Anderson, City & Yorkhill Area Partnership

Briefing Item: Addressing Homelessness Challenges

Summary of Key Points:

- The Council has statutory duties under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 to provide emergency accommodation to any household that it believes to be homeless.

- In addition to the Covid-19 pandemic, Glasgow has also delivered a strong response in relation to the illegal war in Ukraine which has seen a significant number of Ukrainian Displaced Persons (UDPs) move to Glasgow through various sponsor schemes. This response required a re-alignment of resources and focus to ensure that UDPs did not require a statutory homelessness intervention. During the decommissioning of MS Ambition, GCHSCP along with colleagues in the Scottish Government, COSLA and third sector partners worked to deliver positive outcomes for over 1,000 UDPs accommodated on the ship.

- More recently, around July 2023, the Home Office implemented an acceleration in the decision-making process for asylum claimants. As the UK's largest dispersal area for asylum seekers outside of London, this acceleration has substantially increased the demand on Glasgow's Homelessness Service from both those who are granted leave to remain in Glasgow, and those who are granted refugee status elsewhere in the UK but who are choosing to travel to Glasgow for homelessness assistance.

- In relation to those granted leave to remain in Glasgow, the number of referrals received by the Asylum and Refugee Support Team from Mears in the calendar year of 2023 was 1,232 compared with 2022 where 669 referrals were received. This represents an 84% increase in the number of households being granted leave to remain in Glasgow with the majority of these referrals being made from July 2023 onwards.

- Engagement with Mears, as well as the Home Office, is on-going however it is not clear at this time whether this volume of referrals will continue throughout 2024. It is worth noting, however, that information from the Home Office indicates that the backlog of asylum decisions has been cleared but that this backlog refers only to cases who applied for asylum pre-June 2022. Given this, it is clear that there are still a high number of asylum decisions to be made (asylum applications made between June 2022 – present) and demand from applicants who have been granted leave to remain will remain high in 2024, and potentially beyond.

- In addition to this, Glasgow continues to see increased demand from households who have been granted leave to remain out with the city, with specific pressures from households travelling from England and Northern Ireland. It is believed that the progressive homelessness legislation in Scotland (specifically the abolition of priority need) is a key driver of this demand.

- Most recent data indicates that around 125 households, per month, are receiving a positive asylum decision out with the Glasgow area but are choosing to come to Glasgow, as is their right, to request homelessness assistance.

- In order to meet demand for emergency accommodation the HSCP has had to expand its use of bed and breakfast type accommodation. As of Monday 29th April 2024, 1380, households were resident in bed and breakfast type accommodating having sought assistance from the HSCP.

Housing Emergency

- As a consequence of the acute pressures on the Council and the HSCP a decision was taken by the City Administration Committee in November 2023 to declare a Housing Emergency.

- Work is currently being undertaken by the Council and the HSCP to address the housing emergency in Glasgow. This work includes:

    - Continuing to examine alternative sources of emergency accommodation. The HSCP and Council is currently taking forward a number of actions to commission a number of services that will act as alternatives to bed and breakfast provision. We are also working to increase the number of dispersed tenancies available for temporary accommodation within the Private Rented Sector.

    - Engagement with Key stakeholders. A strength of the work to address homelessness in the city is the robust operational and strategic partnerships. There continues to be positive engagement between Council officers, HSCP officers, the Third Sector and RSLs to discuss and address the ongoing challenges in the housing and homelessness sectors.

    - Aligning staffing resources to meet the level of demand.

    - Working with housing association colleagues to continue to increase the number of tenancies available for the resettlement of homeless households.

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
No. of lets to homeless households	1,974	2,322	2,415	3,288	3,311	2,904	3,305

    - The table above highlights the significant increase in settled lets since the introduction of the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in 2019/20. It is also important to highlight that the increase for 2023/24 (compared to the previous year) is likely to be achieved against a reduction of 12% in social housing turnover. The HSCP has written to all RSLs operating in the city to request 67% of all social housing lets for 2024/25. We will continue to work constructively with RSLs to secure this outturn figure.

    - Work with the Scottish and UK Government's to highlight the challenges faced by the Council and HSCP in order to secure additional support to assist in meeting the ongoing challenges.

    - Working with key stakeholders across the voluntary sector and Police Scotland to address any potential public protection and safeguarding issues stemming from the rapid increase in the use of bed and breakfast type accommodation.

    - The HSCP and the Council is committed to reduce the use of bed and breakfast type accommodation. However, given the unprecedented level of demand for emergency accommodation, it is unrealistic to project the ending of its use in the medium term.

Briefing note prepared by: Jim McBride Ext: