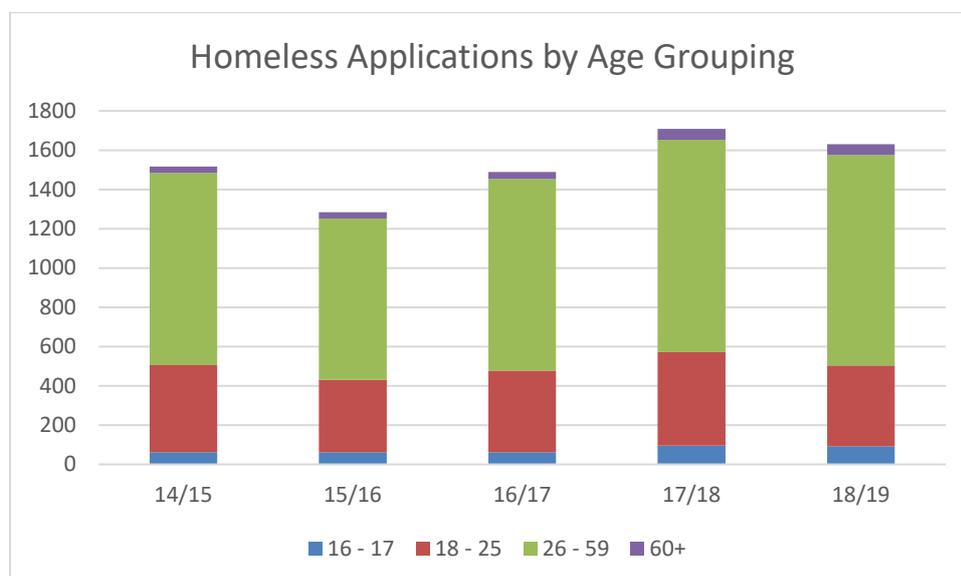
Number of bedrooms	Weekly	Calendar monthly equivalent*	Average Rented Rent	Private Sector
Shared room rate	£75.63	£327.73	N/A	
1 bedroom	£105.86	£458.72	£469	
2 bedrooms	£138.08	£598.34	£688	
3 bedrooms	£172.60	£747.93	£1,012	
4 bedrooms	£228.99	£992.28	£1,464	

Homelessness Context Aberdeen

In Aberdeen, 1,631 homeless applications were received 2018/19 down 4.5% (76) on the 1,707 received during 2017/18 which is equivalent to 1.47% of all households living in the City. This is the first reduction in homeless applications since 2015/16.



Graph of age categories over last 5 years



The reasons for homelessness in 2018/19 have remained relatively static, however a 2% fall has been recorded against those applicants applying due to 'Dispute Within Household – Violent or Abusive' and 1.5% increase among applicants applying from prison.

Reasons for Homelessness (2018/19)	TOTAL
Asked to leave	367
DISP WITHIN HHOLD/REL BREAKDOWN NON VIOL	313
DISPUTE WITHIN HOUSEHOLD-VIOLENT/ABUSIVE	278
TERM OF TENANCY/MORTGAGE - ARREARS	123
OTHER REASON FOR LEAVING ACCOM/HHOLD	101
DISCHARGE FROM PRISON/HOSPITAL/CARE ETC	96
OTHER ACTION BY LANDLORD - TERMINATION	96
APPL TERMINATED SECURE ACCOMMODATION	92
OTHER REASON FOR LOSS OF ACCOMMODATION	71
HARASSMENT	27
LOSS OF SERVICE/TIED ACCOMMODATION	24
FLEEING NON-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	23
OVERCROWDING	7
AWAITING TO ASSESS	6
FORCED DIVISION AND SALE OF MAT HOME	5
EMERGENCY (FIRE,FLOOD,STORM,CLOSURE OR)	2
TOTAL:	1631

3.6% (58) of applicants cited rough sleeping the night preceding application, a 1.1% increase when compared with 2017/18. Of the 58 applicants who slept rough the night preceding application 6 (10%) were determined to be ineligible for assistance and 3 (5%) were not homeless.

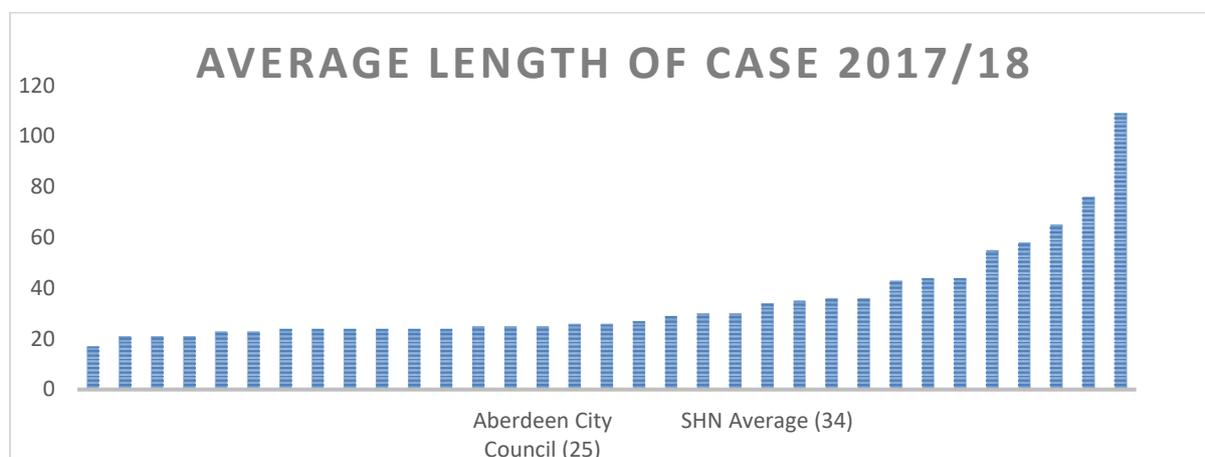
The most common property types that applicants came from during 2018/2019 were home of family members or friends and partners:

