

## **Dumfries & Galloway Annual Assurance Statement 2022/2023 to Scottish Housing Regulator**

### **Housing Options and Homeless Service**

Dumfries & Galloway Council's Neighbourhood Services are responsible for the provision of Housing Options and Homeless services to customers throughout Dumfries & Galloway. As a stock transfer authority Dumfries and Galloway Council has developed close working relationship with Registered Social Landlords across the region to ensure we are able to discharge our statutory duty to provide permanent accommodation which is sustainable and affordable. A person-centred approach is at the heart of our working practices to ensure that we meet our legislative requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. We ensure compliance with the relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Monthly and quarterly returns are provided to the Scottish Government and a yearly Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) return is provided to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Council agreed a 5-year Homeless Strategy in June 2018 which incorporates actions to address performance and drive improvements. This was supplemented by the 5-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in June 2019. The oversight for this improvement work and the strategy is provided by the Council's Communities Committee.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic and the pressures due to the current Cost of Living crisis the Service has not been able to drive forward the actions within the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. One of the main commitments within the Rapid Rehousing Plan was to reduce the number of temporary accommodation needed as well as reduce time spent within temporary accommodation. However, with a significant increase in Homeless presentations over the past year it has not been possible to reduce this, in fact demand levels have meant an increase in temporary accommodation across the region. This has now also meant also utilising Bed & Breakfast accommodation, in order to meet the statutory obligation to provide accommodation,

- During the past year the service has seen an increase of 26% in homeless presentations. To ensure availability of furnished temporary accommodation we have increased our portfolio.
- The Service is fully compliant with the Smoke alarm and Heat Detection Legislation ahead of its introduction in February 2022. The temporary accommodation staff have recently undergone training in identifying dampness and condensation to provide customers with the reassurance that any issues will be addressed. In addition, there is an agreed plan to facilitate decanting of customers where it is deemed necessary.
- We flipped 2 tenancies into permanent accommodation, this has reduced from previous year due to the high demands on the Service.
- As part of homelessness prevention, we continue to work with multi-agency working groups set up with RSL's to identify and work with customers who are in financial difficulties and at serious risk of losing their home.
- We implemented a Housing First Project in Dumfries and Galloway on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021. By the end of March 2023, 11 customers have their own secure tenancies, one of these is a joint tenancy. The target is to have 20 tenancies by the end of the Pilot period.
- We have been working with colleagues across the Council and Third Sector to develop a Youth Homeless Prevention Pathway.
- Due to the increased Homeless presentations and the additional pressures resulting from this the Council has added additional resources into the Service. this will increase staffing resources but also fund the increased costs due to additional demands. Additional resources will allow the service to refocus on prevention activities.

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and Homeless Strategy will be revised in response to the ongoing Service pressures resulting from the Cost-of-Living crisis

We continue to collate and evaluate equality data and feedback to ensure that this informs policy decisions taken by Dumfries & Galloway Council.

### **Gypsy Travellers**

Dumfries and Galloways Governance and Assurance team are responsible for the provision of the Gypsy Travellers sites at Glenluce and Collin. The majority of the work at Glenluce to meet the Scottish Governments Minimum Site Standards was completed in May 2021. Commissioning and snagging works are ongoing, site provision at this location is now above the minimum standard.

A Short Life Working Group continues to address the challenge of meeting the Scottish Government's Minimum Standards at the Collin site. The review of minimum site standards including the Interim Gypsy/Traveller site Design Guide, the COVID-19 Framework and negotiated stopping proposals are a material change in circumstances which are being given due consideration.

It is intended that the Options Appraisal report will be presented to Communities Committee by December 2023 for members consideration.

The Scottish Government's £2million improvement fund has been set aside for improvement works at Collin. Including the installation of smart meters, additional CCTV, fencing upgrades and décor/flooring. This is in addition to the funding of works at Glenluce including additional fencing and kitchen units.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will continue to engage with The Scottish Housing Regulator regarding it's management of the Council's Gypsy/Traveller sites and its approach to achieving the minimum site standards in addition to following the joint action plan by the Scottish Government and COSLA Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021.

Approved by Communities Committee 04 April 2023

Signature:

Ian Blake  
Chair of Communities Committee