



Housing Service

Prevention of Homelessness Policy

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1 Introduction	3
Philosophy and Principles of Homelessness Prevention	4
Homelessness Risk Factors	5
Indicators of homelessness risk - personal factors	5
Indicators of homelessness risk - housing instability.....	6
Indicators of homelessness risk - resilience/protective factors, these can mitigate against the risks	6
Legislative Links	6
Partnership Working	9
Housing Service – Protection Roles	10
2 Support Services.....	11
Housing Support Duty - Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.....	11
With YOU for YOU	12
Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)	12
3 Early Intervention.....	14
Housing Options	14
Personal Housing Plans	15
Housing Information and Advice.....	15
Social Rented Housing.....	15
Nominations	16
Lodging	17
Private Rented Sector.....	17
Section 11 Notifications	17
Private Sector Leasing Scheme.....	18
Rent Deposit Scheme	19
Overcrowded Accommodation	19
Rent Collection and Arrears Policy	20
Training Initiatives	20
Mediation	20
4 Pre-crisis Intervention.....	22
Debt Advice	22
Debt Arrangement Scheme (DAS)	22
Home Owners’ Support Fund	23
Mortgage Rights (Scotland) Act 2001.....	23
Social Work Advice and Assistance	24
Landlord Action and Court Orders	24
Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBO).....	25
Tied accommodation.....	26
5 Preventing Recurring Homelessness.....	27
Tenancy Sustainment	27

Focused Futures	28
Estate Management	28
Repairs, Alterations, Adaptations and Assistive Technology	28
Social Networks	28
Employment	29
Discretionary Housing Payments.....	29
6 Particular Groups - Children and Young People.....	31
Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leavers	32
Armed Forces.....	34
Hospital Discharge	34
Leaving Prison.....	35
Multiple and Complex Needs	36
Domestic Abuse.....	36
Addictions (discuss with SADP and CADSS)	37
Mental Health.....	38
Family Break-ups	39
Refugees and Asylum Seekers.....	39
7 Recording and Measuring Impact of Prevention Activities	42
Scottish Social Housing Charter.....	42

1 Introduction

This policy sets out how the SIC work to prevent homelessness and the recurrence of homelessness.

It takes into account relevant Legislation and Codes of Guidance, including the Prevention of Homelessness Guidance www.gov.scot/publications/prevention-homelessness-guidance/ issued by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in June 2009. This defines prevention activity as the approaches and activities undertaken to secure the most effective, appropriate and sustainable housing outcome for the person concerned, following a competent and person-centred assessment of the risks of homelessness.

Preventing homelessness is a key priority of the Scottish Government and Local Authorities. Scotland has now achieved the historic commitment that by 2012 every unintentionally homeless household is entitled to permanent accommodation. Alongside this, Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities to prevent and alleviate homelessness and duties to ensure homelessness advice and assistance is available to everybody in their area, including homeless prevention and debt advice.

There are a wide variety of reasons that can result in a household finding themselves in threat of homelessness. Some common examples include the loss of a job, a significant reduction in income, relationship breakdown, family breakdown, domestic abuse, physical or mental illness.

Statistics over a number of years show the majority of people lose their home in Shetland due to family and relationship breakdown. Shetland also appears to have a disproportionate number of young people threatened with homelessness when compared to other similar local authority areas.

Increasingly difficult financial circumstances present further challenges for households, and this can result in more people at risk of homelessness. The small number of affordable private rented housing in Shetland and increasing pressure on its availability also reduces the housing options open to people at risk of homelessness. Welfare Reform changes that are now underway will have further impacts on households with a low income.

Good quality housing advice is essential to the prevention of homelessness both in keeping people in their homes and helping them to find alternatives. The SIC provides a full range of housing advice to all residents in Shetland. Our aim is to provide housing solutions that are effective and tailored to meet individual need, and we recognise that effective and sustainable homelessness prevention activity can only take place when partners work in tandem effectively to tackle the causes.

Philosophy and Principles of Homelessness Prevention

Prevention of homelessness is important:

- To minimise the personal trauma associated with homelessness;
- To prevent personal and societal problems caused by homelessness;
- To benefit from the longer term gains derived from creating individual and community resilience; and
- Whilst prevention activities cost money, it will almost always be more cost-effective for local authorities and their partners to pro-actively intervene before crisis occurs, than to respond in an emergency.

From a 'business case' perspective, evidence suggests typical example of a homeless case can cost £15,000 to the public purse, with a more complex case costing in the region of £83,000. Costs derive from the services delivered to people in the form of advice, accommodation and support as well as costs associated with tenancy failure, void management and uncollected rent arrears. In the more complex cases, additional costs associated with health and criminal justice services have also been considered and validated on the basis of extensive evidence¹.

The SIC and its partners aim to prevent homelessness occurring or recurring whenever possible through:

- Early intervention – where those potentially at risk are identified and services provided to support the person and their environment before difficulties escalate beyond repair;

¹ Crisis (2003) How Many, How Much? Single homelessness and the question of numbers and cost, London: Crisis

- Pre-crisis intervention – which can take the form of advice services, mediation services, negotiation with landlords to avoid imminent loss of a home and targeted services at known risk points such as those leaving the looked after system, prison or the armed forces; and
- Preventing recurring homelessness – tenancy sustainment is seen as key to preventing recurring homelessness where there are problems that cannot be resolved by re-housing alone.

Prevention of homelessness is not an alternative to addressing housing need, and should not be viewed as an opportunity to deny people their rights under homeless legislation.

The Housing Service will provide information and advice free of charge to anyone who requests it. Independent housing advice is available free of charge from Shetland Islands Citizens Advice Bureau www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/shetland-islands-citizens-advice-bureau, from the Shetland Tenants Forum or from Shelter. Advocacy for homeless applicants is also available through Shetland Advocacy and we will signpost and refer applicants to these services.

Homelessness Risk Factors

A focus on the main features that create a homelessness risk enable a more concerted understanding of what can be done to tackle it, and why homelessness prevention is such a cross cutting issue, that calls for effective partnership and multi-disciplinary working.

The factors listed below are indicators of homelessness risk, especially where they are interrelated. This means that certain personal factors and/or the absence of protective factors could suggest increased vulnerability to homelessness, particularly where there is also housing instability. The lists are examples and not definitive lists of indicative risk factors.

