

HOUSING ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Council Homeless Services are subject to scrutiny and inspection by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The Council must demonstrate that it is meeting the statutory requirements contained in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Argyll and Bute Council is no longer a social landlord but retains statutory duties to provide services to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Council submits an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). In 2019 the SHR introduced a requirement for all local authorities to submit an Annual Assurance Statement which will be published on the SHR website. The 2020 Argyll and Bute Council Statement was approved by the SHR. This report details the proposed Statement for 2021.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Full Council approve the Annual Assurance Statement contained in **Appendix 1** of this report.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 The SHR produced a document entitled Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland in February 2019. The regulatory requirements are set out in Section 3 of the document and even though Argyll and Bute Council is no longer a social landlord there are requirements for the Council to ensuring that statutory duties are met in relation to preventing and alleviating homelessness.
- 3.2 The SHR issued an Engagement Plan to Argyll and Bute Council Housing Services in March 2019. This plan was not updated in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID 19 pandemic. As a result there continues to be 4 areas in which the SHR can engage with the Council in relation to homelessness services:-

- How people access the service
- The assessment of homeless applications
- Access to and quality of temporary accommodation
- Outcomes for people who are homeless

The SHR are proposing to engage with Argyll and Bute Council in relation to Argyll and Bute's assessment of homeless applications and the outcomes for people who are homeless. The elements within these categories are detailed in the Annual Assurance Statement (**Appendix 1**) and the progress made. In 2019/20 the only cause for concern was the percentage of intentionally homeless cases in Argyll and Bute (7%) compared to the Scottish average (3%). The percentage of intentionally homeless cases reduced to 1% (5 out of 416 cases) in 2020/21 which is in line with the Scottish average.

Housing Services have identified 2 areas of concern from the 2020/21 statistics. The first is the number of repeat homeless cases which has risen from 20 to 25 and represents 6.8% of applications. This is a rise from 5.3% in 2019/20 and is above the Scottish average of 5% for 2020/21. The second area of concern is the number of households who stated that they had slept rough the night before application or within 3 months of applying as homeless. 25 households stated that they slept rough the night before they made a homeless application which remains the same as 2019/20 (6%) but is above the Scottish average of 4%. The number of households stating that they slept rough within 3 months of making a homeless application dropped from 50 to 40 which is a 10% reduction but still represents 10% of applicants which is higher than the Scottish average of 7%. Analysis of repeat homeless cases and rough sleeping cases will be carried out to establish if there are any patterns of areas of work which can be improved to reduce these figures.

- 3.3 In addition to the 4 areas of engagement a section on the impact of COVID 19 on the homeless service has been added to the 2021 Annual Assurance Statement.
- 3.4 Members are kept informed of the Council's performance in relation to statutory and regulatory requirements in relation to housing in various ways:-
- Through the Corporate Pyramid Reporting System
 - Through quarterly Housing Performance Reports submitted to Committee
 - Through the quarterly reporting produced for the Strategic Housing Forum
 - Through the Annual Updates on the Local Housing Strategy
 - Through an Annual Housing Activity report submitted to the 4 Area Committees
- 3.5 The Scottish Housing Regulator wrote to housing organisations on 24 June 2021 to explain that they are continuing to work with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations and ALACHO to produce guidance on equalities data collection. The SHR is working with the Scottish Human Rights Commission to develop a

briefing on the right to housing. The SHR anticipates that these guides will be published later in 2021.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Development and Economic Growth Service – Housing Team will continue to improve services to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Housing Team will continue to engage with the SHR to report on progress on the housing and homeless services provided in Argyll and Bute.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy None
- 5.2 Financial Sufficient budget is required to deliver statutory services
- 5.3 Legal None
- 5.4 HR None
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 5.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – access to services across the local authority area provided
- 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – addressing and preventing homelessness enables households to address other issues such as income maximisation and exploring employment opportunities
- 5.5.3 Islands – homeless advice and prevention services are provided on the islands
- 5.6. Risk – the Council will be subject to censure from the SHR and Scottish Government if statutory duties are not fulfilled
- 5.7 Customer Service – Area teams provided the service across the local authority

Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth

Councillor Robin Currie Policy Lead for Economy and Rural Growth

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Housing Annual Assurance Statement 2021

Appendix 1



Argyll and Bute Council

Housing Annual Assurance Statement 2021

Legislative Compliance

We can confirm that Argyll and Bute Council achieves all the standards and outcomes for people who are homeless and others who use our services:-

- All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework
- All relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Housing Social Charter
- All relevant legislative duties

Argyll and Bute Council can confirm that there were no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in 2020/21.

Argyll and Bute Council can confirm that there were no health and safety breaches in 2020/21 in relation to homelessness resulting in intervention by the Health and Safety Executive.

Argyll and Bute Council can confirm that a statement is being prepared on Equalities and Human Rights in relation to homelessness in the local authority area.

In 2019 The Scottish Housing Regulator notified Argyll and Bute Council that they would be engaging with the Council over 2 areas of work based on the Scottish Government national statistics for 2017/18 and the Annual Returns of the Charter :-

- Argyll and Bute's assessment of homeless applications
- Outcomes for people who are homeless

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the Scottish Housing Regulator has not been able to engage with the Council about the 2020/21 position. The tables below provide an update on the areas of engagement previously notified by the Regulator in 2019.

Argyll and Bute's Assessment of Homeless Applications

No.	Area of Engagement	Progress Made
1.	The percentage of households assessed as not homeless nor threatened with homelessness is above the Scottish average	Argyll and Bute figures – 5% of cases at the end of 2020/21 compared to 5% of cases at the end of 2019/20. Scottish Average for 2020/21 – 3%
2.	The percentage of households assessed as intentionally homeless is the same as the Scottish average	Argyll and Bute figures – 1% of cases at the end of 2020/21 compared to 7% of cases at the end of 2019/20 Scottish Average for 2020/21 – 1%
3.	The percentage of households withdrawing their homeless application before decision is the same as the Scottish average	Argyll and Bute figures – 5% of cases at the end of 2020/21 compared to 3% of cases at the end of 2019/20 Scottish Average for 2020/21 – 5%

Outcomes for People who are Homeless

No.	Area of Engagement	Progress Made
1.	The percentage of people in Argyll and Bute assessed as unintentionally homeless which it provided with a Scottish Secure Tenancy is above the Scottish average	Argyll and Bute Figure for 2020/21 – 81% 2019/20 – 67% 2018/19 – 66% Scottish Figure for 2020/21 – 78% 81% of all unintentionally homeless cases secured settled accommodation in 2020/21 compared to 78% across Scotland
2.	There are a relatively high number of people waiting for more than one year for an outcome	Argyll and Bute Council continues to work with partners to implement a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) which will address this situation. The RRTP Annual Update was approved by Council and

		submitted to the Scottish Government in June 2021.
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The Impact of COVID 19 on the Homeless Service in Argyll and Bute

As reported in the Annual Assurance Statement 2020 the Council has continued to provide a service to households in need of accommodation during the COVID 19 pandemic. Regular contact continues to be maintained with existing households and housing support services continue to provide support to households to ensure that they are able to sustain their accommodation.

The number of temporary accommodation units have now returned to pre-Covid 19 levels. The temporary exceptions to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order are due to end on 30th September 2021. This has given the local authority time to be able to comply with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

As a Stock Transfer authority the Council continues to work effectively with the Registered Social Landlords to secure permanent housing for statutory homeless households.

I can confirm that the Council has sufficient assurance and scrutiny processes in place to support this statement.

Signed

Kirsty Flanagan

Executive Director

Signed

Councillor Robin Currie

Policy Lead for Economy and Rural Growth