

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10:00am, Thursday, 2 September 2021

Homelessness Services – Statutory Returns

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee is asked to note the summary of the Council's statutory homelessness returns.

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Homelessness Services – Statutory Returns

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 All local authorities are required to submit a range of data, quarterly, to the Scottish Government as part of their statutory returns process.
- 2.2 The latest publication of these returns was on 29 June 2021 and covered the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021.
- 2.3 This report will highlight key areas of performance and the link to the full publication can be found in section 8.
- 2.4 This report contains comparisons with the previous years' data, however it is important to note that the global pandemic may have impacted on some of these performance areas.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council produces and reports several statistics related to the performance and delivery of homelessness services in the city.
- 3.2 These figures are collated by the Scottish Government through the returns process and are published to allow scrutiny and comparisons between local authorities.

4. Main report

- 4.1 In 2020-21, the number of households assessed as homeless by the Council showed a decrease of 44% in comparison to the previous year. This was against a national decrease of around 13% in households assessed as homeless.
- 4.2 Included in these returns is a further reduction in repeat homelessness. Repeat homelessness is where a household is assessed as homeless, less than a year after their previous homelessness is resolved.
- 4.3 Repeat homelessness was 5.5% in 2020-21. This is a reduction from 5.8% in 2019-20. This is broadly in line with the national figure for repeat homelessness at 5.4% in 2020-21.
- 4.4 The most common reason for homelessness nationally in 2020-21, is domestic ejection (being asked to leave accommodation), followed by a non-violent dispute within a household.

- 4.5 In Edinburgh in 2019-20, loss of private sector tenancy was the second most common reason for a homeless presentation. There has been a 65% reduction in homeless presentations where the applicant household has lost their private rented tenancy in 2020-21.
- 4.6 To ensure that we prevent homelessness wherever possible, the Council has employed officers to specifically work with people at risk of homelessness from the private rented sector. Results indicate that this work is having a positive impact and that homelessness has been prevented for many households. Reductions in evictions from this sector will also have contributed to the decrease in numbers.
- 4.7 In 2020-21, the percentage of households sleeping rough the night before presenting as homeless was 5.3%, this was above the national average of 4.4%. However, this was consistent with 2019-20, when it was 5.2%.
- 4.8 The Council continues to focus on maintaining contact with service users. Figures show that the Council maintains contact from advice and assessment to conclusion of the homelessness case in 86% of cases. This is consistent with 2019-20.
- 4.9 The Council continued to report breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order (families or pregnant women in unsuitable accommodation). In 2020-21, the order was breached 19 times. This is a 95% reduction on 2019-20.
- 4.10 A failure to accommodate occurred on 525 occasions during 2020-21. This was a 20% reduction on 2019-20 figures.
- 4.11 It is still the case that around 75% of the failures to accommodate also happened outside normal Council opening hours, where the availability of accommodation can be limited, particularly if the service user has had several placements which have ended unsuccessfully or risk factors are involved.
- 4.12 In order, to tackle the challenges in providing accommodation outside normal hours for vulnerable services users, the Council and its partners have developed and expanded rapid access accommodation services. This is accommodation which can be accessed 24 hours per day directly by street-based outreach workers.
- 4.13 The Council's Homelessness Task Force was reconvened with a focus on identifying further solutions for the most vulnerable service users, as when people have experienced severe trauma in their lives it can make it difficult to sustain traditional forms of temporary accommodation.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will provide more regular updates on performance to Committee through the Homelessness Services Dashboard, also on the agenda for 2 September 2021 Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee.
- 5.2 Officers will provide an annual summary of the 2021-22 statutory returns in August 2022.

6. Financial impact

6.1 None.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1 None.

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/>

9. Appendices

9.1 None.