Property Become Homeless From	Number	%
PARENTAL/FAMILY HOME/RELATIVES	412	25.30%
FRIENDS/PARTNERS	382	23.40%
OWN PROPERTY - LA TENANCY	252	15.50%
OWN PROPERTY - PRIVATE RENTED TENANCY	246	15.10%
PRISON	93	5.70%
OWN PROPERTY - RSL TENANCY	65	4.00%
OWN PROPERTY - OWNING/BUYING	54	3.30%
LONG TERM SOFA-SURFING	27	1.70%
OWN PROPERTY - TIED TENANCY	25	1.50%
OTHERS	75	4.60%
YTD TOTAL	1631	100.00%

The reasons for Homeless applications to ACC during 2018/2019 were households being asked to leave their accommodation or breakdown within the households.

	TOTAL	%
ASKED TO LEAVE	367	22.50%
DISP WITHIN HHOLD/REL BREAKDOWN NON VIOL	313	19.20%
DISPUTE WITHIN HOUSEHOLD-VIOLENT/ABUSIVE	278	17.00%
TERM OF TENANCY/MORTGAGE - ARREARS	123	7.50%
OTHER REASON FOR LEAVING ACCOM/HHOLD	101	6.20%
DISCHARGE FROM PRISON/HOSPITAL/CARE ETC	96	5.90%
OTHER ACTION BY LANDLORD - TERMINATION	96	5.90%
APPL TERMINATED SECURE ACCOMMODATION	92	5.60%
OTHER REASON FOR LOSS OF ACCOMMODATION	71	4.40%
HARASSMENT	27	1.70%
LOSS OF SERVICE/TIED ACCOMMODATION	24	1.50%
FLEEING NON-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	23	1.40%
OVERCROWDING	7	0.40%
AWAITING ASSESSMENT	6	0.40%
FORCED DIVISION AND SALE OF MAT HOME	5	0.30%
EMERGENCY (FIRE,FLOOD,STORM,CLOSURE OR)	2	0.10%

Aberdeen continues to perform relatively well, the average number of weeks to close case was 25 weeks.



Average length of stay in temporary accommodation, by type of accommodation

The average length of time spent in temporary accommodation across all placement types was 111 days, 15 fewer than the previous year. The average time spent in B&B has also reduced by 3 days from 61 days last year to 58 this year. The priority and focus given to moving applicants on through temporary accommodation quicker continues to drive these improvements.

At 31st March 2019 temporary accommodation occupancy levels were at 80% where 113 properties sat empty. Occupancy rates are lower this year due to the winding down of the PSL scheme. Occupancy composition at 31st March 2019 detailed;

- 404 homeless households accommodated in temporary accommodation down 22 on the same period last year.
- 33 homeless households accommodated in B&B (including 5 hotels) almost double the amount when compared with the previous year where 17 households were accommodated.
- 59 placements were occupied by households that were not homeless but have been accommodated in temp under local policies.
- 17% (78) of all households accommodated in temp also held a secure tenancy with ACC – 34 decant discretions & 44 discharged a permanent rehouse duty.

Current Temporary Accommodation stock:

- We have 379 temporary accommodation units.
- We have 30 Bed and Breakfast places.
- We have 31 Hostel places.
- We have 81 Private Sector Leasing units.

Rehousing outcomes

Of the cases closed in 2018/19 the Council had a duty to permanently rehouse 1,262 households. Of these 75% (947) were actually provided permanent accommodation, down 3% on the previous year. The fall might be attributable to a significant rise in discharges (77) after the applicant refused their permanent offer.

During the year there were 724 homeless households permanently housed into ACC general need tenancies, 51 fewer than the previous year and representative of a 7% decline in general need allocations. Of the 594 one bed (inclusive of bedsits) general need allocations completed this year 80% (474) went to homeless households.

A further 22 homeless applicants have been permanently housed in specialist accommodation (Amenity & Sheltered) under the special lettings Initiative.

The HL-1 indicates that 211 homeless applicants were permanently housed by an RSL up 31% on the 161 recorded the previous year. Local records show that 118 applicants were housed via nomination agreements with Langstane Housing Association, leaving 93 housed by other RSL providers. Aberdeen City Council is working with other providers to obtain data that can show their lets to households that are assessed as unintentionally homeless.

