

Final Strategy for approval by the Executive Sub-Committee of Housing & Adult Care Services Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003.

**PERTH & KINROSS  
HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY  
2003-2008.**

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## **INTRODUCTION.**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy for their area. The Act also placed on statute new duties for local authorities towards homeless people by enacting many of the recommendations of the First Homelessness Task Force Report, which reported early in 2000.

As Perth & Kinross Council (and other local authorities) have been in the process of formulating the first Homelessness Strategy to become effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003, we have also been busy implementing the parts of the 2001 Act, which came into effect during 2002. At the same time, the Homelessness Bill has now been passed by the Scottish Parliament and enacts the recommendations of the Final Homelessness Task Force Report (February 2002), thereby establishing the framework for the radical enhancement of Council's responsibilities towards all homeless people.

Therefore, the Homelessness Strategy has been written at a time of major changes in the legal framework for dealing with homeless people, and must be flexible enough to adapt rapidly to these changing circumstances.

### *The Vision for Homelessness Strategy*

It is clear that the first Scottish Parliament for almost 300 years has a commitment to tackling homelessness over the next ten years. It is local authorities which are tasked with the responsibility for formulating strategies, which when implemented should remove homelessness as a social problem in our society by the year 2012.

This is the vision which Perth & Kinross Council is aspiring to in its Homelessness Strategy, to be achieved over the next ten years.

In order to deliver this vision the Perth & Kinross Homelessness Strategy is a working document which lays out a major plan of action for tackling homelessness. The first Strategy is a five-year plan, but of necessity it will have to be reviewed year on year, to reflect experience and changes in the resources available for carrying through the strategy.

### *Background*

Perth & Kinross Council already had in place a Single Homeless Strategy for the period 1997-2002, which principally responded to the needs of single homeless people. Over £3.5 million capital was invested in the refurbishment of accommodation and other resources under this strategy. Emergency and resettlement support services developed under the strategy account for £1.5 million revenue expenditure per annum. This provides a good starting point for embarking on the more ambitious aims of Homelessness Strategy.

### *Planning Arrangements*

In order to take forward the task of formulating Homelessness Strategy in Perth & Kinross planning arrangements were substantially altered after consultation with partners in April 2002. The key elements of this planning structure are:

- A new Homelessness Coordinating Group comprising voluntary and statutory agencies was established with a long term remit to provide a forum for continuous joint working in relation to Homelessness Strategy.
- A short life Strategy Group to direct the work of formulating Homelessness Strategy.
- 3 working groups tasked to profile homelessness and to bring forward recommendations for local action to tackle homelessness. These were the Single Homeless Group, the Youth Homeless Group and the Families Homeless Group.
- A Voluntary Sector Forum to coordinate the input of the voluntary agencies in Perth & Kinross, with a particular focus on training, user involvement and voluntary sector monitoring.

### *Producing the Homelessness Strategy*

The planning arrangements adopted in Perth & Kinross have ensured that the process of developing Homelessness Strategy has been a consultative one from start to finish. In December 2002 the 3 main working groups produced final reports with recommendations to the Strategy Group. In addition the Voluntary

Sector Forum has contributed three essential reports to the strategy formulation on User Views, Project Staff Consultation and Voluntary Sector Monitoring.

The recommendations contained in these reports have greatly influenced the content of this Homelessness Strategy. Two other important elements have informed discussions within working groups and now shape the strategic direction of the strategy. Firstly, we have sought to develop our understanding of the extent and nature of homelessness in Perth & Kinross. Secondly, we have identified the resources which are currently applied to tackling homelessness in Perth & Kinross.

An understanding of the extent and nature of homelessness in Perth & Kinross, the awareness of the current pattern of services to tackle homelessness, and a process of informed discussion and consultation about local priorities for action (involving Council services, the homeless voluntary sector and our health partners) are the key ingredients which have determined the shape and direction of our strategy.

*The extent and nature of homelessness in Perth & Kinross.*

In the last year we believe that we have built up a clear understanding of the extent and nature of homelessness, and have a good awareness of the causes of homelessness locally.

