

 **The Scottish Government**

Guidance on the Prevention of Homelessness

Matt Howarth

Homelessness Team

The Scottish Government

Maintaining Progress to 2012 : Priorities Agreed with COSLA

- Investing in the right areas
- Improving access to existing stock
- Improved joint working and the taking of corporate responsibility
- Preventing homelessness before it occurs

The Scottish Government

The Context

- The implementation of LA Homelessness strategies
- The Innovation Fund
- 2012 Support Project - March 2008
- LA secondee to Scottish Government
- Cross sector Advisory Group
- Guidance Issued in June 2009

The Scottish Government

Definition

- Following a competent and person-centred assessment of the risks of homelessness, the approaches and activities undertaken to secure the most effective, appropriate and sustainable housing outcome for the person concerned should be deemed as acceptable prevention activity.

The Scottish Government

Key Messages

- The prevention of homelessness does not happen in isolation from other issues
- Link to other policies e.g., Getting It Right For Every Child, Equally Well
- Alleviating homelessness is an expensive business both in monetary and societal terms

The Scottish Government

A Corporate Responsibility

- Homelessness prevention must be embraced by all parts of the local authority and, where relevant, their local partners including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Health Services.

The Scottish Government

Local Knowledge

- Pro-active and early intervention, based on a well understood knowledge of the local triggers of homelessness, will have more impact than traditional re-active responses to homelessness.

The Scottish Government

Working Practices

- Who can help – health boards, DATs, Community Mental Health teams, RSLs, voluntary sector
- What do you do and what don't you do that you could ?
- Data Sharing – innovative model
- Developing skills / joint training – CIH/ Shelter
- Service User Involvement – SHIEN

The Scottish Government

What It Is

- Early intervention – housing education, etc
- Pre-crisis intervention: advice services, mediation services, negotiation with landlords and targeted services at known risk points
- Preventing recurring homelessness : tenancy sustainment
- Flexible and innovative

The Scottish Government

What It Is Not

- Prevention of homelessness is not an alternative to addressing housing need
- It should allow people in housing need to understand what their options are
- Not an add on

The Scottish Government

Gate keeping ?

- Preventing or discouraging people from making homelessness applications as opposed to preventing homelessness from occurring.
- Local authority concerns – 2012 project
- JRF research
 - prevention activity in Scotland compared to rest of the UK

The Scottish Government

Housing Options Approach

- Housing Options interviews and Personal Housing Plans are likely to provide earlier opportunities to avert later housing crisis.
- Focus on providing sustainable housing outcomes based on person-centred assessment and planning measures

The Scottish Government

What Options ?

- Housing Options - If homeless or within 2 months, application completed alongside the options interview
- Housing Advice and Information - National Standards, Common Housing Registers etc
- Repossessions – Section 11, Homeowners Support Fund, Shelter Helpline
- Rent Arrears – early response and effective corporate response to income and debt

The Scottish Government

Sustaining Tenancies

- Having a strategy – allocations, section 5 referrals, PRS and rent deposit schemes
- Re-settlement – short term low level, longer term, specialised assistance and support , social networks/employability
- National Co-ordinators funded by Scottish Government
- Particular Groups at risk and risk factors

The Scottish Government

Measuring Impact

It is difficult to measure so what does success look like ?

- Would have presented as homeless achieving a positive outcome and therefore not presenting;
- Homelessness threatened whose cases are resolved before they actually become homeless
- Homeless households sustaining their tenancies following the outcome of their homeless presentations.

The Scottish Government

What now ? 2012 and Prevention

- SG/COSLA Steering Group – 7th October
- Modelling Seminars in November– inform SHIF
- Visits to authorities / LHS updates
- Joint Working and Corporate Responsibility
- Promote prevention as key to 2012
- Guidance - share best practice, on-line repository, avoid complacency

The Scottish Government

Questions for Discussion

- **Prevention Activities**
 - What have you found effective in your work ?
 - What are the main barriers to effective prevention ?
- **The Guidance**
 - Have you/will you use it and how ?
 - What else do we need to do to encourage its use and prevention activity more generally ?