Using the Scottish Government methodology provided, based on the number of applicants awaiting housing, the backlog and new assessments and the current number of applicants who are either rehoused or lose contact after assessment there

is a projected deficit of at least 289 properties for homeless applicants per year, down 56 on 2017/18.

DEMAND	2018/19	2017/18
Current Demand - Unintentional Applicants Waiting to Be Housed	439	587
New Homeless Demand - Unintentionally Homeless in Year	1252	1270
Unintentional Applicants That Lost Contact Pre Discharge of Duty	92	95
Unintentional Applicants That Refused Offer & Duty Discharged	81	3
SG RRTP DEMAND:	1189	1289
ACTUAL DEMAND:	1518	1759
SUPPLY	31-Mar-19	31-Mar-18
ACC Properties Let To Unintentional Homeless Households in Year	712	810
RSL Properties Let To Unintentional Homeless Households in Year	205	160
Private Rented Properties Let To Unintentional Homeless Households in Year	39	30
SUPPLY TOTAL:	956	1000
GAP AS CALCULATED USING SG MODEL:	233	289
ACTUAL GAP:	562	759

Prevention of Homelessness

There is an existing commitment to review the function and job specifications of housing services by April 2020, in line with the council's Target Operating Model. The shift of housing services into a new Early Intervention and Community Empowerment area aligns well with the future vision of rapid rehousing, placing an emphasis on customer choice and empowerment through digital delivery. Central to this will be a renewed focus on housing options advice and homelessness prevention across all functions and clusters to increase tenancy sustainment and reduce homelessness. It is intended that the outcomes from the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan will form an integral part of any future service plans, job descriptions and performance management targets going forward.

We have committed to enrolling all frontline housing staff to the Housing Options Training Toolkit as a means of providing a consistent training approach across services, shifting the culture of housing and related services towards the prevention of homelessness. Through the toolkit we also intend to seek collaborative training with other preventative services in localities, education, social work, the Scottish Prison Service, the third sector and health partners to encourage a collaborative approach to early intervention work. The North East & Islands Hub have also agreed to arrange classroom-based learning sessions with representatives from all five local authorities to spread best practice and networking

Existing statutory services will have to work better between locality based staff and local organisations and groups to support households. Recognising a 'no wrong door approach' and that people will seek support when their tenancy is in difficulties from organisations across a locality, not just housing professionals. We intend to redesign our services around a locality based model of housing management using co-location of services to foster more collaborative work across preventative services.

In addition to the training and education of staff, we intend to initiate an ongoing program of tenant and public housing education through digital services. This will focus on empowering tenants across all tenures to make informed decisions on their housing circumstances allowing them to access the support and assistance required at the earliest possible juncture. For new and existing council tenants this will take the form of tenancy education to increase tenancy sustainment and encourage greater engagement in the management of their homes. For home seekers we intend to provide greater access to information regarding tenancy rights and housing availability to assist them in making informed choices to prevent homelessness where possible or move to alternative accommodation in a planned manner if not.

Particular focus will be given to the support of education leavers as part of the Early Access System Change work being undertaken in collaboration with Aberdeen Foyer and other partners across the city. This Big Lottery Funded project seeks to see the system change to provide earlier intervention and support to people leaving school with no positive destinations, a group identified as particularly susceptible to housing issues in early adulthood. Engaging with employability and education services to improve this group's prospects of employment and access to further education prior to the point of crisis will be central to reducing youth homelessness in the city.

A similar collaborative approach to early intervention with the Health and Social Care Partnership will see households approaching services with housing related issues engaged with housing services at the earliest possible stage. Development of joint working protocols and intelligent data usage, driven by the Health & Homeless Data Linkage work completed earlier this year, will target households where engagement patterns with health services indicate that a crisis period is imminent and trigger proactive input from housing and support services.

We will review our rent collection and corporate debt policy with greater emphasis placed on tenancy sustainment and seek to utilise alternatives to the rent arrears escalation policy to manage households in rent arrears. Where eviction is the only course of action, we will seek to convert tenancies to Scottish Short Secure Tenancies or use technical evictions for families to ensure that no families enter the homeless process after being evicted from Aberdeen City Council properties.

For all other evictions we will seek to assess homelessness duty prior to eviction and determine available housing options, removing the requirement for these households to enter temporary accommodation.

To further reduce our homeless journey time we will build on the success of the Domestic Abuse Support and Accommodation Project (DASAP) which is a partnership between Aberdeen Cyrenians and Aberdeen City Council, where staff members from the DASAP team gather information required for the local authority to make a statutory homeless assessment and decision. This means our customers do not have to come into Council offices, and repeat their stories, reliving their trauma multiple times.

Through the housing options hub we intend to initiate a “section 11 plus” project to engage RSL tenants in the city threatened with losing their homes either through eviction or abandonment. We hope to ensure that any household facing losing their RSL property will have their homelessness assessed prior to losing their property to review their housing options and best plan their homeless journey if required.

