Housing Options and Homeless Prevention

At present Housing Options services vary across each local authority. Following on from the Housing Options Guidance being published in March 2016, it is clear that a multi-agency approach which supports the prevention of homelessness around early intervention is the most effective. Housing Options/Prevention of Homelessness would be more effective if it was a mandatory service rather than optional for all Local Authorities, and housing providers in the social and private sector. Given the expanded roll out of Universal Credit, early intervention will be crucial to ensuring tenancies are sustained to ensure people do not end up Homeless or threatened with homelessness. A starting point would be for RSL’s to submit Prevent1 data on a mandatory basis. Re-looking at housing and homeless legislation to ensure that legislation meets the intended government priorities and outcomes for people and communities across Scotland.

Temporary Accommodation

As a stock transfer authority we are solely reliant on contracting the provision of temporary accommodation from RSLs and private landlord partners. These contracts can be a high cost to the authority, with changes to Housing Benefit and the introduction of Universal Credit recouping these costs is becoming more and more challenging. Increasing numbers of homeless presentations are from people with complex needs therefore requiring support beyond basic tenancy management and out with Housing Support Duty. This places additional pressures on Homeless teams and support services to provide the level of support needed to these individuals. Moving from HL2 data collection to HL3 data collection also allows public reporting around temporary accommodation.

Permanent Accommodation

Local annual lettings targets for Homeless clients remain a priority in D&G for the authority and partners. However, the accommodation needs for those with complex issues remain challenging, with difficulties for some mental health and support services not having enough resources to support those individuals who require it. This often leads to more time being spent in temporary accommodation while these resources are obtained. There is pressure spots within D&G around supply and demand of accommodation in particular 1 bed accommodation and larger accommodation. The introduction of Universal Credit and recouping housing costs
will be a challenge for RSL partners. This may result in increased demand for housing options and homeless services within D&G as we move towards full implementation in February 2017.

**Multiple and Complex Needs**

Given the pressures on Homeless and support services supporting individuals with multiple and complex needs there needs to be focussed/targeted resources to provide the services needed. In particular those customers who do not meet the critical eligibility priority framework around SDS. It is vital that multi agency work can respond quickly to the needs of people at their most vulnerable, and ensure information sharing protocols allow this to be done. Cross agency work needs to happen at the earliest opportunity, to instigate multiagency work at the prevention stage, before the crisis arises. A joined up approach could be aided by more co-location of services and clearer referral pathways.