Indicators of homelessness risk - personal factors

- Lack of self-care, coping or employability skills;
- History of institutional living, e.g. looked after children, care leavers, long term nursing or social care, periods in prison or service in the Armed Forces;
- Domestic or sexual abuse in the household or as a child;
- As a child, missing school, running away from home or residential care, moving house frequently and/or having a drug, solvent or alcohol problem;

- Relationship breakdowns including between partners and between parents and their children;
- Social isolation;
- Rape or sexual assault as a child or an adult;
- Learning disabilities, literacy and numeracy difficulties;
- Physical disabilities;
- Substance misuse issues;
- Physical or mental health problems - especially if health deteriorating;
- Death or incapacity of a carer;
- Bereavement;
- History of anti-social or offending behaviour;
- Debt issues; and
- Household with no rights to public assistance losing funding or employment.

Indicators of homelessness risk - housing instability

- Previous homelessness or part of a homeless family as a child;
- Rent or mortgage arrears;
- Impending eviction or repossession action;
- Tenure insecurity; staying care of; tied tenancy with prospect of unemployment, e.g. Armed Services accommodation;
- Living in accommodation unsuitable for adapting to meet particular needs;
- History of/and current neighbour complaints; and
- Experiencing harassment/feeling unsafe in the area they live.

Indicators of homelessness risk - resilience/protective factors, these can mitigate against the risks

- Supportive friends or family;
- Strong social networks;
- Appropriate support services;
- House owned outright or positive equity;
- Savings or access to financial help;
- Competent advice and advocacy;
- In stable employment or with employable skills;
- Personal empowerment;
- Self-esteem and confidence; and
- Positive attitudes.

Legislative Links

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to prevent and alleviate homelessness. Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended by the 2001

and 2003 Acts) sets out the powers and duties of local authorities in dealing with applications from people seeking help on the grounds that they are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Section 37(1) requires local authorities to have regard to Guidance issued by Scottish Ministers in the exercise of their homelessness functions. This addition to the Code of Guidance www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366 (the Code) provides such guidance. The Code should be used as a supporting document for local authority staff in carrying out relevant activities and discharging this responsibility, and should be seen as a repository of guidance and best practice to cover different scenarios.

In many respects the duty to prevent homelessness following the removal of priority need in 2012 has become more important than ever. This guidance, which has been agreed between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and issued jointly, supplements Chapter 2 - Prevention of Homelessness within the Code of Guidance on Homelessness www.gov.scot/publications/code-guidance-homelessness/pages/0/. The additional guidance was developed within a changing context in national policy direction and is in accordance with the revised relationship between central and local government established as a consequence of the Single Outcome Agreement and Concordat.

The Housing Service provides information in line with the Homeless Persons Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Regulations 2002 www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2002/414/made and meets the standards set out in the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers www.slac.org.uk/advice-agencies/scottish-national-standards-for-information-and-advice-partners/.

Preventing and alleviating homelessness is a corporate responsibility and this addition to the Code is intended for the local authority as a corporate body; particularly in terms of its focus on early and integrated intervention. The Code is also relevant for Community Planning Partners, other local landlords including Registered Social Landlords, elected council members and a range of others involved in tackling homelessness in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

The Homelessness Prevention Advisory Group contributed to the development of this guidance. The Group, which met four times from June 2008, has adopted the following definition of homelessness prevention:

*“For the purposes of this guidance and central to our definition of homelessness prevention, we consider that; 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”.*

To reinforce and underpin the importance of the information contained within the guidance the Group agreed that the following key messages summed up the approach necessary for success:

- “The prevention of homelessness does not happen in isolation from other issues. An exclusive focus on homelessness may not yield the most efficient results; rather a holistic or systemic approach is needed.”
- Alleviating homelessness is an expensive business both in monetary and societal terms; the principles of “spending to save” are proven in respect of homelessness prevention.
- Homelessness prevention is a corporate responsibility and must be embraced by all parts of the local authority and, where relevant, their local partners including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Health Services.
- Prevention in this context is not an alternative to increasing housing supply. Investing in housing supply is a key joint priority for the Scottish Government and COSLA. However, even if we had surplus housing in every sector there would still be a need for an integrated prevention approach to counter the corrosive and damaging effects that homelessness can have on children, adults and communities.
- Homelessness prevention activity complements work already underway to improve services for children and families and others with particular needs

through introduction of the Early Years Framework, Getting it Right for Every Child, the Anti-Poverty Framework and Equally Well, the report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities.

- Effective and sustainable homelessness prevention activity will only take place when partners work in tandem to tackle the causes.
- 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.
- Housing Options interviews and Personal Housing Plans are likely to provide earlier opportunities to avert later housing crisis.
- Homelessness prevention activity should focus on providing sustainable housing outcomes based on person-centred assessment and planning measures.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a statutory requirement on local authorities to prepare strategies for preventing and alleviating homelessness. The Local Housing Strategy is the main strategic document incorporating housing, homelessness and support issues. Developing a single strategy framework assists in rationalising the reporting requirements of local government through the Concordat, however the statutory duty on local authorities under the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act to address these areas remains.

Partnership Working

The SIC recognises that preventing homelessness is a corporate responsibility and is committed to ensuring knowledge of homelessness risk factors and prevention activity is embedded across the whole organisation, including shared assessments such as With YOU for YOU and [GIRFEC](#).

Raising awareness of risk factors and the resilience / protective factors can make a real and significant difference to homelessness, and is particularly important in relation to health, education and social work services – they are often best placed to note and respond to risks before an issue escalates to the crisis of homelessness.

The SIC recognises that homeless prevention activity is particularly important in the following policy areas:

- Equalities;
- Housing/Council Tax Benefit administration, Welfare Benefits and Financial Inclusion;
- Education and Youth work;
- Child and Adult protection;
- Community Justice, Safety and Domestic Abuse;
- Health Improvement;
- Employability;
- Community Engagement activity.

The SIC recognises that Community Planning Partners with an interest in providing housing and / or promoting social equality (such as Hjalmland Housing Association, advice agencies, health boards and employability agencies) all provide services that can also help to prevent homelessness.

Housing Service – Protection Roles

Housing staff adhere to the Housing Service – Protection Roles staff guidance which provides details about initial actions relating to Child Protection; Adult Support and Protection; Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). The guidance provides information on the processes involved and who to contact for staff with concerns about individuals covered by these policies and procedures.

2 Support Services

Housing Support Duty - Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

From June 2013, legal duties are placed on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of those homeless applicants who are entitled to permanent rehousing and ensure that housing support services are provided. These services can be provided by agencies involved in Housing Support, and in Shetland Housing Support is provided by SIC Housing and a wide range of partner agencies.

In terms of preventing homelessness, Housing Support services can assist at an early stage in supporting vulnerable people at risk of homelessness as well as assisting and educating those who may have difficulties maintaining their accommodation in the longer term.

The Housing Support services provided in Shetland can actively prevent homelessness through early intervention, pre-crisis support and tenancy sustainment activities. Housing Support is an essential service in assisting the SIC to meet its prevention of homelessness targets.