We will work with the private rented sector to improve the availability and standard of privately rented properties. Using landlord information sessions, we will ensure that landlords are aware of their legal responsibilities and ensure that information is available for them to assist in managing their properties. We will also improve the access to support and assistance available in the sector to match that of council and RSL tenants, with all future service design incorporating all types of tenure in the city. This will include assistance from money advice services, which will be particularly relevant to educate landlords and tenancy as UC is delivered within the city. Through this work we will seek to improve the standard of accommodation across the private rented sector and increase tenancy sustainment.

Psychologically Informed Environment Service Design will be a cornerstone for all future service delivery involving tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention. Through a consistent approach to service delivery we will embed self-reflective practice to fully engage staff in the "golden thread" of housing options advice and where homelessness has occurred or is inevitable, the harm reduction measures imperative to assisting households to move through the homeless process with the least possible disruption to their lives. As a result, roles within the housing services will become more generic to empower workers decision making and create a greater understanding of the barriers faced by households at each stage of their housing journey.

Homeless Journey Time

Target: Reduce Journey Time (50 days by 2024)

In 2017 Aberdeen City Council undertook a survey with current homeless households and people who had experienced homelessness over the last 4 years. Along with the strategic objectives outlined in RRTP, feedback from our customers is supportive of the idea, with 70% of respondents requiring to be housed immediately.

What did you want from ACC?	%responded
House me immediately	70%
Place me in temp	20%
Prevent loss of home	9%

The Council's temporary accommodation stock is also used for other services. At any one time only 87% is used by households who have accessed the homelessness route. The increase in referrals for temporary accommodation from the Councils HRA stock has steadily been increasing.

Number of Temporary Accommodation tenancy created - decants/discretions from Council HRA			
2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
5	22	35	54

In addition, temporary accommodation has been used to house Syrian New Scots and Social Work clients. At the start of April 2018 there were 14 Care Experienced Young people using a form of temporary accommodation provided by the Council, 3 of whom were in hostel type accommodation. We are currently redesigning our Throughcare Protocol in line with our Corporate Parenting role.

The last full review of the costs of temporary accommodation was in April 2016 which reduced the service charged to tenants in temporary furnished flats by around £45 per week. Officers are currently reviewing the costs to consider the HARSAG recommendations and the current service design within Aberdeen City Council. These changes will be brought to Council as part of the budget setting process in February/March 2019.

It is likely that temporary furnished flat costs will reduce due to changes in staffing structure and reduction in spend in other areas. At the same time, it may not be possible to reduce the costs of hostel accommodation. The main cost pressure is the 24/7 staffing of the units. In addition to the high claim for housing costs from Housing

Benefit, these costs are capped so the Council's General Fund is also required to contribute to the service.

80 West North Street

80 West North Street is a purpose-built unit for households experiencing homelessness which was opened in 2015. Within it are 20 self-contained en-suite rooms, including adapted properties, each has their own cooking and washing facilities. They are designed to replicate a person's tenancy going forward, with their own electric meters, which are managed on site. People staying there are allowed guests and are each given their own key fob to access the property when they want.

Within the building there is also large communal kitchen and common rooms for training and community building. These are currently staffed 24 hours a day and the Council's Out of Hours homeless service operates from them.

St Fittick's House

St Fitticks House was is a former bail hostel which was transferred across to be used as temporary accommodation in 2010. It consists of 15 rooms, with one bathroom for each quad of rooms.

There is a large communal kitchen, laundry and two resident's area within the building. It is staffed 24/7 by Accommodation Unit Officers.

95 Bon Accord/Tullos/HMO

For 6 years households have been offered the opportunity to access cheaper temporary accommodation in shared flats or buildings. This started with the conversion of an old janitor's house, Tullos Lodge, for people who were working and saving for a deposit. This has been expanded to include a small former hostel and larger flats rented from private landlords or the Council stock. Rents are calculated as a percentage of LHA rate to be affordable for customers.

Private Sector Leasing (PSL)

There has been a Private Sector Leasing scheme project in Aberdeen since 2011. This is run internally by Aberdeen City Council, by the same team who deliver the temporary accommodation. As of 1st of April 2018 there were a stock of 159 properties. This scheme is currently under review and is handing back properties where they are no longer financially viable for the Council to hold.

It has prevented taking more properties from the HRA stock and has also been used as a vehicle to lease properties from other RSLs for temporary accommodation. All of these flats are furnished to the same standard as the temporary furnished flats and for the customer there should be no difference between these properties and our own temporary furnished flats.

B&B/Hotel

Aberdeen City Council recently undertook a procurement exercise to drive up the standards and expectations of our customers within B&B accommodation which was completed in May 2018.

The Council routinely uses 3 B&B providers, which have capacity of 6, 14 and 10 spaces. The smaller units to provide less distribution to the customers and can be very homely in nature.

Temporary Furnished Flats

Most of the temporary accommodation is rented from the Council's HRA stock. These properties are fully furnished and decorated before being let to households experiencing homelessness. There is a wide spread of flats across the city ensuring households can benefit from a range of options and communities to live within.