At the end of this strategy document we have published a Profile of Homelessness for Perth & Kinross which highlights the main findings of our analysis, based on local authority statistics for 2001-02, and also the results of voluntary sector monitoring. We have learned a great deal about homelessness in Perth & Kinross from this exercise, and by using this information to inform discussions within working groups we have come to important conclusions. However, there is still work to be done, to consolidate and refine our understanding of the patterns of homelessness locally, and this remains an important focus for further work.

Key findings from our Profile of Homelessness are outlined below form the backdrop to our strategic thinking.

- The numbers of people approaching the Council to make homeless applications has been growing year on year. In 1997-98, 523 people presented to the Council and in 2002-03, we fully expect that up to 1100 people will present to the Council.
- In 2001-02, the last full year for which statistics are available, 957 people presented as homeless. After assessment, the Council had a duty to provide permanent accommodation to 30% of applicants. 5% of applicants were homeless, and deemed in priority need, but were deemed to intentionally homeless (therefore the Council duty was discharged by providing temporary accommodation and advice and assistance) Another 26% of applicants were deemed homeless but not in priority need, and therefore the Council's duty was discharged by providing advice and assistance (although note that this duty has been enhanced since October 2002).
- Of those applicants to whom the council had a duty to provide permanent accommodation the majority were households with dependent children, and within this group, single parents outnumbered couples with children by 3 to 1. A significant number of households deemed in priority need are single households, and there are several reasons for this, but we wish to highlight the growing incidence of mental illness and vulnerability because of youth as key issues for action.
- Another trend highlighted by the local analysis, is the significant number of young people presenting as homeless. Presentations from the 16 – 24 age group far outweigh what would equate to the proportion of young people in the population as whole, and indicates the need to address this within the strategy. These statistics confirm the experience of homeless agencies and housing services on the ground, that the housing system and support systems need to gear up to respond to the young homeless issue
- Applicants not deemed in priority need is another important group to consider. This group is mainly made up of single male applicants. From October 2002, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, all local authorities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to this group. Looking to the near future, when the Homelessness Act 2003 is implemented authorities will on a step by step basis have further duties to provide applicants with permanent accommodation.

The Profile of Homelessness is incomplete without consideration of homeless people who are in contact with voluntary agencies.

A 4-week survey carried out on behalf of the Voluntary Sector Forum found that there were almost 200 people in contact with voluntary agencies. Not all of the people were actually homeless, but 110 were, and others

were either formerly homeless, or in a situation where they were at risk of homelessness. Clearly, the majority of the people in the survey, although at different stages in the homelessness cycle, needed the support and assistance offered by agencies.

Looking specifically at the homeless group within the survey it was highlighted that over 40% had not had a homeless assessment. Over 50% had experienced homelessness before. The main reason given for homelessness was “relationship breakdown”, and this is a telling conclusion, although further work is needed to look into this in more detail. Alcohol problems were experienced by around 30% of the group, and this is confirmed by discussions within working groups. Alcohol misuse is often a causal factor as well as a consequence of homelessness, and many agencies report that this is a major issue.

Thus the voluntary sector findings help to confirm some of the priorities emerging from the analysis of local authority presentations (which gives a bigger but less detailed picture of needs)

- Young homeless people emerge as a priority group.
- Single parents are one of the largest groups presenting and the voluntary sector monitoring signposts the need to direct support and resettlement services towards this group.
- Couples with children need support too.
- The main group in contact with voluntary agencies is the single homeless group, mainly male but not exclusively. It is clear that many of this group need support, and specialist support with alcohol and mental health issues. Again this may be mirrored in the larger group presenting to the Council.

Beyond the most recent survey of voluntary sector agencies, in Perth & Kinross we also have monitoring information from services for rough sleepers over a period of 4 years. Much of this monitoring information has informed our strategic thinking for the RSI Outcome Agreement, and has also assisted with our Homelessness Strategy. Clearly, what stands out is the need to have high tolerance services which work with people in direct access, and a range of other accommodation and support to meet varying needs. At the most needy end, there is a need to provide support and accommodation for people with long term needs – associated with alcohol misuse, bad physical health and long term homelessness.

#### *Resources being applied to tackle homelessness in Perth & Kinross.*

Resources dedicated to tackling homelessness are invested in 3 main areas: the local authority – the Homeless Section of the Housing & Property Services; in the voluntary sector, where there are a number of agencies providing services; and in the health sector within the newly created Public Health team of the LHCC. Care Together and Education & Children’s Services also provide services for homeless people, and there are overlapping clients with community care needs and vulnerable families and young people.