Housing support can be:

- Personal support e.g. help with getting into further education/employment, help with alcohol or drugs awareness, help to reduce offending or help with relationships;
- Help to keep accommodation secure e.g. gate keeping or other issues;
- Help to keep accommodation safe;
- Advice on using domestic equipment & appliances;
- Help to arrange minor repairs to equipment;
- Training in maintaining the accommodation and surroundings;
- Assistance to engage with individuals;
- Help with arranging adaptations to cope with disabilities;
- Advice or assistance with personal budgeting and dealing with debts;
- Advice or assistance with other people and neighbours;
- Assistance with benefit claims;
- Advice or assistance with resettlement into future accommodation;
- Advice or assistance in helping to move;
- Assistance with shopping & running errands.

Housing Support is about building skills and confidence to help people develop and enable them to manage for themselves as much as possible. This might mean doing tasks with people for a short period of time until they are confident and can cope without support. It is recognised that whilst many users will benefit from focused or time-limited work, some users of the service may require longer-term support.

With YOU for YOU

With YOU for YOU is the SIC's process of ensuring anyone over the age of 16 within Shetland can access the support or services they require. With YOU for YOU is an approach that focuses on the individual's goals and involves everyone working together to achieve the best possible outcome for the individual.

We will seek to build capacity with partners by ensuring that this holistic assessment recognises the indicators that can lead to homelessness and by promoting early intervention to prevent homelessness.

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

[GIRFEC](#) is an approach that aims to improve outcomes for all children. It puts the wellbeing of children and young people at the centre. A common coordinated framework for assessment, planning and action across all agencies is used to address needs and ensure young people get the right help at the right time.

The homelessness risk factors highlight some significant risk factors that can be identified early and certainly before they reach 16 years of age. In particular, evidence of children 'missing school', 'running away' and experiencing childhood domestic and sexual abuse have been shown to lead directly to homelessness either as a young person or adult. There are opportunities for breaking the cycle of homelessness by intervening much earlier to prevent it from ever occurring. We will raise awareness of the homelessness risk factors with partner agencies and build capacity through training, to ensure young people at risk of homelessness are identified and support provided to reduce the risk.

Getting It Right for Every Child aims to improve outcomes for all children and young people. GIRFEC recognises that children have the right to be consulted about decisions that affect them, and promotes a shared approach that:

- Builds solutions with and around children and families;
- Enables children to get the help they need when they need it;
- Supports a positive shift in culture, systems and practice;
- Involves working together to make things better.

3 Early Intervention

The key principles of early intervention are:

- To reduce inequalities;
- To identify those at risk of not achieving their potential and take action to prevent that risk materialising;
- To make sustained and effective interventions in cases where these risks have materialised;
- To build the capacity of individuals, families and communities to maximise their life chances, making use of high quality, accessible public services as required.

Housing Options

A Housing Options approach can make a valuable contribution to the prevention of homelessness. An online [Housing Options Guide](#) is available to assist applicants to access the range of potential housing options available to them in Shetland. The Housing Service publicise the availability of advice and assistance on housing options:

- in letters to applicants;
- through regular adverts in the Shetland Times;
- through a link on the Shetland News website;
- through posters displayed in a wide range of local shops, health centres and community halls throughout Shetland;
- through leaflets freely available in different locations;
- Advert in the Lerwick/Scalloway map
- Online.

Anyone in housing need is encouraged to approach the Housing Service early, when their housing issue may be less serious, easier to address and has a greater chance of achieving a settled outcome that assists the household and also prevents homelessness:

Publicity material is also available in a range of different languages and formats, and language interpretation services are available on request.

Personal Housing Plans

We carry out housing options interviews to actively assist applicants understand the range of potential housing options available to them in Shetland, based on a full assessment of their specific and personal circumstances.

Housing option interviews are targeted towards higher risk groups identified using the homeless risk factors, but can be made available through referrals or by invitation following an assessment of the risk of homelessness.

After the interview, personal housing and prevention of homelessness plans are developed to suit the circumstances of the household. These plans provide appropriate advice and a range of actions that the household can pursue, all of which are based on a realistic assessment of housing need.

Any other care or support needs identified as part of the housing options interview will trigger the shared holistic assessment With YOU for YOU or [GIRFEC](#).

Housing Information and Advice

When applicants visit the Housing Service, often it is difficult to encourage them to see advice as a positive outcome if they are looking for a home or instant resolution to their housing situation.

It is important to address and manage these expectations and be clear there are broader benefits from receiving advice on housing options and discuss effective ways to take action to resolve a housing problem.

We will provide advice, which is:

- person centred and holistic;
- private and confidential;
- based on a genuine attempt to diagnose the problem;
- accurate;
- provides options;
- provides for referral;
- provides follow-up action;
- provides redress to service users.

Social Rented Housing

Homelessness and housing crisis can often be avoided when people are encouraged to apply to waiting lists and given a clear understanding of the policy rules used to manage waiting lists.

The Council operates a Common Housing Register with Hjaltland Housing Association. A single application form is completed to access either or both waiting lists.

Anyone aged 16 or over can apply for housing. We operate a priority allocation system based on an assessment of housing need. The Council gives reasonable preference to applicants who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, currently living in overcrowded or unsatisfactory conditions, in a house which does not meet the Tolerable Standard or are a large family.

To maximise choice, applicants can choose to apply for Council housing in up to six areas or groupings of areas within Shetland. They can also indicate areas, streets or types of housing which they would not be willing to accept.

Hjaltland Housing Association operates a choice based letting's policy, and applicants can register an interest in any advertised vacancy.

We encourage existing tenants of both landlords to resolve housing need through mutual exchanges, and the Council is part of Home Swapper. In addition, the Council has a separate allocation quota for transfer applicants that include Hjaltland Housing Association tenants. The aim is that this helps to create moves between all of Shetland's social rented housing.

Nominations

The Council and Hjaltland Housing Association have a nomination agreement where the Council can nominate applicants from its own waiting list to 50% of Hjaltland's vacancies each year. Nomination quotas and the agreement are reviewed annually.

Lodging

Lodging in someone else's home is recognised as a positive and affordable housing option for some people. For home owners and tenants, taking in a lodger can help maximise income and spread the cost of housing related expenses. Tenants should request permission from their Landlord to take in a lodger, which will not be unreasonably refused. Tenants should also be aware that any lodger living with them can have an effect on any benefits they claim. We advise tenants to discuss the implications with the Finance Service before making a formal request.

