



South West Scotland
Community
Justice
Authority

OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION AUDIT

March 2008

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SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND CJA

OFFENDER ACCOMMODATION AUDIT

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In Spring 2007 the Scottish Executive Justice Directorate (now the Scottish Government Criminal Justice Directorate) commissioned an audit of supported accommodation in each CJA area, as well as practices relating to the wider provision of accommodation for offenders.

It was acknowledged that the spread of hostel accommodation in Scotland is uneven and concentrated in specific areas.

The CJA area based audits of offender accommodation services are an important starting point in examining this provision and moving towards more needs-based services.

In June 2007 the South West Scotland CJA endorsed a local approach for the Chief Officer to work with nominees from Housing Services on a report by local authority area.

Two meetings were facilitated during which a standard approach was developed. All local authority reports from housing representatives were received by March 2008 and the Criminal Justice Social Work perspective was obtained via submissions from managers at operational level.

Jacqueline Clinton
Chief Officer

Dumfries & Galloway Council Submission - Housing Services

Offender accommodation audit

1 Introduction

This paper was requested by South West CJA in order to progress the request for an Offender Accommodation Audit to be produced by March 2008.

The paper is structured to reflect the agreed way forward at the meeting convened by the Chief Officer of the CJA on 03.10.07. The paper covers Dumfries and Galloway Councils

- Structure and approach to housing of offenders and liaison with SPS
- Current provision of any supported accommodation within the area which is used by offenders
- Existing specific (exclusive) accommodation used by particular vulnerable client groups

2 Background and context

- 2.1 There has been in the recent past a significant increase in both furnished accommodation and hostel accommodation provision in Dumfries and Galloway due to legislative changes and the associated increase in homeless presentations. There has been historically a low level of direct provision by the council of hostel and other specialist accommodation. This has meant a reliance on a variety of external accommodation providers (both voluntary and private sector). This presents a number of difficulties in operational and strategic terms. There is the risk that external providers could quickly withdraw from the market, leaving the council exposed. There is a difficulty in ensuring an appropriate geographic spread of accommodation and a lack of consistency of both quality of stock and management. There is further financial exposure for the council through the significant housing benefit costs which do not attract DWP subsidy.
- 2.2 The current provision of temporary accommodation generally lacks sufficient particular specialist accommodation with support. There is no designated offender accommodation.
- 2.3 The availability of housing support, often critical to the sustainability of accommodation projects, is severely limited in Dumfries and Galloway, having been subject to an 18% budget cut in Supporting People grant by the Executive (Scottish Govt). This has meant a need to reduce SP by £3.5million over the last three years. There is currently no potential to expand provision to meet new and emerging needs.

3 Structure an approach to housing offenders and liaison with SPS

- 3.1 As a stock transferred authority, the structures within Dumfries and Galloway will likely be different from other local authorities that retain a housing stock. The Council's Housing Service is part of the wider Social Work Service and has responsibility for Housing Strategy

(the production and co-ordination of the Local Housing Strategy), the strategic and operational management of the homelessness service and the strategic and operational management of the Supporting People service. The Operations Manager Housing Services is a member of the Social Work Senior Management Team , along with Operations Manager Criminal Justice. This structure allows for effective joint working between the services.

- 3.2 The Council discharges its duties to secure permanent accommodation under the Homelessness legislation through Section 5 referrals to Registered Social Landlords. The Council's Homelessness Service is provided through four area-based teams in Stranraer, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Annan.
- 3.3 The Council has established two posts of Prison Liaison Officer (Homelessness) with a remit to assist with accommodation and support needs of offenders on liberation from prison. The posts are located within the Homelessness Service but are based within the CJSW teams in Stranraer and Dumfries. This allows for close / joint operational working between Housing and CJSW. The Prison Liaison Officers have responsibility for investigation and assessment of homeless applications from offenders, carrying out pre-release interviews, arranging for temporary accommodation and identifying / arranging necessary housing support. The PLOs have access to the Link Centre within Dumfries prison and work closely with SPS staff. The Council also funds a prison outreach officer, based in D&G CAS, who provides advocacy and other support services to offenders.

