

Dumfries & Galloway Annual Assurance Statement 2018/2019 to Scottish Housing Regulator

Homeless Services Team

Dumfries & Galloway Council are responsible for the provision of Housing Options and Homeless services to customers throughout Dumfries & Galloway. Dumfries and Galloway Council is a stock transfer authority, therefore close working relationships have been developed with our Registered Social Landlords working across the region to ensure we are able to discharge our 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 are meeting our legislative requirements we submit monthly and quarterly returns to the Scottish Government. We provide our yearly ARC return to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Dumfries and Galloway Housing Options and Homeless Service has been working closely with the Scottish Housing Regulator to improve service areas highlighted in the Local Area Network Local Scrutiny Plan 16/17. The Council agreed a new 5 year Homeless Strategy in June 2018 which incorporates actions to address areas of performance and also drive improvements. The oversight for this improvement work and the strategy is provided by the Council's Communities Committee.

The Council's immediate focus was to deliver improvements at pace which delivered benefits for the service users and ensured that the legislative requirements of the service were being fully met. Initial prioritisation was to ensure that working practices of front line staff across all four offices were focussed on improving the customer service. However, the scale of challenge to transform the service was recognised along with the additional resourcing requirements needed to deliver the changes required.

Key Areas for Improvement were:

- ◆ Homeless Policy and procedure development
- ◆ Homeless Performance and statistical information development
- ◆ Homeless Temporary Accommodation Review
- ◆ Homeless system procurement and implementation

In addition, work has continued to embed a new staffing structure to support an improved service to customers throughout this year.

We submitted our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and associated Resourcing Plan to the Scottish Government within the agreed timescales and we are now working in partnership with our key stakeholders to bring to implement the actions we agreed as part of the plan.

Gypsy Travellers

Dumfries and Galloway Council currently operates two Gypsy/Traveller sites at Glenluce and Collin. A budget allocation of £338k was agreed through the Council's 2019/20 Capital Investment Strategy to carry out works at the Glenluce site that will result in the achievement of the Scottish Government's minimum site standards. These improvements are scheduled to complete by April 2020 and the residents on this site have been provided with regular updates in relation to scheduling. In addition, consultation with residents has also been held to allow them to influence the final design that is progressed. The site at Collin doesn't currently comply with the Scottish Government's minimum site standards and this has been confirmed to the Scottish Housing Regulator. A Remedial Plan has been submitted identifying the steps required to achieve compliance and setting out a timeline for doing so. Work is ongoing to assess the most appropriate and cost-effective solution and this will be the subject of a further report to the Council's Communities Committee in early 2020. The Scottish Housing Regulator has been made fully aware of the Council's approach to achieving the minimum site standards in our region and regular progress updates are provided. All those residents on the two Council managed Gypsy/Traveller sites have new occupancy agreements that reflect the rights and responsibilities set out in the Scottish Government's minimum site standards