Appendix 3 outlines the resource inputs being made in Perth & Kinross for tackling homelessness and the sources of revenue funding.

Revenue funding for the homelessness function within Housing & Property had grown in a piecemeal basis over the last several years, as the service had been required to respond to increasing levels of homelessness applications. In the last year, to implement the new duties of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Homelessness Implementation monies have been utilised to build capacity within this service. These have mainly been directed towards providing improved advice and assistance, more effective assessment and developing and managing temporary accommodation.

The Supporting People framework also emerges as an important revenue funding stream for housing support and resettlement services. These support services are provided in hostel settings, intermediate accommodation and as floating support to people in mainstream accommodation. The opportunity to develop services in these areas came about under the Transitional Housing Benefit scheme from April 2000. The Draft Perth & Kinross Supporting People Strategy (October 2002), further indicates the extent to which additional housing support services could be applied to tackling homelessness after April 2003. In particular, the Supporting People Strategy highlights the shortfall in tenancy support services, housing support for families, and floating support arrangements for single homeless clients - and in particular the chronic lack of housing support services for young people. These are all areas of overlap with Homelessness Strategy.

There is also variety of funding streams for other services directed towards homelessness. In non-accommodation based services - CATH Day Centre, CATH Workshop, Perth Furniture Project – funding can be stable but fixed (CATH Day Centre), linked to programmes driven by other agencies (CATH workshop funded via Scottish Enterprise) or extremely precarious and “hand to mouth” in the case of the Perth Furniture Project. As elements of the strategy place great emphasis on employment /training initiatives, developing

social networks/opportunities etc, and a furniture strategy, the current level of investment in these areas would need to be increased to deliver on objectives.

Beyond the direct services to homeless people, investment in training across the homelessness sector is limited up to this point, and determined by what can be afforded by individual agencies.

We conclude from our analysis of current resources that:

1. The Scottish Executive Implementation monies have been critical as a means of building capacity in the local authority to date, and will also provide further opportunities across the homelessness sector in pursuit of the our strategic actions.
2. The Transitional Housing Benefit scheme has emerged as a major catalyst for action in relation to prevention, tenancy support and resettlement services.
3. Non-accommodation services seem to be under-funded and suffer from insecure funding streams.
4. Historically, there has been little investment in preventative services or specifically targeted services for young homeless people – one of the key areas emerging as a priority.
5. Our frontline accommodation services are of a good standard, but more investment is required in resettlement and longer-term support arrangements.
6. Investment in training and user involvement has been very limited and this is another area for action under the Homelessness Strategy.

These then are the main conclusions to be drawn from our examination of current expenditure on homelessness services.

#### *Linked Strategies and Plans*

Links to the Supporting People Strategy have already been stressed, but it should be noted that Homelessness Strategy must incorporate or closely link with several other important strategies and plans. These are:

- The Local RSI Outcome Agreement 2002-03 agreed in April 2002 between the Scottish Executive and the Council, and being updated for 2003-04.
- The Tayside Health & Homelessness Action Plan agreed in June 2002.
- The Supporting People Strategic Plan published in draft in October 2002.
- The Children's Services Plan is also important in relation to families, children and young people.
- The Local Domestic Abuse Strategy.

Looking to the future the Homelessness Strategy will form an important element of the Local Housing Strategy, which is to be developed over the next year leading up to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004. The Community Plan will also become the overarching strategic document for Perth & Kinross and Homelessness Strategy will be linked to this, through the Health & Wellbeing thematic group and the Joint Health Improvement Plan.

#### *Equal opportunities.*

In formulating our Homelessness Strategy we understand the range of needs which homeless people present with, and the diverse nature of different groups. Much of our Strategy is concerned with reaching out to excluded groups: ensuring effective assessment to identify differing needs; ensuring access for all homeless people to services – housing, health, social support, and community care; seeking to offer all homeless people better access to the housing system; and where necessary targeting specific services to vulnerable groups. This perspective implies a commitment in the strategy to an equal opportunities approach, aiming to provide services which to meet the needs of all people who are homeless, regardless of gender, age, race, disability or sexual orientation. In monitoring the implementation of the strategy we will focus on ensuring that equal opportunities principles are applied across the homelessness sector and all of the services which are involved. There may also be new challenges in relation the particular needs of ethnic minorities, and for example the needs of refugees, which homelessness and other frontline services must be ready to respond to, if required.