4 Supported accommodation for offenders

- 4.1 There is no designated temporary / interim accommodation for offenders operated by Dumfries and Galloway Council. The current practice is that there is an assessment of their housing need carried out by PLO or, where the offender is subject to MAPPAs , undertaken on a multi-agency basis through the MAPPAs panel. If there is a low-level risk, offenders may be accommodated in self-contained furnished accommodation (usually with outreach support), supported hostel accommodation or B&B. If the offender is assessed as high risk, or where they are subject to MAPPAs, it is highly unlikely they will be accommodated safely in supported hostels or B&B. In these circumstances, a self contained furnished accommodation is likely to be the most suitable provision, subject to a full risk assessment by the Police and with appropriate support / monitoring arrangements in place. Due to the limited availability of such provision this presents a challenge to all agencies. In practice, approximately 50% of all offenders who require temporary accommodation are being placed in supported hostel or B&B, with 50% being placed in self contained furnished accommodation.

5 Specific accommodation for vulnerable client groups

- 5.1 There are 2 local authority owned hostels situated in Stranraer. These properties are available for young people aged 16 to 21.
- 5.2 Annanbank – Stranraer. This hostel has 7 rooms available one of which is fully adapted for people with disabilities. The accommodation is managed by a private provider under contract with the Council and provides safety and

security with housing support provided by an onsite manager. Outreach support provided as required. The support element is funded through a Supporting People contract. Offenders are occasionally accommodated here if they have been risk assessed as low level. The accommodation would never be used for offenders subject to MAPPA.

- 5.3 Reston – Stranraer. This hostel has onsite housing support during the day and a concierge service during the night. The support is funded through an SP contract and provided by Loreburn Housing Association's housing support services. This accommodation is not available to any offenders due to particular vulnerability of client group (young-16-21, formerly looked after, through care).
- 5.4 Other hostel accommodation is provided throughout the region by private providers who have SP contracts to provide safety and security with a small amount of housing support. Other outreach support is provided as required. The total bed spaces available to use in these properties amount to 66. Details of these properties and locations are set out below:

Stranraer

Hampton Court – 11 Rooms. Individual furnished apartments.

49 Agnew Crescent – 10 Rooms. 5 apartments with 2 rooms in each

Lochview Guest House – 8 Rooms

1 Windsor Terrace – 6 Rooms

Newton Stewart

Benyellary Hostel – 11 Rooms

Dumfries

6 Academy Street – 5 Rooms

106 Brooms Road – 5 Rooms

10 Galloway Street – 3 Rooms

21 Galloway Street – 7 Rooms

- 5.5 Again, offenders are accommodated in some of these units if the risk assessment is low. Offenders subject to MAPPA are usually not accommodated here, unless specific police assessment, as part of the MAPPA process, identifies it is safe to do so.
- 5.6 Apart from the above, the Council leases 156 furnished self-contained properties throughout the region. Details of these properties and locations are set out below.

Table 5.7

Unit size	Bedsit	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Stranraer	1	9	20	8	N/A	N/A	38
Dumfries	8	21	27	18	N/A	1	75
K'Bright	N/A	9	5	4	N/A	N/A	18
Annan	N/A	9	7	8	N/A	1	25

- 5.8 In addition to the above we currently spot purchase accommodation in B&B and privately provided HMO properties.
- 5.9 We currently have two Interim/Move-on Supported Accommodation pilot projects and one project which is set up to provide Interim/ Move-on Supported Accommodation for young single mothers or pregnant young women.
- 5.10 The first was set up in the Stranraer area in partnership with Turning Point Scotland and is designed to provide Interim/Move-on accommodation to service users who are excluded from mainstream housing because of drug problems. The homeless service is currently providing two furnished properties for this service and it is intended to provide a further two as soon as possible. Service users will normally already be in the homeless system and are referred either by Homeless Service staff or Turning Point support workers.
- 5.11 The second project is the Queen Street project in Dumfries which was set up in partnership with Irvine Housing Association who purchased and refurbished the building with the aid of homeless strategy funding. The Homeless Service now lease the building from IHA on a 10 year lease and the support is provided by Loreburn Housing Association, funded through Supporting People grant. The project provides 5 furnished flats, 1 bed-sit, 2 one bed roomed and 2 two bed roomed. The project is to provide Interim/Move-on Supported Accommodation to young mothers or pregnant young women who will benefit from support to assist them to move onto permanent accommodation.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The Council requires more suitable temporary accommodation to meet both the demand but also the specific needs of homeless clients. There is insufficient suitable accommodation for particular vulnerable groups and no designated accommodation for offenders.
- 6.2 Pressure on Supporting People budgets means there is little prospect to expand existing or develop new supporting people services to meet need.
- 6.3 Generally, the approach taken to the provision of temporary accommodation for offenders is to utilise the existing general provision for homeless clients, with additional outreach support as required (Subject to resources and appropriate risk assessments.)