Aberdeen City Council is currently undertaking a trial of using re-use items from local charities Instant Neighbour and Somebody Cares to furnish the flats in a homely fashion and reduce the overall costs of temporary accommodation.

Each new tenant of a flat receives cutlery, crockery, quilts, pillows and bedding, which they can retain for their new home after temporary accommodation.

Resettlement

Also managed by the Housing Access and Support Service is 53 properties that are not on the homeless return. These are bedsits and 1 bed properties scattered across the central area of the city. These have traditionally been used for customers receiving support for up to 2 years or care experienced young people.

Homeless Households would have their application deferred under the interim regulations while staying in these properties and therefore do not appear on the HL1 or HL3 report to the Scottish Government. We will shortly be reviewing this provision.

Future of Temporary Accommodation

The reduction of homeless journey times over the last few years has already seen the reduction in Aberdeen's need for temporary accommodation. There has been a substantial reduction in the use Hotels/B&B's, back to the baseline of using 3 B&B's providing up to 30 spaces.

In March 2018 we were also able to close 165 Crown Street, an older style hostel with 22 rooms, this was largely thanks to a reduction in homelessness journey time.

Over the duration of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan we will continue this pathway to remove all B&B usage, and with a view to closing one of our hostels and we will also review the usage of 80 West North Street.

This view is supported by our customers. The refusals recorded in the HL3 consistently show that more offers are refused for Hostel or B&B types of accommodation in 2017/18:

	TFF	B&B	Hostel	PSL
Confirmed	88.8%	76.3%	76.6%	88.6%
Refused	11.2%	23.7%	23.4%	11.4%

An accommodation unit like 80 West North Street offers customers a substantially improved experience to that of the older style hostels. While a move away from this type of accommodation all together would be ideal, there will remain a need for Aberdeen City Council to provide emergency accommodation out of hours, I.e. in the evenings or weekends. For some households the safety of a staffed building which can offer support following a presentation is more appropriate than being given a set of keys and address to move into their own temporary furnished flat immediately in the middle of the night.

Due to the proposals of support mentioned below, it is proposed that a portion of the Resettlement properties are given back to the HRA and let to Homeless Households. This can be achieved by “flipping” the accommodation, a term we use for re-designating their use.

We will retain a number of these units for outreach housing support from the core block of supported accommodation, in line with the support needs identified within the RRTP toolkit. These will be flexible properties treated in the same way as temporary furnished flats, and only designated as supported accommodation as the need arises.

We recognise the particular needs of people working or in education, college, school or university have in accessing temporary accommodation due the costs, which can result in some people stopping their courses, the rapid rehousing model should ensure these households are not losing their job or education due to experiencing homelessness.

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Tool provides a focus on unintentionally homeless households. It does not consider those who are in temporary accommodation with any other decision. These households may also require temporary accommodation and therefore will need to feature into Aberdeen’s future temporary accommodation landscape.

In April 2018 there were 56 households in temporary accommodation where the local authority did not have a duty to rehouse. Some of these households are intentionally homeless are owed a period in temporary accommodation while given housing advice and options.

The high pressure on Aberdeen's private sector rental market has traditionally made it very hard to offer intentionally homeless households reasonable housing options. As rental costs have reduced over the last few years, we have been successful in supporting more people into private sector housing options, via use of Aberdeen City Council's Prevention Fund to support households with their first months' rent or deposit.

Within those 56 households, 25 were ineligible for rehousing. In Aberdeen we are proud not to have needed a winter care shelter since 2011. Over each winter we relaxed the rules around access and staying in temporary accommodation to try and ensure no-one has to sleep rough.

In 2017/18 this service was enhanced by the establishment of the Assertive Outreach Rough Sleeping project which supported 34 households to access homelessness assessment and temporary accommodation from December 2017 to October 2018. Providing people with their own accommodation during the winter period in a fully furnished flat gives them a solid foundation and supportive service to establish whether eligibility can be gained, for example by appealing with the DWP or gaining employment.

The flexible funding approach, giving front line officers the ability to make on the spot decisions to support customers out of rough sleeping was successful, and thought needs to be given about what role this has in the future, along with the Councils existing Tenancy Set up Fund and Prevention Fund.

These households may also have the same needs as an unintentionally homeless households in terms of mental health, alcohol and drugs, yet not the eligibility to pay for any accommodation, to provide the stable base to get support with these issues. Therefore, this winter period provides an opportunity for a range of services to become involved in their support and look at ending rough sleeping with the person in the long term.

Aberdeen Cyrenians already deliver a service on behalf of the Council to support these households into support and rehousing options. Discussion shall be taken forward with the Health and Social Care Partnership about the support on offer to these households, and also households who are supported by Social Work in similar situations to ensure a joined up approach.

In future years, focused work is needed to link up households with employability projects, to support people throughout the pipeline which will help these households gain eligibility for mainstream services.

In terms of costs and type of accommodation, a suitable style of temporary accommodation has not yet been found. Of those households in temporary accommodation in April 2018 the current arrears were £57,802.93.

Journey Time

The total homeless journey time to permanent house households by the Council in November 2018 was 175 days, the average time it took to make a homeless decision for this group was 17 days, and the time from an offer being made to allocating a property was 47 days.

This highlights that there are currently 111 days elsewhere which is likely to be taken up with time to get support in place and deferrals due to refusal of offers or homeless offers being withdrawn. There is a bi-weekly meeting of Council officers tasked with looking at long standing homeless cases and cases in temporary accommodation which do not have a housing outcome. Learning from this meeting is applied in service wide changes. It has been running since March 2016 and has been a successful tool in highlighting the time that households spend in temporary accommodation and subsequently our temporary accommodation stock.

We have an existing relationship with HMP Grampian to deliver on the SHORE standards (Sustainable Housing On Release for Everyone) with a staff member from our homelessness team working part time in the Prison and a new Prison Liaison Officer role having just been created. Similar arrangements, protocols and standards will be developed with other public bodies such as Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and Cornhill Hospitals, so that everyone should have had their homelessness assessed prior to release and therefore have no need for temporary accommodation.

This highlights the need to have a better understand the housing stock on offer. For example, the number of steps or aids and adaptations required within the property, and how that is matched to the needs, whether they be physical or social, of the homeless person being offered the property. This includes whether we should be offering properties that are not ready to be let, and are subsequently withdrawn by landlords from a households, delaying their journey again.

Aberdeen City Council is currently working on a review of Allocations Policy to take into account the needs of all customers, and the choice and control that approaches such as Housing First provide for our customers. A decision has been made to shift our allocation process to choice based letting but this will not be the method for rehousing homeless households. Rather we will look to re-house homeless households from our available properties prior to advertising them for choice based lettings. This will allow homeless households to move into permanent accommodation by date order rather than the current system where households are delayed by the time it takes for their particular property to be brought up to standard.

To fundamentally shift the journey time to a rapid rehousing model, radical changes to how we do business will be needed.

Access to existing accommodation for homeless households

In collaboration with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils, we intend to engage RSL partners operating in the city to initiate and agree a protocol across all three authorities. Each RSL will be asked to submit an annual report of their existing properties in each local authority area and anticipated turnover of stock. This will allow an agreed number of properties to be agreed annually to best utilise their stock in relation to the profile of homeless applicants in each authority and ensure the required 50% of offers made to homeless households by each RSL is achieved within each authority area rather than across their entire stock.

Further work is needed to reduce void letting times which will bring more properties back into use and on the condition that properties that are let. When a homeless household is let a property it should be in a move in condition to help them make it a home. This would reduce arrears while some households attempt to pay for two properties and allow a better start for the customer in their new home.

What work will be undertaken to reduce void letting times?

In terms of void letting times within temporary accommodation, the void rate is very low, despite experiencing chronic demand for temporary accommodation presently. The current level of voids within temporary accommodation stock has reduced significantly in the last six months, and is around 9% of current stock levels.

However, the mainstream void letting time has a detrimental effect on moving people from temporary accommodation into mainstream properties. As at today's date, we have 143 tenancies in temporary accommodation who are awaiting keys for their mainstream offer. The voids group currently meet fortnightly to discuss outstanding voids cases.

We have also instigated an action focussed Director level meeting in this regard. One of these actions involves a reallocation and redeployment of existing resources to tackle this issue.

We intend to apply for funding via RRTP in order to allow us to engage a contractor to clear the backlog of long term void properties, which in turn will allow us to reduce the voids letting times and release stock to enable rapid rehousing to become a reality.

Rapid rehousing will also ensure that demand reduces for temporary accommodation during the 5 year term of this Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

We also need to consider that stock that we have on offer through the social landlord market and what actions need to be taken to retrofit properties to meet current demand. This could include converting a number of empty 2 beds that landlords have across the city to 1 bedroom properties or further innovation around how these 2 bed properties are offered to single people or couples.

Access to Support

As of April 2018 there were 76 households deferred for support reasons which was an average journey time of 78 days. This is the time that Aberdeen City Council take to assess their housing support needs or that it is said that a customer cannot be made 'live' for an offer of housing. At the same time services from partner organisations have had capacity to take on new referrals, therefore there is a blockage in the current process.

This provides a poor experience with some customers experiencing duplication in having their need for support assessed.

To enable the move to a rapid rehousing model, the option to defer the homeless application for people requiring support will be removed by April 2019. The current support on offer will have to meet the customers aspirations and the Council legal duties for rehousing and there will not be the possibility to defer it. This will also mean reviewing our use of SSST's which is currently a barrier to households accessing permanent accommodation.

This is in line with our customer requirements. The 2017 survey of previously homeless households demonstrated that 72% of respondents wanted outreach housing support, 18% support was required in temporary accommodation and 10% in supported accommodation.

Housing First

In Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire there is a consortium delivery Housing First which is on track to be supporting 33 Customers by November 2019. This consists of a consortium of Aberdeen Cyrenians, Aberdeen Foyer, Turning Point Scotland, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. This service is a pathfinder for how Housing First will work in the city.

Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnerships are represented on the board and screening group of Housing First Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

This strategic action is contained within the Community Planning Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

There is a clear goal within the pathfinder cities of mainstreaming services. In Aberdeen we will evaluate this approach and the delivery of Housing First by the Consortium. It is the intention to mainstream the service once the pathfinder has completed.

In Aberdeen, we are going to create a Housing Support Hub for homeless households, and those currently in tenancies. This will consist of Aberdeen City Council's internal housing support team, commissioned housing support, supported accommodation providers, as well as others who will provide housing or support in the city.

Representative from the Health and Social Care Partnership services will also be invited on to the Hub where households need may be more appropriately met by care service or jointly delivered. Local landlords will also be invited to join the hub to ensure the right information is shared to support households into their new tenancies.

The hub will be responsible for ensuring support is delivered on day one. It will interweave statutory and non statutory workers to enable support to be delivered with a flexible approach with the supported person at the centre. Short term support will continue to be delivered by the ACC Housing Support team and customers will now be given direct access to the commissioned services which provide medium to long term support and supported accommodation.

We will look to develop common pathways, outcomes and forms using digital solutions within the Hub to enable our support staff to spend more time with their customers and less time in back offices.

Discussion will be undertaken by the homeless households Housing Advice or Case Officer to help the person choose their pathway of support which will be co-located in Marischal College and other homeless presentation points as they develop.

The commissioned services are expected to be assertive in their nature. Using the learning of the Assertive Outreach Begging and Rough Sleeping services delivered in the city, the teams will not be able to close cases for 'non engagement' and are expected to exhaust all measures to find and support customers.

The Hub will be able to flex services to ensure they are responsive to customers' demands, for example by delivering an assertive outreach service during the winter months and scaling back that activity during the summer.

Services will also be asked to look at peer support mechanism to support new customers going through the homelessness process to be supported by those with lived experience.

This approach would also allow direct access to services and customers to have choice of services from the hub where possible. As the person progresses through to their housing outcomes if different support is needed it can be discussed at the Hub and new approaches or services offered to the customers.

This approach will be supported by the recommissioning of housing support service by Aberdeen City Council from October 2019 with the aim of a new partnership being implemented from April 2020.

The Hub will have clear outcomes to achieve in line with our Local Outcome Improvement Plan targets, to increase tenancy sustainment and reduce repeat homelessness. The services will be measured on this basis, with progress for households assessed with individuals' outcomes being reported via a common interface.

We also intend to make the supported accommodation options available in Aberdeen accessible to current tenants in the city, in order to provide an element of respite for the customers, to get short term and intensive support while retaining their current tenancy. It is expected this approach will also reduce the demand on our temporary accommodation, as there will be less movement between different types of accommodation for our customers.

While there is a recognition that Rapid Rehousing will work for many households and Housing First for some of our most chaotic people, we feel that some supported accommodation must continue to be available for people who need it.

At the same time this must be the right type of accommodation and support to prepare people for tenancies in the future. This continues to be small scale core and cluster tenancies. Aberdeen continues to re-model the type of support we have on offer in this direction.

A test for change service was set up in April 2017 to look at support being delivered into a 6 flat core block with more limited hours of support available. This was designed to service customers who were institutionalised and unwilling to try their own tenancy at this time. This will continue with up to 40 of the resettlement flats mentioned above being used for supported accommodation in the future.

There is an existing service of core and cluster housing support commissioned by Aberdeen City Council and delivered by SAMH, it is proposed to continue with this type of service which will be re-commissioned during 2019.

The service provided by Aberdeen Cyrenians at Margaret House, for chaotic homeless customers in a communal setting will end by April 2019. The building, the shared facilities within it, and the care home nature of the services is no longer fit for purpose for our customers and therefore we are moving these residents on with support to their own tenancies where possible, or tenancy based supported accommodation if needed.

All customers within the service have now moved on following an assessment of their needs. Most have gone on to receive the Housing First service, while others continue in supported accommodation.

It is proposed that this is aided by the co-location of drugs, alcohol and mental health workers within Homelessness services or homelessness services within them. Discussions are ongoing to carry out tests for change for these services with our partners in the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Aberdeen Foyer deliver 27 spaces of housing support in a supported accommodation setting for young people and it is anticipated this will continue. When the service was last tendered the ideal time that someone spends in the accommodation which shifted down to 6 months, in line with our ambitions to provide short and focused support to people, before they move into their permanent accommodation. In line with proposed

housing hub above we will look at how direct access to this support can be made available for our customers.

Over the last 2 years Aberdeen has experienced an increasing presentation rate from 16 and 17 years olds.

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
62	61	61	95

Discussion have been ongoing regards the possibility of delivering a Night Stop services in the North East of Scotland to help provide the space, time and support for young people to consider options going forward. Officers in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council are taking forward discussion. While homelessness may still provide a route for many young people it can be done in a coordinated way. Often young people are coming to homelessness service at times of crisis where they need immediate access to accommodation. The accommodation at the time is not always appropriate for their needs, and there is no-time to give the young person or their family the support they may need.