### *The Rural Dimension in Perth & Kinross*

In the course of formulating the homelessness strategy working groups have made frequent reference to geographical size of Perth & Kinross and the remoteness of some communities. There is an ongoing question for the homelessness strategy in this respect. Consultation responses to the Draft Strategy also indicated that greater weight needed to be given to the rural dimension. It is acknowledged that the majority of accommodation and support services are based in Perth. However, this is changing as increasingly voluntary agencies are providing outreach and floating support outside of Perth. In addition, the Council is committed to providing a response to homelessness which is effective across the area. Perth & Kinross Council is committed to tackling homelessness, in a manner which addresses the individual and family needs of clients – it follows, that the strategy will strive to provide locally based responses where possible. Therefore, in all parts of the strategy the Council and its partners is committed to finding the right balance between local based and centrally based responses and actions. This underlying principle runs through the Action Plan, and will be monitored through our formal monitoring and review process.

### *Main Objectives*

Turning now to the main objectives of our Homelessness Strategy. There are four main sections:

1. Preventing homelessness.
2. Responding to homelessness when it does happen.
3. Resolving homelessness,
4. Delivering the Homelessness Strategy.

## **SECTION 1. PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS.**

There is broad agreement that at the point of most homeless crises it is impossible to intervene in a way which will prevent homelessness occurring.

However, it is our view in Perth & Kinross that a preventative approach across agencies can be developed over time as part of a longer term approach, within the Homelessness Strategy.

Our analysis of homelessness in Perth & Kinross has highlighted the following areas for preventative action:

1. There are particular concerns about young homeless people and the difficult transition which many young people have from their childhood home into independence, over several years and through several homeless crises. In Perth & Kinross support services for young people are underdeveloped and there is a widespread management problem in relation to young tenants in Perth & Kinross – which is an indicator of the need for support.
2. Institutional discharge and health related problems are a key features of the long term single homelessness problem. There is a lack of a coordinated or joint approach to dealing effectively with this problem, which is a shared concern across housing, health and social work agencies.
3. The main reasons for homelessness in Perth & Kinross are related to relationship breakdown (dispute with partner) or family/household disintegration (family or friends no longer willing to accommodate) We need to explore what kind of preventative action could be relevant here and draw on good practice from elsewhere. The point has been well made by several responses to the draft strategy that domestic abuse often underlies relationship breakdown, and there may be need for specialist services in this area.
4. Other reasons for homelessness in Perth & Kinross also indicate that “the fear or threat of non domestic violence” is a growing and significant reason for homelessness in Perth & Kinross. This is major cause for concern is major cause for concern which requires action.
5. Through the Supporting People Strategy the extent of tenancy support needs through out the social rented sector has been highlighted. ( link to housing management policies)
6. The private rented sector is a major provider of accommodation in Perth & Kinross and losing private sector accommodation is also a major reason causing homelessness. There is another area where positive influence can be brought to bear in the longer term.
7. Evidence emerging from our analysis of the extent and nature of homelessness in Perth & Kinross highlights that high levels of homelessness applications come from particular estates, and more work is required to identify the significance of this for targeted preventative action.

### **TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS IN PERTH & KINROSS WE WILL :**

- develop a joint approach to homelessness education in schools and in other settings where there is a target audience of young people, which is integrated with other awareness raising programmes.
- develop early intervention strategies for “at risk” groups with a particular focus on young people at risk of homelessness – including mediation, respite accommodation, planned re-housing.
- develop a planned approach to dealing with young homeless applicants by appropriate assessment.
- bring forward plans for delivering coordinated advice and assistance for people leaving institutional care, including prisons, hospitals and other specialist units.
- prevent tenancy breakdown through the further development of and targeting of floating support arrangements to at risk tenants and in particular young people, and look at possible local approaches in relation to family /relationship counselling and or mediation services, including outreach services for people at risk of domestic abuse.