John Lynch, Education/Social Work & Comm Services, D&G Council

Dumfries & Galloway Council Submission – Criminal Justice Social Work Services

Offender accommodation audit

1 Introduction

- This short paper provides a Criminal Justice Social Work perspective of the Offender Accommodation Audit undertaken by the South West Scotland Community Justice Authority at the request of the Scottish Government.

2 Background and context

The paper submitted by the Operations Manager for Housing Services in Dumfries and Galloway provides a comprehensive outline of the accommodation provision within Dumfries and Galloway.

3 Structure an approach to housing offenders and liaison with SPS

As indicated in the Operations Manager's Housing Services report the Council has established two posts of Prison Liaison Officer (Homelessness) with a remit to assist with accommodation and support needs of offenders on liberation from prison. These posts are located within the Homelessness Service but are based within the CJSW teams in Stranraer and Dumfries. This allows for close / joint operational working between Housing and CJSW.

The PLOs have access to the Link Centre within Dumfries prison and work closely with SPS staff . The Council also funds a prison outreach officer, based in D&G CAS, who provides advocacy and other support services to offenders.

The Council has now moved to appoint an officer to co-ordinate the Council's response to the National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders and the post holder will work closely with a range of housing providers, Criminal Justice Social Work and the Police.

4 Supported accommodation for offenders

There is no accommodation specifically provided for offenders, however from time to time additional services are provided by third sector organisations for high-risk offenders. This service has been provided within accommodation provided by universal housing providers.

However specialist accommodation has been provided for a small number of high-risk offenders who have a learning disability. The accommodation includes electronic monitoring equipment and other smart technology and on site support staff. This type of accommodation is very resource intensive.

From time to time there are issues in respect of:

- Accessing accommodation for returning prisoners who are benefit claimants and who cannot access Housing Benefit prior to release and therefore have to make homeless applications just prior to release. This is sometimes difficult to manage when there is short notice of a prisoner's release.
- Accessing suitable bail accommodation.
- Accessing accommodation that is appropriate for those subject to electronic tagging.
- Funding of 10% of Intensive Support Packages
- Managing high risk offenders in small communities.

5 Conclusions

The Council requires more suitable temporary accommodation to meet both the demand but also the specific needs of homeless clients. There is insufficient suitable accommodation for particular vulnerable groups and no designated accommodation for offenders.

Pressure on Supporting People budgets means there is little prospect to expand existing or develop new supporting people services to meet need.

Generally, the approach taken to the provision of temporary accommodation for offenders is to utilise the existing general provision for homeless clients, with additional outreach support as required; subject to resources and appropriate risk assessments.

Allan Monteforte, Operations Manager, Criminal Justice Social Work Services, D&G Council

East Ayrshire Council Submission - Housing Services

Offender Accommodation Audit

1. Introduction

This paper has been prepared in response to a request from the Chief Officer of the South West Scotland Criminal Justice Authority. As requested the paper will cover the following areas:-

- Details of the local authority structure and approach to the housing of offenders and the liaison arrangements with prisons in the area.
- Details of the current provision of temporary accommodation within the local authority which is used by offenders.
- Existing specific (exclusive) accommodation used by particular vulnerable groups.

2. Provision for Offenders in East Ayrshire

2.1 Criminal Offenders

All offenders are legally entitled to register their housing need with the Council.

East Ayrshire policy is one of early intervention. The aim being to identify offenders at the earliest opportunity if they are in the prison system so a planned discharge from their prison sentence can be achieved.

Our Housing Options Officer visits Kilmarnock Prison twice weekly to conduct homeless interviews if the prisoners are within two months of release. This reduces the time the ex-offenders needs to spend in temporary accommodation depending on availability, offenders would be accommodated in one of the following temporary accommodation resources that are available to the council:-

2.2 Current Provision of Temporary Accommodation

St Andrews Court Hostel

This is a council owned hostel property in central Kilmarnock which has twenty individual rooms and residents have shared use of kitchen, bathroom, communal lounge and laundry facilities. The hostel is staffed 24/7 by our own team of hostel support staff who are responsible for supervising the building and providing general housing support to residents depending on their individual support needs. The accommodation is predominantly used for single persons or childless couples.