This type of service, could be a forerunner to a more developed Supported Lodging scheme within the city to provide more appropriate support and accommodation to our young people

The protocol between Education and Children Services and Housing Access and Support is currently under review and will be delivered in 2019 to ensure all care experienced young people continue to have access to the right forms of support and accommodation. This will include recognition that no care experienced young person should have to come through the homeless route.

We will also work with partners to explore Future Builders and Living Work schemes, whereby young people can get skills and a trade while working on their future homes and others.

Aberdeen City Council currently commission Grampian Women's Aid to provide 10 spaces of accommodation for women and their children fleeing domestic abuse. This has been delivered in a block of 6 flats and 4 outreach flats since May 2017. Whilst this shift away from communal refuge living has proved successful, work will be undertaken prior to re-commissioning to look at how this resource can be used to support women and their families stay at home, should they wish to, or whether the service would be appropriate to link in to the housing support hub.

In Aberdeen there is also a partnership between Aberdeen Cyrenians and Aberdeen City Council to provide support and accommodation to all people fleeing domestic abuse, DASAP. This support women's, men and their families who are experiencing domestic abuse. Homelessness services are accessed via the lead officer from

Aberdeen Cyrenians preventing someone needing to tell their story more than once or having to come into Council offices.

The Scottish Women's Aid publication Change, Justice, Fairness, will be central to the recommissioning and design of future services, designing for greater flexibility in our response to women and children forced into crisis by domestic abuse.

For households with no or low housing support needs, they are currently offered support via a commissioned service from Aberdeen Cyrenians called Practical Tenancy Set Up. Officers will have identified that short term practical assistance is required, but the household does not need a housing support services as prescribed regulations. Typically this support is not expected to last more than 4 weeks and will look at providing assistance to set up utilities, benefits, to arrange debt / rent arrears repayments and refer on to other local agencies as required.

There is a cross over with this role and the expectations of how a housing officer performs their functions and internal housing support teams with the Council and RSLs. It is not efficient to refer to an external organisation, where the customers have to strike up another relationship for short term support, therefore this role will end.

Aberdeen City Council also recently renewed the formal signing of our Armed Forces covenant where we have committed to offer up to 1% of our 2,000 new Council houses to those leaving the armed forces and adapt up to a further 0.5% for those injured in service.

Increase Housing Supply

Buy back policy

Aberdeen City Council currently has a policy in place which allows properties which were sold under right to buy to be purchased back by the Council. This policy is currently being redrafted to maximise the resources available and ensure that the properties purchased are of the size and type most needed in the city.

Empty Homes

There are currently more than 2,000 long term empty homes across the city. An Empty Homes Officer has been recruited on a two-year temporary basis to reflect the changing requirements of empty homes across the city and to ensure empty homes are brought back into use. The post is being funded on a 50:50 basis with kick-starter funding from the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership. This funding allows councils to test the waters of empty homes work via a 2-year pilot project.

The Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Amendments Regulations 2016 allow local authorities to charge increased Council Tax on certain homes that have been empty for one year or more. The power contained in the Regulations is intended as an additional tool to help local authorities encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use, both to increase the supply of housing for those who need homes and to reduce the blight on communities caused by houses being left empty and allowed to fall into disrepair. £50,000 has been allocated to allow Aberdeen City Council to establish an empty homes loan fund with its objective being to bring empty properties back into use for those people who currently have an unmet housing need on the council's housing lists. The criteria relating to how the scheme will operate is currently being developed.

Increasing Access to Private Rented Sector

- Make places that we are going to let more attractive to let
- PIE of our stock
- How we use stock we have – low demand properties, what can we do with existing properties

By creating an expanded landlord and tenant education programme we intend to engage with registered landlords in the city to raise the standard of properties being let and of the property and tenancy management skills of the sector. Through this engagement we intend to seek out landlords who are willing to work with the council to offer housing to households in contact with our services, improving their business prospects whilst also assisting statutory services in meeting their demands. Greater access to the private rented sector should also offer greater choice to households seeking rehousing and achieve better housing outcomes and tenancy sustainment.

Currently the council operates a rent deposit scheme but this will be replaced by a bond scheme in future, allowing greater expansion to fully utilise the properties currently available in the city through private landlords. The possibility of providing greater access to some council facilities for private landlords assisting in the rehousing of homeless households is also to be considered as an incentive to better access the market. This will include shared accommodation where people want it. Through the bond scheme and empty homes initiative we will look to increase the number of households recorded on both the HL1 and Prevent1 records as “secured privately rented accommodation”, reducing the need for household to access temporary accommodation, reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation and offer a greater level of choice to households working with our services.

Central to the above will be the co-location and integration of private sector leasing and landlord registration services with allocations, housing options and homelessness services to best utilise available resources and better match supply to demand.

New build affordable housing

We would like to investigate test for changes to accelerate house building for formerly homeless households and others within the city. The current process takes too long to react to changes in the market, and as the toolkit shows Aberdeen is going to be over 300 properties a year short to meet its demand if current trends continue. Therefore we need to look at how we can inject the right type of housing in short timescales to build communities in the city going forward.