Private Rented Sector

Good quality and affordable private rented housing plays a vital role in preventing homelessness. We will work with private landlords to raise standards by providing advice and information on their rights and responsibilities including the [Landlord Registration Scheme](#), mandatory [licensing of houses in multiple occupation](#) and the [Repairing Standard](#). We will also be proactive in negotiating with landlords over the terms and conditions of leases.

We will promote the voluntary [Landlord Accreditation Scotland Scheme](#), which aims to further improve standards by promoting best practice, ensuring that accredited landlords comply with the Scottish Core Standards for Accredited Landlords and providing access to support, information and landlord training in all aspects of managing residential property in Scotland.

We offer information on our website for private landlords, and will provide further information and signposting where needed.

Section 11 Notifications

All landlords and creditors are required to notify the local authority if they intend to take action to evict a tenant.

On receipt of a section 11 notification we will contact the tenant or occupier to offer a housing options interview. As part of the housing options interview, we will consider whether homelessness can be prevented and provide support or make referrals to other agencies as appropriate. As a minimum, if this offer is refused, we will provide

housing advice and assistance, information on their statutory rights in relation to homelessness and the housing options available to them.

Private Sector Leasing Scheme

The Council may lease vacant and unfurnished properties in the private rented sector to help meet housing need, depending on available resources. Where we do this, we will provide a full property and tenancy management service at no cost to the landlord. Properties purchased specifically for private sector leasing will not be considered and if a tenant was evicted in order for a property to be considered for private sector leasing, the property will be rejected.

We would provide landlords with a guaranteed rental income and rent paid even if the property is unoccupied. Rents will be paid direct to the landlord either monthly or quarterly in advance for the duration of the lease.

Because we would be seeking to secure properties on a longer-term basis with no management cost to the Landlord, we would be seeking to attain properties at a value below the market rate. We would offer landlords flexible lease periods of 3, 4 or 5 years with an annual rent increase for landlords who provide properties on a 5 year lease.

We will guarantee vacant possession of the property at the end of the lease, and will return the property in as good a condition as it was received.

During the tenancy, we will carry out minor repairs as required, but the landlord would retain responsibility for any repairs that may be required to the structure and fabric of the building, the central heating / hot water system, plumbing and electrical wiring. We will undertake to notify the landlord as soon as possible of any repairs that fall into these categories.

Rent Deposit Scheme

The Council will consider applications to offer a rent deposit guarantee to households who can afford a rent in the private rented sector, but are prevented from accessing this because they cannot fund the tenancy deposit. The scheme is open to households who:

- are homeless or threatened with homelessness (this includes those found to be homeless intentionally); or
- are at risk of homelessness; and
- have a local connection with Shetland (as defined in homeless legislation); and
- are on a low income with little or no savings and/or in receipt of benefits; and
- have no outstanding housing related debts to the council (if an applicant is in debt to the council but has had a payment plan in place for 3 months, which they have maintained and which will not be affected by increased debt they may still be accepted onto the scheme).

In all cases we will undertake a financial assessment of the applicant/s. Where it is clear the applicant/s cannot financially access the private rented sector independently, the Council may provide a written deposit guarantee to the Landlord that they will cover the deposit on the tenant/s behalf.

A deposit guarantee will only be paid in relation to properties located within Shetland which are suitable to the applicant/s needs.

Apart from providing the deposit guarantee, the Council has no further responsibility in the tenancy - the contract remains between landlord and tenant. We can provide housing advice and support to the tenant or landlord to help sustain the tenancy if required.

Overcrowded Accommodation

We will assess whether accommodation which is statutorily overcrowded and a danger to health can be altered to relieve overcrowding, and can provide recommendations on options. In private housing we will signpost the owner to advice available on loans/grants that may be an option through the [One Stop Shop](#).

SIC tenants who are overcrowded will be considered for a transfer in line with the [Allocation Policy](#).

Rent Collection and Arrears Policy

The Council recognises the importance of early intervention in managing rent arrears. We use eviction as a last resort as we recognise the devastating consequences that the resulting homelessness can have.

We aim to resolve debt issues with SIC tenants at an early stage using a range of joint measures with SIC Finance and Legal Services. This involves letters, face to face meetings and case conferences to offer all feasible support to tenants who need it to manage debt. We also refer tenants to independent advice services for financial and debt advice.

Training Initiatives

To raise awareness of homelessness and the responsibilities of the local authority in preventing and alleviating homelessness, we run awareness raising sessions open to a wide range of professionals who often support those at risk of homelessness.

These will look at:

- Risk Factors for Homelessness;
- Local Features of Homelessness;
- Homeless Assistance – what applicants are entitled to;
- Early Intervention Measures – what we can do to prevent homelessness;
- The Range of Housing Options in Shetland

In addition we will ensure information on homelessness in Shetland is available on the internet and in leaflets distributed throughout Shetland. This information is checked and updated regularly.

Mediation

One of the most common homelessness reasons in Shetland is disputes between families/friends that are no longer willing or able to accommodate someone who has been living with them. In these circumstances, mediation is a tried and tested way of helping people consider the nature of the situation they are in, and enables them to make realistic choices about future housing circumstances.

Mediation services are particularly appropriate for:

- Young people who have disagreements / disputes with parents or friends
- People going through a relationship breakdown
- People involved in neighbourhood disputes
- People who need emotional or practical support

Where homelessness can be prevented through mediation and all parties concerned agree to participate in the process, we will make a referral to Mediation as an option to prevent homelessness.

4 Pre-crisis Intervention

Pre-crisis intervention is action we can take at the stage just before homelessness occurs.

Although there are specific pressures working with households in the period just before homelessness, we can in some cases still prevent homelessness from occurring. Pre-crisis intervention can take the form of advice services, mediation services, negotiation with landlords to avoid imminent loss of a home and targeted services at known risk points such as those leaving the looked after system, prison or the armed forces.

Debt Advice

Shetland Islands Citizen Advice Bureau www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/shetland-islands-citizens-advice-bureau (SICAB) provides advice and information on a wide range of topics. They can provide independent advice on managing rent arrears, mortgage arrears and other debts. We will refer individuals to SICAB who are in debt or who are struggling to manage their finances, and offer to support them to attend the appointment if they wish.

Debt Arrangement Scheme (DAS)

The [Debt Arrangement Scheme](http://www.dacscotland.co.uk/landing/desktop/das/?utm_source=Bing&utm_medium=cpc) (DAS) www.dacscotland.co.uk/landing/desktop/das/?utm_source=Bing&utm_medium=cpc is a debt management tool introduced by the Scottish Government. This service is often free, but some money advisers may charge for their services.

DAS can offer help to an individual that can assist them to address their debts in a manageable way. This can help prevent homelessness particularly in cases where unmanaged debt can put the household at risk of losing their home.