Peden Court Hostel

This is a council owned hostel property in central Cumnock which has seven individual rooms and residents have shared use of kitchen, bathroom, communal lounge and laundry facilities. The hostel is staffed 24/7 by our own

team of hostel support staff who are responsible for supervising the building and providing general housing support to residents depending on their individual support needs. The accommodation is predominantly used for single persons or childless couples.

Temporary Furnished

The Council has 47 units of temporary accommodation from within its own stock ranging in size from bedsit to four bedroom and spread out geographically throughout East Ayrshire. These properties are fully furnished and have dedicated tenancy support workers providing support to the residents placed within these units. Twenty five more units are due to come online shortly.

Landlord Leasing Schemes

The council has 7 units of temporary accommodation leased from private landlords, ranging in size from one to three bedrooms. There are five properties within the Kilmarnock area, one in Stewarton and one in Cumnock. These properties are fully furnished and have dedicated Tenancy Support Workers providing support to the residents placed within these units.

The fact that the offender has been in prison would give the person a priority need in compliance with the Homeless Code of Guidance. In normal circumstances the temporary accommodation offered for single males or females would be of the hostel type.

2.3 Sex Offenders

For sex offenders, more structured discharge and planning arrangements are in place to acknowledge risk and check the suitability of accommodation prior to the offender's release. In East Ayrshire, accommodation is normally made available for sex offenders from within our stock of temporary furnished units. In all instances the suitability of this accommodation is determined by both the Offender Assessment Unit of Strathclyde Police and the Criminal Justice Section of the Social Work Department. Both parties have to approve the property before it can proceed. The MAPPA process has also assisted in ensuring that the accommodation needs of offenders are identified and monitored.

In most instances offenders will initially need to be placed in temporary accommodation. If the Council has a duty to provide the offender with permanent accommodation they will be added to our homeless waiting list and an allocation of permanent accommodation is made based on their date of application. The permanent accommodation could be from Council owned stock or by a Section 5 referral to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) who has a vacancy.

Where there is no permanent duty to accommodate the offender, temporary accommodation and advice and assistance will be provided for a reasonable period of time, to allow the ex-offender to secure alternative accommodation.

2.4 Offenders who are Local Authority Tenants

The Council will not take legal action against a tenant unable to occupy their property because they are in prison, provided they are able to return within 13 weeks and adhere to all conditions of tenancy including maintaining a clear rent account. If they are unable to return within 13 weeks, they will be expected to relinquish their tenancy and will be granted a suitable tenancy as soon as possible after their release. Where possible the Council will endeavour to make available a suitable property for their release date.

3 Specific Temporary Accommodation

Blue Triangle Housing Association

They have three two bedroom flats in the centre of Kilmarnock and four outreach flats two bed-sits and two one bedroom in size. They provide supported temporary accommodation to single males/females aged between 16 and 25 years who are referred through the Homeless Section. In order to access this provision clients must be homeless and lack the necessary skills to be able to maintain a Council tenancy. Blue Triangle prepares young people for independent living by ensuring the provision of access to healthcare, housing and careers advice. The length of stay in this accommodation can range from four months to over a year dependent on the support needs and skills of the individual. They do accept offenders as long as they meet their normal criteria.

Women's Refuge

Women's Aid manages two women's refuges one in the North Division in Kilmarnock and one in the South Division in Auchinleck. They provide a specific temporary accommodation service for those women who have suffered domestic abuse. This accommodation could be made available to female offenders who were victims of abuse.

There is no specific temporary accommodation provision for sex offenders. The consensus viewpoint of partners is that providing accommodation for sex offenders in one location is more likely to encourage networking and possibly the likelihood of re-offending. Accordingly, we seek to avoid accommodating sex offenders in the same locus.

Gerry Darroch, Housing Services, East Ayrshire Council

East Ayrshire Council Submission - Criminal Justice Social Work Services

The above submission from EA Housing Service accurately reflects the resources available and the processes for accessing these.