- refocus housing and estate management policies towards the prevention of homelessness in the social rented sector across Perth & Kinross – including estate management issues, the administration of rent arrears, housing benefits.
- develop a strategy for working with private rented sector to extend access to accommodation for at risk groups and to ensure that tenancies are sustained.
- research further the geographical distribution of homeless presentations in Perth & Kinross and target advice and support into “hot spot” areas.
- develop practical means of homeless people and ex homeless people rebuilding social networks which will lead to sustainable housing solutions.

## **SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE RESPONSE WHEN HOMELESSNESS DOES OCCUR.**

When homelessness does occur the Council will seek to ensure that there is a compassionate and efficient response which offers effective advice and assistance, and places homeless people in emergency or temporary accommodation which is most suitable to their needs. It is also important that where homeless clients are in a vulnerable or distressed situation that the frontline staff direct people to agencies, which may be able to offer specific advice or help.

The new duty towards non priority homeless applicants, effective from October 2002, has increased pressure on the Council's supply of emergency and temporary accommodation. The Council's own emergency hostel at Greyfriars (48 bedspaces) was augmented recently by a new satellite unit for 8 families, and further temporary furnished accommodation throughout the area. This new configuration of emergency and temporary accommodation will result in greater opportunities for homeless people to be accommodated outwith a the hostel setting and this is a welcome development, also providing the opportunity for clients to be accommodated closer to social networks. The importance of having local based temporary accommodation has been stressed in response to the Draft Strategy, particularly where there are children.

It is well known that the Greyfriars Hostel is not highly regarded by service users and there is a feeling of stigmatisation associated with staying there. This is an area where there is room for improvement.

Such is the demand for emergency accommodation that Perth & Kinross requires to continue the use of bed & breakfast accommodation for single people, and we would wish to ensure that good standards are in place. Households with children are not as a matter of policy accommodated in bed and breakfast.

There is a need to take stock of the most recent developments in temporary accommodation in Perth & Kinross.

Within the voluntary sector there are a number of hostels providing accommodation, including specific provision for rough sleepers and a local Resettlement Hostel for single homeless. These hostels provide accommodation and 24 hour support/supervision and meet different needs within the single homeless sector. There is already a high level of inter-agency working going on between voluntary agencies and also the statutory sector and this needs to be strengthened.

Working groups have highlighted the following areas of concern:

- Many of the families presenting as homeless present with differing, multiple and complex problems requiring support – including where women are fleeing domestic abuse.
- Rough sleeping continues to be a feature in Perth & Kinross and there is a need to have adequate bedspaces in place to be able to respond.
- The councils own hostel provision provides accommodation for single people and families with children and this often creates a volatile and unacceptable mix.

Underpinning the findings of Working Groups has been an understanding that homelessness crises need to be dealt within a compassionate and caring way by all staff and agencies involved. However, there is also the opportunity for agencies to engage with clients in a positive and supportive way at the point of homeless crisis, and this can be of fundamental importance for the whole process of resettlement from start to finish. Quality intervention starts with good quality advice and assistance – it is followed by robust/practical and sympathetic resettlement work, while people are in emergency accommodation, and this carries on through follow up support when accommodation has been found and allocated.

In Perth & Kinross we are committed through our Homelessness Strategy not only to providing quality accommodation which meets peoples needs, but also to a process which ensures that homeless people receive the package of advice support and assistance which they require. It is early days but this is the vision for Perth & Kinross Homelessness Strategy.

At this stage it is important to develop organisational approaches, which deals with the needs of the homeless individual or family; and which is based within a comprehensive homelessness/housing assessment process that takes into consideration not only the housing needs but the support needs, which may be short or longer term.

**IN ORDER TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO HOMELESSNESS WHEN IT DOES OCCUR WE WILL:**

- further develop the councils arrangements for delivering advice and assistance across all contact points to ensure that all homeless people receive the consistent information about the process and options available to them.
- Support the role of voluntary sector agencies in providing independent advice and advocacy in Perth & Kinross.
- At an early stage develop resettlement specialty within the council's emergency and temporary accommodation provision as part of overall framework of needs based work with homeless people.
- In emergency and temporary accommodation ensure that homeless people are provided with the specialist healthcare, and support which they require, including support from voluntary agencies who are experienced in specific areas.
- Make most effective use of local authority and voluntary sector hostels and temporary provision through the redevelopment of formal protocols.
- Monitor the usage of temporary accommodation and establish targets for temporary accommodation in Perth & Kinross to meet the overall demands for homeless accommodation from applicants to the council to whom there is a duty under current and emerging legislation.
- For young people who are homeless, develop specifically targeted advice, assistance and support arrangements and develop a range of accommodation and support options which can be offered in an emergency or on a temporary basis.
- Through the rough sleepers initiative, and in collaboration with other agencies, ensure that there is sufficient direct access provision within Perth & Kinross to ensure that no one is having to sleep rough.