Home Owners' Support Fund

The Scottish Government operates two schemes to assist homeowners having difficulty paying any loans that are secured against their property.

Anyone considering finding out more about the Home Owners' Support Fund is advised to seek independent financial advice firstly. There are a range of criteria, and an information booklet, on the Scottish Government's website at

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/privateowners/Repossession/hosf-1.

Mortgage Rights (Scotland) Act 2001

The Mortgage Rights (Scotland) Act 2001

www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2001/11/contents came into force on 3 December 2001.

The Act provides, among other things, powers that allow the courts to consider the debtor's circumstances where a court order for repossession has been applied for. The court can decide, based on a household(s) circumstances, whether an order should be made delaying the repossession to give the debtor time to find alternative accommodation or, where possible, to get their mortgage back on track.

This Act may assist in opening discussions between the lender and the mortgage holder to seek to prevent homelessness. Further information is available from the Scottish Government.

Social Work Advice and Assistance

In addition to a general duty to promote social welfare in making advice, guidance and assistance available, social work departments have an emergency power under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to assist persons in need in certain circumstances.

Section 12 enables local authorities to give cash to, or in respect of, any person aged at least 18 years who is in need within the meaning of the Act, and requiring assistance in exceptional circumstances constituting an emergency, and where to do so would be more cost effective than giving assistance in another form. Local authorities should have regard to other means of assistance available to the person in need, and to whether any assistance given should be repaid.

Landlord Action and Court Orders

Where an applicant has applied for housing because they are being evicted from their current accommodation, we will make every effort to negotiate with the landlord to try and prevent the eviction taking place.

If the landlord does not have the right to evict, we will advise the tenant of their rights and refer to/make an appointment with SICAB www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/shetland-islands-citizens-advice-bureau for further support. We will also contact the landlord to advise them of their responsibilities, and advise them to seek their own legal advice.

If the landlord has the right to end the tenancy but has not followed the correct procedure we will advise the tenant of their rights and refer to/make an appointment with SICAB www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/shetland-islands-citizens-advice-bureau. We will also contact the landlord to advise them of their responsibilities. This may not prevent the tenancy being ended but may give the applicant more time to find alternative housing.

If the landlord has the right to end the tenancy and has followed the correct procedure, we will advise the tenant of this. We will also advise them of their rights in relation to homeless legislation and that we intend to contact the landlord to determine if there are any options to negotiate the continuation of the tenancy.

We will refer applicants to the Housing Support Service to assess any housing support needs, advocacy or other services to assist the applicant to remain in their current accommodation. We will contact Social Work if there are children under 16 in the household re Children (Scotland) Act. And, in cases with anti social behaviour consult the antisocial behaviour procedures which aim to prevent eviction due to antisocial behaviour, by working with local landlords and providing advice in relation to landlord / tenant rights and responsibilities.

Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBO)

If a tenant or someone in their household has an ASBO, their tenancy can be changed from a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) to a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST). New tenants can also be offered SSSTs if they or members of their household have an ASBO or if they have been evicted from previous accommodation anywhere in the UK within the past 3 years for antisocial behaviour or illegal activity associated with their home.

The landlord must provide support to enable the tenants to sustain the tenancy and convert to a full SST. This support might include, for example, alcohol / debt / family counselling, housing or social work support. The support must be linked to the stated objectives in granting a SSST.

The SSST will convert automatically to a full SST after 12 months if there has been no repetition of antisocial conduct. If there has been antisocial behaviour during the SSST or if the terms of the ASBO have been broken, the tenancy can be ended, leading to eviction of the tenant and their household.

Should the tenant refuse support, it is for the landlord to decide whether it wishes to offer the SSST on the basis that the behaviour will improve without support or whether it wishes to make acceptance of support a condition of the SSST offer.

The Council will use SSSTs to prevent eviction in the first instance and give the tenant time to sort out problems without immediate fear of eviction.

Tied accommodation

The loss of tied accommodation that is provided as part of employment can result in homelessness especially if little notice is given to the employee. If the employer does not have the right to end the tenancy for whatever reason e.g. did not have right to terminate employment, we will advise the tenant of their rights and refer to SICAB www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/shetland-islands-citizens-advice-bureau for further support.

If the employer does have the right to end the tenancy but has not followed the correct procedure we will advise the tenant of their rights and advise the employer of their responsibilities and refer both to SICAB www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/shetland-islands-citizens-advice-bureau. This may not prevent the tenancy being ended but may give the applicant sufficient time to find their own alternative housing.

If the employer does have the right to end the tenancy and has followed the correct procedure we will advise the tenant accordingly, and give them information on their rights in relation to homeless legislation. We would also make it clear that we would be making contact with the landlord and ask if there are any options to negotiate the continuation of the tenancy e.g. is the accommodation available as a non-tied let.

5 Preventing Recurring Homelessness

In considering resettlement, we will bear in mind the key principles set out by the Homelessness Task Force that:

- Solutions to homelessness should be based on a thorough assessment of the household's needs, including support needs. The specific needs of families with children should not be overlooked;
- The objective should always be to find sustainable solutions, which enable homeless people to be reintegrated back into the community, and which are likely to last in the longer term;
- Joint working is crucial in addressing complex or multiple needs.

We routinely offer short term, low level support to newly housed homeless applicants to assist with resettlement, including a settling in visit and assistance through the Housing Support Service.

If a risk of recurring homelessness is identified, we will carry out routine home visits to assess the individual's ongoing ability to cope and we will maintain an oversight of how the rent account and related financial affairs are being managed.

At the first sign of difficulties, we will refer the tenant to the Housing Support Service for assessment.

Tenancy Sustainment

All householders, but particularly young people, can struggle to maintain their tenancies and these struggles can lead to crisis and put households at real risk of homelessness if they are not dealt with.

We use a range of resources to work with individuals who face challenges sustaining their tenancy, and this work is specifically structured to the needs of the individual households.

We also work with groups to raise awareness of tenancy sustainment and the skills needed to successfully manage a tenancy. The group work involves Housing Support Workers and Housing Officers who, in consultation with other agencies and the Schools Service, work together to promote the skills required to maintain a successful tenancy.

This also provides an opportunity to promote an understanding of homelessness locally and an awareness of the housing options available.

Focused Futures

Focused Futures opened in 2009 and was developed with Hjaltland Housing Association, Careers Scotland, Moving On Employment Project, Shetland College, Bridges and Life Skills.

It is based on the Foyer model and works with 16-25 year olds who want to get into a job, education or training. The project can provide shared/supported accommodation and housing support for young people who are homeless/leaving care and looking for support to move in to employment, training, college or volunteering opportunities.