Criminal Justice Social Work have always enjoyed a very positive relationship with Housing Services, and although MAPPA has formalised these, East Ayrshire has for some years had a protocol on working with Sex Offenders which Housing Services were fully involved with and "signed up to". This included a strategic meeting attended by senior officers from the Police along with Heads from both Housing and Social Work. The protocol also ensured that appropriate local authority/police checks were undertaken before the allocation of accommodation to high-risk offenders. A high level of trust has existed between the groups for a considerable period of time. The group has now been overtaken by the MAPPA process. It has always been our agreed policy in East Ayrshire not to house offenders together but to ensure they are appropriately accommodated in mainstream housing.

East Ayrshire is in a fortunate position to be able to offer accommodation both in rural areas and more urban environments and Housing Services can provide suitable housing to meet the needs of the individual. This added to the Tenancy Support Service, which is linked to all those who have a temporary tenancy, offers offenders (as well as others) the opportunity to get a level of support which will assist in their settling in the community as well as in general rehabilitation of offenders. As with other authorities, the housing of young people is problematic as this group does require a much higher level of support. Young offenders are particularly difficult to sustain in their own tenancies and supported accommodation for this group eg Blue Triangle is very expensive, £300 plus per week.

The Children's Commissioner in Scotland is supporting the idea that young people who have been in the care system should be sustained and supported by local authorities for a much longer period of time. As many offenders have a background in the care system, this is clearly an important area for us but local authorities need to be adequately resourced. This would include increasing the provision of supported accommodation.

Fiona MacKinnon, Service Manager, Criminal Justice Social Work Services, East Ayrshire Council

North Ayrshire Council Submission - Housing Services

Temporary Accommodation Profile

Access/Referral

All temporary accommodation is accessed on day of presentation or via standby or planned discharge. Access routes are via the local office and an emergency out of hours freephone number. From the housing office, staff will contact the "screen" and liaise with staff operating the database holding information of each unit of temporary accommodation.

Area Housing Offices

<p><i>IRVINE AREA OFFICE</i> 1ST Floor Bridgeway House Irvine KA12 8BD Tel: 01294 324875 Fax: 01294 324874</p>	<p><i>ARDROSSAN AREA OFFICE</i> 9/11 Glasgow Street Ardrossan KA22 8EP Tel: 01294 605258 Fax: 01294 471723</p>	<p><i>KILWINNING AREA OFFICE</i> Howgate Kilwinning KA13 6EJ Tel:01294 552261 Fax: 01294 557787</p>	<p><i>DREGHORN AREA OFFICE</i> 21A Main street Dreghorn KA11 4AQ Tel: 01294 221860 Fax: 01294 216018</p>	<p><i>KILBIRNIE AREA OFFICE</i> 34/36 Main Street Kilbirnie KA25 6DW Tel: 01505 685177 Fax: 01505 682638</p>
<p><i>SALTCOATS AREA OFFICE</i> 27 Vernon Street Saltcoats KA21 5HE Tel: 01294 602611 Fax: 01294 471675</p>	<p><i>STEVENSTON AREA OFFICE</i> 1 Main Street Stevenston KA20 3 AB Tel: 01294 605281 Fax: 01294 471729</p>	<p><i>DALRY/BEITH AREA OFFICE</i> Townend House 2 Townend Street Dalry KA24 4AA Tel: 01294 835355 Fax: 01294 835437</p>	<p><i>ARRAN LOCAL OFFICE</i> Lamlash Isle of Arran KA27 8LB Tel: 01770 600338 Fax 01770 600028</p>	<p><i>LARGS AREA OFFICE</i> Moorburn House 24 Greenock Road Largs KA30 8NE Tel: 01475 686948 Fax: 01475 689227</p>

"Screen" no: 0800 0196 500

Furnished Flats

NAC currently manages a pool of 156 Temporary Furnished Flats, which are used by all age groups and family compositions. They are situated throughout North Ayrshire and are varied in size and house type. Support is offered by the Tenancy Support Team in all properties, although existing support in place from other providers will continue in order to compliment the work of TST. The provision of support includes independent living skills, access to healthcare, resettlement, addictions and offending behaviour, careers and training.