### **SECTION 3. RESOLVING HOMELESSNESS**

Many of the agencies working with homeless people in Perth & Kinross have highlighted the need for homeless people to access skilled help and support to enable them to move out of homelessness effectively, and into sustainable accommodation. The need for support and the duration of support will vary from individual to individual and from family to family, and it may be varied in its nature, ranging from the highly practical (such as help with furniture) to emotional and specialist support – or even support over a long period to reestablish social networks.

The Perth & Kinross Single Homeless Strategy 1997 –2002 led to the development of a range of accommodation and support for mainly single homeless clients. A number of voluntary agencies have been established locally and also further developed in the last 5 years, providing a network of agencies able to respond to the support needs of single homeless people. There are also other well established agencies such as Women's Aid, which have a long history and which have developed in response to the particular needs of women fleeing domestic violence.

During 2002-03, the Supporting People framework has also provided an opportunity for the development of new support services targeted at many homeless groups and these include new floating support services for young people and families in particular, but also people with other particular needs.

Working Groups have highlighted the need for arrangements for the individual resolution of homelessness to be well planned. Our Strategy places great emphasis on developing a robust framework for dealing with homelessness, which begins with advice and assistance, continues with resettlement input and assessment, and then moves onto allocation of accommodation or allocation of accommodation and support where there is a need for ongoing support.

The vast majority of homeless people will not need ongoing support but there is a need to help people through the process and to link them into the mainstream services that everyone needs to live a healthy and independent life. Equally, where there is need for ongoing support this should be identified during the homelessness crisis.

In order to resolve homelessness in Perth & Kinross we will require a range of accommodation including mainstream accommodation, furnished accommodation, intermediate accommodation models as an interim step towards a secure tenancy. Alongside accommodation, support arrangements will also need to be put in place to meet a variety of needs.

#### **TO RESOLVE HOMELESSNESS IN PERTH & KINROSS WE WILL:**

- Take measures to increase and ensure access to permanent accommodation for all homeless people in conjunction with partners, by the best use of Council stock and through joint protocols with RSLs.
- For households with children ensure that there access to a range of different support including specialist support where required and also longer term tenancy related support where this is needed.
- Develop a specific approach for dealing with homelessness where it is linked to continuing anti social behaviour.
- Consolidate and further develop a range of intermediate supported accommodation to meet the particular needs of ex rough sleepers, single homeless clients, young people, ex offenders and other groups identified within the Supporting People Strategy.
- Develop a range of furniture packages available to homeless people and quantify the demand for furnished accommodation over time.
- Develop move on arrangements for homeless people to ensure that intermediate accommodation does not clog up.
- Ensure that homeless people have the opportunity to access supported and mainstream employment or training based initiatives which will assist them in moving out of homelessness, or help to sustain them in independent living.

- Provide supported accommodation to meet the needs of homeless people with long term support needs who are not going to be resettled in to mainstream accommodation.
- Continue to provide day centre based services within Perth & Kinross for homeless people and further develop the targeted support for niche groups with a focus on resettlement outcomes.

## **SECTION 4. DELIVERING THE HOMELESS STRATEGY**

We have outlined in previous sections how we intend to tackle homelessness in Perth & Kinross in terms of out broad aims, under the headings prevention, effective response and resolving homelessness. There remain some important things which we must also aim to do if the Strategy is to be effective in the long run.

