



Scottish Federation of
Housing Associations

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Housing Associations

Shelter Conference: Four Years and Counting- Homelessness and Housing Associations

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Statutory Role of Housing Associations - Origins

- 1999 – Homelessness Task Force set up
- 2000 – Interim Report
- 2001 – Housing (Scotland) Act
- 2002 – Final Report
- 2003 – Homelessness (Scotland) Act

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

- Each LA had to assess levels of homelessness and prepare a homelessness strategy
- Applicants had to be given temporary accommodation while their case was investigated
- Priority need applicants were entitled to permanent accommodation
- Those with reasonable accommodation overseas could not apply as homeless
- 'Threatened with homelessness' period was extended to two months
- Offers of accommodation had to be reasonable and meet any special needs
- **HAs now had a duty to allocate to homeless people referred by councils (Section 5 referral system)**
- Basic rights for hostel dwellers were introduced



The Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003

- Priority need' to be extended in stages. By 2012 there will be no distinction between different priority groups
- People who make themselves 'intentionally homeless' will get temporary accommodation
- Ministers have the power to suspend 'local connection' rules to stop councils from simply referring homeless applicants to another area

HTF also made 59 final recommendations, 54 of which related to changing policy & practice.

Homelessness Rates

How many people are homeless in Scotland?

- In 2006/7, 59,096 households made homeless applications. This is a 2.2% reduction from 2005/6.
- In 2006/7, 41,123 households were accepted as homeless or potentially homeless, and 31,464 (77%) of those households, were in priority need.
- The number homeless or potentially homeless has increased by 26.5% since 1997/8.
- In 1997/8, 54% of homeless applicants were in priority need, rising to 77% in 2006/7.



Some Section 5 Statistics (2006/7)

- 2,700 homeless people housed
- This is 16.0% of all association allocations
- Around 6000 referrals, success rate around 50%
- 98% given permanent tenancies....

....however, this is only part of the picture....



‘Non-Statutory’ Contribution by Associations

.....there are other routes into association stock for homeless people.

- All association allocations policies must give reasonable preference to homeless (1987 Act)
- CHR commonalities exercise – homelessness given highest priority in almost every association policy
- SCORE – 42% of ALL allocations by associations going to homeless
- Housing associations not always good at measuring/publishing allocations outcomes



Section 5 Operational Difficulties

- Inconsistencies in interpreting protocols
- Multiple referral=high failure rate
- Section 5 vs Nominations Agreements
- CHR/CBL further complicates
- SG recognises that work needs to be done – commissioned review of Section 5



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Scottish Government Review of Section 5

Will look at:

- Pre-referrals
- Nominations Agreements
- Protocols
- Good Reason Guidance
- Awareness Raising
- Common Housing Registers & Choice Based Letting

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Wider Challenges Facing Associations

- RTB restrictions end in 2012!!
- Support & care solutions/sustainable tenancies
- Solutions need to be more than just a numbers game
- Avoid sectoral defensiveness
- Expand the role of associations
- Remain committed to aims of 2012

Are We Pulling Our Weight?

- What has been the housing association commitment to addressing homelessness ?
- How does that commitment manifest itself ?
- What role should housing associations have in preventing homelessness? Strategic? Practical?
- What more can or should associations do?
- What are the barriers?