Ardrossan Hostel, Ardrossan

Ardrossan Hostel has 10 rooms and 9 flats and is used by all age groups and family compositions, as a "short stay" interim measure until alternative accommodation can be sourced. The Hostel has a minimum of 3 members on each shift, providing 24 hour support. Support is offered by on site staff, although existing support in place from other providers will continue in order to compliment the work of the staff. The provision of support includes independent living skills, access to healthcare, resettlement, addictions and offending behaviour, careers and training.

Victoria House, Irvine (managed by Cunninghame Housing Association)

Victoria House has 27 rooms and is used by all age groups and family compositions, as a "short stay" interim measure until alternative accommodation can be sourced. The Hostel has a minimum of 3 members on each shift, providing 24-hour support. Support is offered by on site staff, although existing support in place from other providers will continue in order to compliment the work of the staff. The provision of support includes independent living skills, access to healthcare, resettlement, addictions and offending behaviour, careers and training.

Quarriers (Green Street)

This facility offers supported accommodation to a mixed sex client group aged between 16 and 25 years. There are 19 rooms and 4 self-contained flats. In order to access this provision clients must be vulnerable. Quarriers prepares young people for independent living by ensuring the provision of appropriate and adequate Housing Support, coupled with access to healthcare, resettlement services, Criminal Justice Services and education, training and careers advice. The length of stay in this accommodation can range from a few months through to two years dependant on the support needs and skills of the individual. The Quarriers project can also be utilised as respite accommodation as part of a prevention action to give parents and young people time out to allow time for support and mediation to take effect.

Quarriers (Kilwinning)

This facility offers supported accommodation to very vulnerable females in need of additional support and life skills, in order to prepare for independent living, where it has been identified that mixed gender facilities are inappropriate. As within our other temporary accommodation provision, Quarriers ensures the provision of appropriate and adequate Housing Support, coupled with access to healthcare, resettlement services, Criminal Justice Services and education, training and careers advice.

Nicola Thom, Housing Services, North Ayrshire Council

North Ayrshire Council Submission - Criminal Justice Social Work Services

The above North Ayrshire Council Housing Services' submission gives basic information on services available. North Ayrshire has striven to end its use of inappropriate temporary placements in B&B establishments and now homeless people are accommodated in hostels or furnished flats. Historically there have been

tensions between Criminal Justice Social Work and housing, however since Local Government Reorganisation in 1996, and the growth of a corporate identity for the local authority, working relationships have improved on a year on year basis.

This is perhaps exemplified by the excellent support that NAC Housing Services provides in identifying appropriate accommodation for sex offenders. Once a release date is identified for a sex offender, Social Work, Housing and the Police discuss the suitability of accommodation available. In my experience NAC Housing do their utmost to place the offender in accommodation that minimises the risk to the public. This liaison function with Social Work and the Police had been undertaken by a senior Housing manager who linked directly with ourselves. However, NAC have now recruited a SOLO who attends Level 2 and Level 3 MAPPAS.

There is always an argument that we should identify hostel accommodation specific for offenders. This would certainly have benefits if it is clearly linked to risk posed e.g. as a condition of bail or as a licence condition. I have no doubt that on an Ayrshire wide basis there is a need for such a hostel, however, we should whenever possible house offenders in mainstream accommodation as part of their rehabilitation and social inclusion.

Local Authorities are continually striving to improve their level of housing stock. However, it can often be the case that offenders are housed in particularly deprived areas with significant social problems. This can contribute to re-offending as the offenders can be surrounded by the factors that contributed to their offending. However, it is recognised that if behaviour change is to occur we have to recognise what cannot be changed and focus our energy on what we can change.

Jim McCrae, Locality Manager - Criminal Justice Social Work, North Ayrshire Council

South Ayrshire Council Submission - Housing Services

Accommodation Provision for Offenders

1. Introduction

This paper has been prepared in response to a request from the Chief Officer of the South West Scotland Criminal Justice Authority. As requested the paper will cover the following areas: -

- Details of the local authority structure and approach to the housing of offenders and the liaison arrangements with prisons in the area.
- Details of the current provision of any supported accommodation within the local authority area, which is used by offenders.
- Details of any accommodation that is made available or used by specific offender groups such as women or young people.

This paper is intended to help inform the audit of accommodation for ex-offenders that is being undertaken by the Criminal Justice Authority as requested by the Scottish Government.