1. During the term of the Single Homelessness Strategy 1997-2002 in Perth & Kinross we developed services for homeless under the planning umbrella, provided by a Single Homeless Co-ordinating Group. For the formulation of Homeless Strategy new arrangements were put in place and which built on the sound foundations of the Single Homeless Group, and over the duration of the new strategy we will need to ensure that the new Homeless Co-ordinating Group provides the focus for effective joint working on implementation. Joint working across the range of agencies will be an essential element of new strategy, and we will look to all Council services, the health sector, the voluntary sector to play their roles.
2. The commitment, goodwill and skill/expertise of staff working in homelessness is an essential ingredient for the success of the Homelessness Strategy. Much emphasis is placed on the need for the skilled advice and assistance which is needed in places where homeless people are in contact with agencies. The HomePoint Standards provide a framework for training staff in this respect. However, across the sector there is clear need for a Training Strategy which will help to build capacity and confidence in the sector, to respond to the often difficult and complex needs of homeless people.
3. Neither must we forget the telling contribution which service users can make to the formulation of strategy and there is a need to continue work that has started in relation to user involvement in Perth & Kinross.
4. The Homelessness Strategy has been focused mainly from the perspective of dealing with homelessness as a individual crisis. Our analysis at this stage has found it difficult to look at the structural issues and housing supply problems which determine the extent of homelessness in Perth & Kinross. This remains the challenge over the next year as the Local Housing Strategy is formulated. Through the Local Housing Strategy (and the development funding programme and planning system) we will seek to maximise the supply of good quality affordable housing in Perth & Kinross.

### **TO HELP US DELIVER OUR STRATEGY IN PERTH & KINROSS WE WILL:**

- Seek to ensure that the Homelessness Strategy is implemented through robust joint planning arrangements in Perth & Kinross.
- Develop a Training Plan for a homelessness sector staff in statutory and voluntary sectors.
- Continue to explore new ways of engaging with service users through the Strategy and involve them in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.
- Look at the housing supply problems in Perth & Kinross as these relate to the Homelessness Strategy through the Local Housing Strategy process in 2003-04.

## CONCLUSION

### *Objectives and Action Plan*

The broad objectives of our Strategy have now been outlined. In order to deliver on these objectives, an Action Plan is required to specify the detailed actions required under each objective. We have identified where financial resources are already being lined up for specific actions, and also timescales. However, it is our view that many of the timescales are provisional at this stage, and will become clearer as the strategy is implemented. Importantly too, our Action Plan identifies the partners who will be involved in implementing actions, and this illustrates the extent to which this Homelessness Strategy will only be effectively implemented with commitment from a range of services and agencies.

### *New Financial Resources for Homelessness Strategy.*

New financial resources are required in many parts of the Strategy. At this stage, the Scottish Executive has made available additional resources across Scotland for implementing Homelessness Strategy. Over the three year period from 2003-04 to 2005-06 the Scottish Executive has confirmed that £127million are being made available for homelessness activities in Scotland. Based on this level of allocation, in 2003-04 Perth & Kinross will receive £569,500. At this stage, our Action Plan indicates where elements of this allocation are to be directed in 2003-04, but the final direction of funding is still to be confirmed. Spending plans for 2004-05 and 2005-06 will also be developed in line with the main strategic priorities.

Clear links have also been established with our Supporting People Strategy, as a means of developing much needed resettlement and housing support arrangements for homeless people. However, there are concerns that there will not be new money available through this funding stream for 2003-04.

Money to develop furnished accommodation is also to be allocated through Communities Scotland and the amount coming to Perth & Kinross is yet to be decided.

Clearly, it will be necessary for the Strategy to move forward within constraints of the financial resources which are being made available, and through frequent review to make most effective and efficient use of available monies. However, at a time of optimism, embarking on the Action Plan, there remains the impression that additional financial resources over and above those already allocated will be necessary to deliver.

### *Monitoring the Strategy.*

For the reasons given above monitoring and reviewing the strategy and Action Plan is absolutely critical to ensuring that it remains focused and responsive. An annual report will be produced detailing the actions and outcomes being achieved. The Homelessness Co-ordinating Group in Perth & Kinross, will have an important role, as it is the multi-agency group which will oversee implementation of the strategy and which will receive regular reports and updates. Within this group, statutory agencies and voluntary sector agencies will come together to critically review progress.

A full review of the strategy will be carried out in year three of the Strategy.

In terms of Public Performance Monitoring the annual report will be fed into the Community Planning system (Health & Wellbeing Group), and the Chief Executive will formally report to the Strategic, Policy & Resources Committee of the Council.