Housing staff based on site for some of the time can provide emotional and practical support to tenants.

Estate Management

We build the capacity of all housing staff so that they are better able to identify tenants at risk of homelessness. For example, a DLO operative may be concerned that a tenant is not coping with their tenancy because of the condition of their property or because they spend little time in their home. If a member of staff is concerned that a tenant may be at risk of homelessness, a referral will be made to the Duty Housing Officer for follow up action.

Repairs, Alterations, Adaptations and Assistive Technology

We will work closely with the Housing Repairs staff and the One Stop Shop to ensure repairs, alterations and adaptations are installed as quickly as possible to assist in preventing avoidable homelessness.

Social Networks

There is overwhelming evidence demonstrating that isolation and loneliness are major reasons for the failure of a tenancy following homelessness. Many people who have experienced homelessness will have lost confidence or not feel able to maintain positive social networks with families, friends or work colleagues.

Where information gathered as part of the homeless assessment process shows households do not have strong positive social networks, we will make a referral to the Shetland Befriending Service www.shetland-communities.org.uk/subsites/shetland-befriending or the Housing Support Service who can provide support to build or rebuild social bonds.

Employment

For many people who are resettling following homelessness, getting or keeping a job is an important factor in determining whether or not accommodation can be sustained. We will consider whether any members of the household require assistance to maintain or find employment. For homeless people who have complex needs, or who have been homeless or roofless for a significant length of time, pre-vocational support will be essential.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit

The [Welfare Reform Act 2012](#) makes significant changes to Housing Benefit entitlement from April 2013. Universal Credit, also introduced in 2013, will make further changes to how support for housing costs will be paid to claimants in coming years.

We will make information available to our tenants and applicants to enable them to make informed choices about their housing circumstances. We will also review our policies to take account of these changes as information on entitlement is clarified.

Further information on applying for [Housing Benefit](#) is available from the SIC Finance Service who can be contacted on 01595 744682.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments are short-term payments awarded to people who need additional help paying their rent, council tax, or both. They must already

receive Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction to qualify. Further information is available by contacting the SIC Finance Service on 01595 744682.

6 Particular Groups - Children and Young People

We aim to work jointly with partners to prevent homelessness for families with children. We recognise that children's local surroundings have a stronger influence on their quality of life due to their limited mobility in comparison to adults. Maintaining friendships and continuing attendance at local activities is more difficult for children than for adults if they have to move to a different area, so action to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place can have a particularly positive benefit for the household as a whole.

Prevention of homelessness is also beneficial in terms of remaining in the same school, with the same GP, health care and other local services and contact with supportive family and friends.²

We offer a housing options interview as a matter of priority to any family at risk of homelessness, and develop an effective personal housing and prevention of homelessness plan which will be frequently reviewed.

We also offer housing support as required and work with the family to assist them in taking any actions that are identified within the personal housing plan.

In a relationship breakdown between family members where there is potential homelessness of a 16 -21 year old, we will arrange to visit the family home to discuss the circumstances with the young person and their parents or carers.

We will refer, where appropriate, young people aged 16-17 to the Homeless Prevention Family Mediation Service. This is a confidential and impartial service that offers mediation to the young person and their family or carers.

The Homeless Prevention Family Mediation Service aims to:

- Help young people and their families communicate better with one another;
- Improve the relationship(s) between the young person and the people they live with (e.g. parent, carer, partner, relative or friend);
- Provide the opportunity to explore all the young person's housing options e.g. remaining in or returning to current home/situation, being supported to move into alternative accommodation or presenting as homeless to the local authority;

² Scottish Government Guidance on Meeting the Best Interest of Children Facing Homelessness

- Reach a decision that is acceptable to everyone involved about the future, where the young person lives and the relationships they have with family and friends.

This could include:

- the young person returning home or remaining at home;
- the young person returning home for a short/fixed period before moving elsewhere;
- the young person remaining outside the home, living with other family or friends;
- the young person moving to alternative accommodation, with the family agreeing to support the young person to live independently.

Where allegations of abuse are involved, we will not carry out home visits and mediation will not be offered. The Child Protection Procedures www.safershetland.com/child-protection will be referred to if there are any concerns about the welfare or safety of children - either the young person presenting as homeless, or any children remaining in the household. In addition, we will also consider whether a GIRFEC is required in relation to any children remaining in the household.

Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leavers

Local authorities have particular responsibilities for all looked after children, young people and care leavers. This covers those looked after at home and those looked after away from home.

The guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent These Are Our Bairns www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/08/29115839/0 states that Scotland's Looked After children and young people will live somewhere:

- they feel safe and nurtured;
- a place they can call home;
- a place free from abuse and harm;
- a place where they feel supported and confident in expressing their views to develop into well-rounded, successful and responsible adults.

The transition into independent living is a key milestone for any young person. For young people leaving care, it is perhaps the most significant transition and securing

accommodation that is appropriate for their needs will impact significantly on their success.

The Joint Protocol for Care Leavers outlines pathway plans and young person's transition from care to independence, avoiding homelessness where possible. We will help provide advice and information to Looked After children and young people in care to prepare them for their own tenancy. We will also help raise awareness amongst young people of their responsibilities in the community within which they live and the potential consequences of their actions within that community.

We will ensure that any accommodation offered meets health or disability needs and any needs in respect of education, training or employment. We will also take into account the need to maintain positive friendships and relationships.

We will have the same expectations of tenancy success as for all other tenants, but we will be mindful of signals that could indicate a possible tenancy failure, and will review support plans early to meet support needs that emerge during the course of a tenancy.

The Hub Project was developed as a partnership between Hjaltsland Housing Association, SIC Housing & Children's Services, Moving On Employment Project, Bridges, Careers Scotland, CADSS, Adult Learning, Shetland College, NHS Shetland and the Mediation Service. It opened in 2012 when 3 year Big Lottery funding was secured to provide a service for vulnerable young people who have experienced the care system or homelessness. It is aimed at providing them with the skills and confidence to maintain a tenancy and reduce the risk of future homelessness.

The project provides a shared flat for two young people with a sleep-in facility for staff as well as 2 flats that accommodate a further 2 young people. The shared flat provides a skills base where other young people leaving or preparing to leave care can access activities such as cooking skills, budgeting, benefits advice, practical household activities, employment skills & development of social skills such as managing differences and conflict.

Support for those who are part of the project is available for as long as it is needed or requested by the young person. All the young people have access to 24 hour support.

Armed Forces

Armed Forces personnel can be vulnerable to homelessness at the point of discharge from the Services but also at later points as a consequence of poor health or disability. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) issues a Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Living Accommodation in the case of all service personnel approaching their date of discharge from the Services. The certificate is usually issued 6 months before discharge.