2. Provision for Offenders in South Ayrshire

2.1. Local Authority Structure, Approach to Housing for Ex-offenders and Liaison Arrangements with Prisons and Other Agencies working with Offenders

2.1.1. Offenders who are homeless or risk of homelessness on date of release

All offenders are legally entitled to register their housing need with the Council. At the present time, the majority of offenders who are potentially homeless and require accommodation on their release make contact with our homeless service.

The Prison Liaison Officer, employed by the Simon Community, providing services on a pan-Ayrshire basis, normally facilitates this contact. In addition to this, East Ayrshire Council, provide an advice service at Kilmarnock Prison, the EAC Officer will deal with an initial homeless presentation and establish contact with the Homeless Service.

The offender is entitled to make a homeless presentation within two months of their date of release. Although, the two months notice of potential homelessness offers an opportunity for effective pre-release arrangements, and the Council's aim is to ensure that named accommodation is identified prior the date of the offenders' release, named accommodation is often not confirmed for the ex-offender until the actual date of their release. The factors which hinder effective pre-release planning are:- the demand and pressure on both temporary and permanent accommodation provision in South Ayrshire, and the lack of funding to cover rent liability on any

temporary accommodation that may be identified, as the offender is ineligible to apply for housing benefit prior to their date of liberation.

For sex offenders, more structured discharge and planning arrangements are in place to acknowledge risk and check the suitability of accommodation prior to the offender's release. In South Ayrshire, accommodation is normally made available for sex offenders from within our stock of temporary furnished units. In all instances the suitability of this accommodation is determined through joint working with Criminal Justice Social Work and the Police, using the principles contained within the National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders. The MAPPA process has also assisted in ensuring that the accommodation needs of offenders are identified and monitored.

In most instances offenders will initially need to be placed in temporary accommodation. If the Council has a duty to provide the offender with permanent accommodation they will be added to our homeless waiting list, and an allocation of permanent accommodation is made based on their date of application. The permanent accommodation could be from council owned stock or by a Section 5 referral to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) who has a vacancy.

Where there is no permanent duty to accommodate the offender, temporary accommodation and advice and assistance will be provided for a reasonable period of time, to allow the ex-offender to secure alternative accommodation.

2.1.2. Offenders who are Local Authority Tenants

The Council will not take legal action against a tenant unable to occupy their property because they are in prison, provided they are able to return within 13 weeks and adhere to all conditions of tenancy including maintaining a clear rent account. If they are unable to return within 13 weeks, they will be expected to relinquish their tenancy and will be granted a suitable tenancy as soon as possible after their release. Where possible the Council will endeavour to make available a suitable property for their release date.

2.2. Current Accommodation

South Ayrshire Council has a range of temporary accommodation available, some of which is regarded as being supported. However, there is no specific supported accommodation that is dedicated to the needs of offenders. At the present time, depending on availability, offenders would be accommodated in one the following temporary accommodation resources that are available to the Council: -

Temporary Furnished Units – The Council has 88 units of temporary accommodation from within its own stock that are furnished and used to accommodate homeless households.

Temporary Furnished Units (RSL Provision) – The Council has partnering arrangements in place with Ayrshire Housing, a locally based Registered Social Landlord (RSL). This arrangement provides 18 units of temporary accommodation.

Secession House – This is council owned hostel property in Troon, which provides 10 self contained furnished units. This accommodation is staffed by a Support Provider who has daily contact with residents and provides general housing support.

Landsburgh House – This is council owned hostel property in Ayr, which has twenty four individual rooms, and residents have shared use of kitchen, bathroom, communal lounge and laundry facilities. The facility is staffed 24/7 by council staff, who are responsible for supervising the building and providing general housing support to residents depending on their individual support needs. This accommodation is predominantly used for couples or single person households. The Council's Housing Panel has recently approved plans to reconfigure this facility, to provide 1 two bedroom and 22 one bedroom self-contained units. This change is partly to ensure that the accommodation meets the future expected requirements of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order and also to remove the need for residents to share communal facilities with other households.

Other Furnished Units – There are 7 dispersed units of accommodation which are owned by Ayrshire Housing and managed and supported by Women's Aid.

Chalmers Court – This is an 11 room hostel which is owned and managed by Blue Triangle Housing Association. The facility is staffed 24/7 and residents are provided with housing support to help prepare them for independent living.