We will not insist upon a court order for possession, or a Certificate of Cessation to establish that entitlement to occupy has ended. Where official documentation is provided, we will take advantage of the six-month period of notice of discharge to ensure that service personnel receive timely and comprehensive advice of the housing options available to them when they leave the Armed Forces.

We will refer to the circular 'Housing for People Leaving the Armed Forces' www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/16342/management/socialhousingaccess/allocations/Guide/decidingtoallocate/armedforces which provides guidance on meeting the needs of ex-Service personnel and their families and also provides information about other housing options and support.

Hospital Discharge

The Council will establish close links between the Housing Service, Gilbert Bain Hospital, primary care and community health services, and will provide these agencies with a named point of contact in Housing.

We are committed to working in partnership with lead professionals to develop discharge protocols, which include provision for the involvement of all relevant agencies in pre-discharge assessment and the formulation of through-care and after-care plans.

Pre-discharge discussions are vital particularly where individuals may be reluctant to reveal housing difficulties for fear these could delay their discharge.

Advance planning will be required to ensure accommodation is available, in some cases planning will be required to take place several years in advance where new accommodation has to be provided, particularly specialist accommodation.

Even where accommodation is already available, we will check to make sure that it is still suitable (for example for a person who has become physically disabled) or that support services are in place (for example for a discharged psychiatric patient).

In some cases, we will check the availability of move-on accommodation which the discharged person may need at a later date because of likely changes in his or her condition after discharge; and always where discharge accommodation is only available for a limited period.

The With You For You should provide for the position to be reassessed if a tenancy is in danger of not being sustained (particularly if this is due to part of the care package not being delivered).

Leaving Prison

Many prisoners do not have secure accommodation available on their release making it difficult for them to integrate successfully into the community. This insecurity increases the risks of both homelessness and re-offending.

We will work jointly with prisons and social work to try and prevent people from becoming homeless on release from prison. This will involve acting as soon as we are aware a prisoner is to be released, assisting with completing appropriate application forms and providing advice on realistic housing options.

Council tenants who may be going to receive a custodial sentence of their housing options before their court date where this is possible.

If a sentence is for less than 13 weeks, tenants will be able to retain their tenancy and leave the house unoccupied for this period. They may be entitled to housing benefit and should be provided with advice on making a claim and securing their property for this period. If their sentence is for a period longer than 13 weeks, we will make a decision in consultation with the Finance Service. This decision will be based on the risk of the tenant getting into debt and whether this is a feasible option for the tenant.

If the tenant is on remand they may be entitled to up to 52 weeks of housing benefit. The tenant's housing options should be discussed with them as they are entitled to request to sub-let their property for this period.

If their sentence is for significantly more than 13 weeks but less than one year, they will have the option to sub-let their council tenancy for this period.

If their sentence is for more than one year, they will have the option to assign their tenancy to someone else in the house, or to terminate their tenancy and to reapply for housing.

Where the tenant receives a custodial sentence and terminates their tenancy, efforts should be made to secure an equivalent house on their release rather than the person presenting as homeless. In these situations, 'special case' status can be considered for the applicant in order to assist with meeting this aim.

If the tenant is unable to store their belongings for the duration of their sentence, the Council can arrange storage for them. The cost of this will be recharged to the person, but not until they have been permanently re-housed after their release from prison.

Multiple and Complex Needs

The term 'multiple and complex needs' has various definitions. For the purposes of this policy, it applies to people who are vulnerable to homelessness for a range of reasons that may include:

- mental ill health;
- substance misuse issues;
- challenging behaviours;
- marginal, high risk and hard to reach; and
- other combinations of disadvantage e.g. age and transitions – young and older people, or living in poverty, poor housing, poor environments.

Domestic Abuse

The Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership is committed to tackling both the cause and effect of domestic abuse throughout Shetland, and its vision is to identify ways

to prevent domestic abuse, and where this is not possible to protect its victims. The strategy aims to protect and provide support to those who experience or are affected by domestic abuse, and to support and develop a range of services for those who have experienced domestic abuse.

We will make every effort to prevent homelessness for applicants suffering domestic abuse and will seek to make permanent offers of secure housing as quickly as possible when the applicant's decision is to move home.

In addition we will refer the applicant to Women's Aid and provide the applicant with advice and signposting on their rights in relation to the Matrimonial Homes Act and other legal options to take action against the perpetrator of abuse e.g. interdict with powers of arrest etc. The applicant will not be forced or coerced into pursuing these options nor should they be expected to justify a wish not to pursue actions.

The applicant will be informed that if they wish to pursue any such actions they can be provided with temporary accommodation. When providing temporary accommodation, we will make every effort to provide accommodation close to family support, friends and schools.

Addictions (discuss with SADP and CADSS)

In 2008 a Scottish Government report ³showed clear evidence of links between substance misuse and homelessness. The report stated that 'over the last 40 years the associations between substance misuse and homelessness have become progressively better understood. Research has moved from a position in which homelessness was seen as a consequence of substance misuse, mental health problems or some combination of the two and towards a position in which substance misuse and homelessness are seen as mutually reinforcing, interrelated, social problems. Those who experience homelessness or substance misuse tend to share characteristics and homelessness can be both an outcome of substance misuse and a catalyst for substance misuse.

People who become homeless who have no history of substance misuse are at an increased risk of developing substance misuse problems. People who become involved in substance misuse are, in turn, at increased risk of experiencing homelessness. These populations are in addition characterised by poor social

³ Effective Services for Substance Misuse and Homelessness in Scotland: Evidence from an International Review, Nicholas Pleace, Centre for Housing Policy.

supports, negative experiences during childhood, poor educational outcomes, and sustained worklessness.

In addition, there is a strong association between the presence of mental health problems or severe mental illness among homeless people with substance misuse problems in Scotland.

Homeless people with substance misuse problems have a range of needs that can include support with daily living skills, a requirement for mental health services and a requirement for support in managing substance misuse. Their needs are often complex and services that focus on any one element of their need, be it substance misuse, mental health or housing related support, meet with less success than services that are designed to support all their needs.'

If we are the first point of contact for an applicant with a substance misuse issue who is at risk of homelessness, we will use the With YOU for YOU process to assess need and provide a comprehensive support plan which takes need into account and works to prevent homelessness. We will refer the applicant with their agreement to CADSS or Social Work for support in managing their substance misuse. We will also refer the applicant to other services, such as GP/Community Mental Health Team and Family or Community Mediation as appropriate and provide information on local support groups.

We will not insist on abstinence before accommodation is provided as we recognise the value of a harm minimisation approach in relation to maintaining engagement with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless.