High Support Unit (Chalmers Road, Ayr) – This facility provides 6 units of accommodation which is owned by Ayrshire Housing and operated by Quarriers. The accommodation is specifically intended for the 16 – 21 year olds, predominantly former care leavers. High levels of housing support and other supports are provided to residents to prepare them for independent living. This accommodation can be used for offenders within the 16 – 21 age group. Referrals and the allocation of this accommodation is managed by the Youth Housing Support Group which is a multi disciplinary group, involving Housing, Social Work, Quarriers,

Aberley House (Direct Access Facility) – This is a privately owned and managed facility. The Council contracts with the owner to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households. It is a 21 room facility, and residents have shared use of kitchen, bathroom and lounge facilities. The support needs of individuals are identified and are met by external housing support providers who visit the property.

George Street (Direct Access Facility) – This is another privately owned and managed facility. The Council contracts with the owner to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households. It is a 5 room facility,

and residents have shared use of kitchen and bathroom facilities. The support needs of individuals are identified and are met by external housing support providers who visit the property.

River Street (Direct Access Facility) – The Council has recently approved the use of this privately owned and managed facility. It is still under development. On completion of the building works, the facility will provide 7 units of self contained accommodation, for homeless households. The support needs of individuals are identified and are met by external housing support providers who visit the property.

Women's Aid Refuge – There is an 8 room refuge run by Women's Aid operated within the Council area. This accommodation is only available to females and the accommodation is allocated and managed by the Women's Aid Collective. This accommodation could be made available to female offenders who were victims of abuse.

Private Leased Properties – The Council has recently started to lease properties in the private rented sector to use as temporary accommodation for homeless households. At the present time, 6 properties are in use from this sector.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation – In order to meet demand for accommodation and to fulfil the duty placed on the Council to accommodate homeless households, there is still a heavy reliance on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The Council routinely uses 5 B & B establishments which provide a total of 40 rooms of accommodation. This accommodation is predominantly used for couple or single person households.

2.3. Housing Support for Ex-Offenders

The support needs of any ex-offenders who are placed in temporary accommodation by the Council are initially assessed at the point of presentation. An initial allocation of housing support provision will be made, and through ongoing review of the case, it will be identified if support needs change. In addition to general housing support provision, offenders may also be allocated support from Criminal Justice Social Work, to deal with specific needs arising from mental illness, addictions or to help compliance with specific licence conditions. These supports are provided to the offenders in their individual accommodation.

2.4. Accommodation for Specific Offender Groups

In South Ayrshire, there is no accommodation provision for specific offender groups. The accommodation needs for each offender are assessed on an individual basis and accommodation is allocated using the existing resources available to the Council.

Michael Alexander, Housing Services, South Ayrshire Council

South Ayrshire Council Submission - Criminal Justice Social Work Services

The above submission from South Ayrshire Council Housing Services is accurate in its description of the resources available and the processes in South Ayrshire Council. Overall we are extremely happy with our relationship with housing colleagues who are helpful in assisting us provide suitable accommodation for offenders. We have no wish to create offender specific accommodation in SAC (eg hostel) as we believe rehabilitation is best achieved by offenders living in mainstream accommodation. Like many Local Authorities however the problem is lack of choice caused by low housing stock although the main RSL is very helpful also. We have good checks in place for allocating accommodation to sex offenders which involve police, housing, education and children and families each checking the address from their perspective prior to an offer being made to the offender.

As regards young offenders there is a need for additional high support places in SAC as I am aware there are only 6 units in SAC and demand is greater than this.

Jim Hunter, Criminal Justice Services Manager, South Ayrshire Council

CONCLUSION

The submissions received from local authority housing departments and criminal justice social work contained many references to positive joint working.

A number of respondents commented that the advent of MAPPA has formalised working practices although the cost of funding 10% of intensive support packages is a pressure on resources.

The submissions indicated that the majority of offenders' needs are met through homelessness legislation and this can be problematic as housing benefit is not payable prior to release.

The submissions describe a range of supported accommodation that is used to provide specialist and mainstream provision. There is no desire for offender specific accommodation to be provided in South West Scotland. Rather, there is an expressed need for additional resources to improve current provision and support for offenders, especially young offenders. The view expressed was that offenders' rehabilitation needs are best served by the provision of supported mainstream accommodation