Our aim is to provide safe, secure housing first, along with multi-agency support to meet need and reduce the risk of harm to the individual, their family and the community.

Mental Health

People with mental health problems across the spectrum of mild to psychotic and long term conditions are prone to homelessness.

We will aim to identify people with mental health problems who are at risk of homelessness, as early as possible. Where appropriate, we will use the With YOU for YOU process to assess need and provide comprehensive support as part of our approach to preventing homelessness.

Referrals to the Housing Support Service will also be made where appropriate to support a person with a mental health condition either as part of preventing homelessness or support to enable them to maintain their accommodation.

Family Break-ups

Where appropriate, we will advise an applicant to seek legal advice in relation to their rights under the Matrimonial Homes Act or Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006. In terms of family breakdown, we will advise the applicant if they may have rights to remain in the family home and support their action to enforce these rights.

If the applicant does not have any rights, we will try and negotiate a return where it is safe to do so, even if only for a short period of time to enable a planned move to happen.

It may be possible for the Council or another service provider to intervene to prevent non abusive family breakdown and resulting homelessness. We will consider whether it is appropriate for another agency to provide relationship counselling or mediation services. It may also be appropriate to consider other forms of support - such as drug or alcohol counselling - where these may help to resolve underlying tensions.

Even where the family ceases to live together, these measures may help to prevent homelessness or its reoccurrence by enabling family support to continue.

The needs of any children in the household should be taken into account, and support offered to help minimise the impact of the relationship breakdown or family homelessness. The Child Protection Procedures will be referred to if there are concerns about the welfare or safety of children in the household.

The provision of support should never be an alternative to rehousing where there is a risk of abuse.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

An asylum seeker is a person who has made an application to the UK Government for protection and who is waiting for a decision on their application. Asylum seekers are subject to immigration control with temporary admission but not leave to enter or remain in the UK. While they await a decision on their claim they may receive financial support and accommodation from the UK Border Agency⁴.

An asylum seekers application for asylum is assessed by the UK Border Agency and if he or she meets the criteria set out in the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of refugees, the asylum seeker will be recognized as a refugee and granted refugee status. In some circumstances the asylum seekers may be granted a form of 'subsidiary protection' and status, either Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave.

Refugees and those granted other forms of status shown above are generally eligible for mainstream benefits and support including homeless assistance from Shetland Islands Council and chapter 13 of the Code of Guidance provides further information.

Refugees display multiple indicators of homelessness risk and can lack many of the resilience measures which can mitigate against the risks. For example:

- Many are likely to have experienced persecution, torture or trauma in their country of origin or severe hardship in their efforts to reach the UK. As a result many may have medical, community care or mental health needs;
- Many will have no access to money or supportive friends and family in Scotland. As an asylum seeker they are not allowed to access the labour market and cannot work to earn a living;
- English language may be a significant barrier as well as their knowledge of their rights and entitlements in the UK, especially if they are a recent arrival in the country;
- Refugees may have experience of feeling unsafe in the area they were living in during their asylum claim and have experienced harassment.

Refugees are likely to be most vulnerable to homelessness at the point of receiving a positive decision on their asylum claim. At this point any accommodation provided by the UK Border Agency is terminated after 28 days and the refugee will have to access accommodation, enter the labour market and make any benefit claims. This is a particular issue where a fast decision is made and the refugee may have had little time to learn about their new environment or develop support mechanisms.

⁴ In Scotland, Glasgow currently remains the only area where asylum seekers are accommodated by the UK Border Agency, although there are asylum seekers across Scotland who are accommodated with family and friends and only receive financial support.

Good practice⁵ for preventing homelessness in refugees recommends:

- Improved and continued multi agency working to ensure that refugees do not become homeless during the 28 day transition period when they are granted status;
- Less prolonged stays in temporary accommodation;
- Impartial, specialist advice to assist newly recognised refugees in accessing appropriate accommodation;
- Needs assessment and consultation with the refugees on their preferred areas, taking in to account places of work or worship;
- Home based tenancy sustainment services that are tailored to meet their sometimes complex needs;
- Trained staff who can deal with applications from refugees and who can respond to the needs of the household, including with respect to their duties in addressing racial harassment.

⁵ Heriot Watt University (2009), Navigating the Maze: Refugee Routes to Housing Support and Settlement in Scotland, Netto G, Fraser A.

7 Recording and Measuring Impact of Prevention Activities

Homeless activity is recorded through the homeless assessment process and the completion of statutory HL1, HL2 and PREVENT1 returns. These returns assist the Scottish Government with ensuring the homeless legislation is implemented and monitored consistently across all Scottish local authorities.

We will record outcomes including:

- Households, which might otherwise have presented as homeless achieving a positive outcome and therefore not presenting;
- Households presenting as threatened with homelessness whose cases are resolved before they actually become homeless; and
- Homeless households sustaining their tenancies following the outcome of their homeless presentations.

In addition we will monitor:

- The proportion of tenants placed in council and RSL stock as a result of a homeless application who maintain their tenancy for at least 12 months;
- The proportion of applicants placed in other types of tenure as a result of a homeless application who maintain their tenancy for at least 12 months;
- The number of repeat homeless applications and the reasons for the repeat homelessness;
- The number of households referred for help to specific homelessness prevention services;
- The outcomes of Section 11 notifications;
- The outcomes for applicants accessing a Housing Options interview;
- The outcomes of personal housing plans.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

As part of measuring performance to show Social Landlords are meeting the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/03/2602, the SIC will self-assess its performance in a range of areas. This includes measuring:

- Access to Housing and Support – people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

In meeting this standard, we will request information from service users on the interventions, services and assistance they were given to help prevent them from becoming homeless. We will use this information to report on the standards and to inform policy and practice.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Prevention Schemes

Housing Options Guide – online, comprehensive guide to housing options in Shetland	www.shetland.gov.uk/housing-options
Rent Deposit Scheme – assistance in the form of a written guarantee for households seeking a private rented sector tenancy who can afford the rent, but not the deposit	Contact Housing Officer for more information
Debt Arrangement Scheme – Scottish Government free, debt management tool	www.dacscotland.co.uk/landing/desktop/das/?utm_source=Bing&utm_medium=cpc
Home Owners' Support Fund – Scottish Government assistance to homeowners who are experiencing difficulty in paying loans secured against their property	www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/privateowners/Repossession/hosf-1
Mediation – free, confidential and impartial service to help people consider the nature of their situation and make realistic choices about their future housing circumstances	Contact Housing Officer for more information
Furnished Tenancies – provides essential household items to people who have been homeless and who are unable to access these items on their own	Contact Housing Officer or Housing Support Worker for more information