Supported Accommodation

Background

1. This paper is provided to inform the Committee of on-going cross sector work being taking forward in relation to the provision of supported accommodation which may have implications for preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness amongst young people in Scotland in the future. Details are provided below on the Supported Accommodation Implementation Group (SAIG), established in November 2011 to take forward the recommendations of the earlier Supported Accommodation Working Group (SAWG).

2. Both SAIG and the earlier SAWG have a strong focus on improving provision for young people at risk of homelessness, although not exclusively given the potential risk to other groups irrespective of age e.g., armed forces veterans, prisoners. SAWG was initially set up at the request of Ministers, following concern expressed at the 2012 SG/COSLA Steering Group about the numbers of young people becoming homeless. The focus of both groups has been on the provision of both purpose built residential supported accommodation and on 'floating support' within settled mainstream accommodation.

3. SAWG met for the first time in March 2010 and provided recommendations in March 2011, with Linda McTavish, Principal of Anniesland College as Chair. Ministers requested the establishment of an Implementation Group to take forward these recommendations and the Minister of Housing and Transport met with the new Chair in August 2011. The Minister has asked to be provided with regular updates on the progress of the work of the Group.

Supported Accommodation Implementation Group (SAIG)

4. The Supported Accommodation Implementation Group (SAIG) has been established to consider how best to take forward the recommendations of the Cross Sector Supported Accommodation Working Group (SAWG) Final Report, originally published in March 2011. The chair is Ken Milroy, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Foyer, and the group met for the first time on 24 November 2011 to agree a remit and workplan with the intention of producing proposals for implementation in relation to supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness across Scotland by November 2012.

5. It is intended that the group will have meetings in March and June 2012 to address the themes of the SAWG recommendations around models of practice, funding, employability and general issues and a final meeting to agree proposals in October 2012. Membership is cross sector and the secretariat (provided by the Scottish Government Homelessness Team) will

work with stakeholders not represented on the group to ensure any evidence submitted is included in the deliberations of the group.

6. The group will also work with stakeholders to ensure service user involvement is a feature of the work of the group. The Scottish Homelessness and Involvement Network (SHIEN), which is funded by the Scottish Government to promote service user involvement amongst those that have experienced homelessness, is represented on the Group.

7. The remit of SAIG, agreed at the first meeting in November 2011 is:

To inform and influence progress towards the implementation of recommendations of the Cross Sector Supported Accommodation Working Group Final Report aimed at supporting the development of a network of supported accommodation across Scotland for those at particular risk of homelessness including young people. To provide proposals for cross sector stakeholders to develop and where possible, improve, current practice and provision within supported accommodation across Scotland in line with Scottish Government objectives for tackling and preventing homelessness.

8. With the establishment of SAIG, it has been recognised that there have been wider policy developments since the publication of SAWG recommendations in March 2011, which SAIG will need to consider in taking forward its work plan e.g., proposals for welfare reform. The Department for Work and Pensions proposes major changes to the way housing benefit is calculated and delivered in relation to Supported Accommodation. It is not yet clear precisely what these changes will be but given their potentially significant impact, SAIG and other stakeholders focussing on tackling and preventing homelessness in Scotland will wish to monitor developments in this area.

The Recommendations of SAWG : Published March 2011

Models of Practice

1) Provision should be as flexible and tailored to the individual as possible to avoid available accommodation dictating the response from housing providers ahead of support needs. Services should go beyond the provision of housing and be needs driven and focussed on outcomes not processes.

2) There is a need for a wide range of options and services for the diverse client group at risk of homelessness. Accommodation based and non-accommodation based services (such as floating support in mainstream tenancies) should be available alongside generic and specialist support.

3) Timing is vital to successful outcomes with the initial assessment process crucial to positive outcomes in all supported accommodation services. This assessment should include health, employability and financial advice with awareness that not all issues which may affect positive outcomes will necessarily be revealed at the initial assessment stage.

4) Empowerment of the individual through participation and involvement must be central to the delivery of all supported accommodation services and may be linked to personal recovery. Peer support, voluntary and paid, should be utilised where appropriate as an important part of this process. This approach should be taken forward in the context of the national personalisation and self directed support agenda.

5) All supported accommodation services should be aware that for service users, supportive relationships with staff are likely to be the most important factor, with nurturing and care existing alongside the opportunity to get involved in a variety of positive activities. Where support is residential, smaller scale provision is more likely to benefit service users.

Funding

6) Existing Local and Regional planning frameworks should be utilised for developing supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness with consideration given to a funding mechanism to incentivise shared planning. The priority of any fund should be to release funds from silos to areas of need. Any funding initiatives for developing supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness across Scotland need to be part of a clear planning framework which addresses both the capital and revenue needs of services.

7) Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have an important contribution to make in the expansion of supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness in Scotland, working strategically with local authorities. To allow RSLs to develop this role, it is recommended that a funding stream with similar objectives to Wider Role be maintained or developed as an important driver in this process.

8) In a period of restricted public spending, non government funding can have an important contribution to make to the expansion of supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness in Scotland. New levers for attracting non-Government money alongside or linked to existing funding streams should be explored. The funding model of Inspiring Scotland and other models across the world provide a guide for promoting innovation and levering in resources to develop social philanthropy in this area. Promoting the establishment of Trust Funds for attracting money to supported accommodation on a themed basis should also be considered.

9) Social return on investment models and other approaches for measuring outcomes should be piloted around supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness taking advantage of the new Better Futures housing support monitoring tool.

Employability

10) Employability support should be part of the core service offered in supported accommodation. All housing support providers should be able to ensure that employability related activity is a core element of support and this may require staff training. It should also be recognised there is also a direct link between participation and involvement of service users and the development of employability skills and these should be encouraged.

11) The further education sector can have a role to play in the provision of supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness in Scotland and links between housing support providers and this sector should be strengthened to support those colleges that aspire to develop this role.

12) A lever already exists to enable housing support providers to participate in employability strategies for young people through the work of local authority-led More Choices More Chances (MCMC) Partnerships. Housing providers are encouraged to link in to these Partnerships either individually or through a network approach. This will help to ensure that the needs of young people requiring housing support are considered and that local direction and developments are related back to housing support partners. The Better Futures housing support monitoring tool has a role to play in measuring progress.

13) While recognising that benefit trap issues remain for those at risk of homelessness in supported accommodation, models of innovative practice for the development of employability skills and provision of employability support in supported accommodation already exist across Scotland and shared practice and signposting could be enhanced. The Scottish Government's Employability Learning Network should be promoted and more fully utilised as a national resource including for those delivering supported accommodation services across Scotland.

General

14) It is vital to emphasise the importance of continuing adequate and appropriate welfare benefits for young people at risk of homelessness to the Department of Work and Pensions. Without these, strategies to improve outcomes for those at risk of homelessness through the use of supported accommodation will be undermined.

15) Development and sharing of practice in provision of supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness should be linked to existing national, local and regional planning frameworks, particularly local housing strategies, and including Community Planning Partnerships and Community Justice Authorities. This approach should include housing investment and supply, local authority regional hubs on preventing homelessness and existing or new funding streams. This will allow a holistic view to be taken across and within partner organisations. A common approach focussed on tenancy sustainment should be one of the priorities in preventing homelessness across Scotland.

16) Models already exist which could provide a national framework for the development of supported accommodation for those at risk of homelessness. The priority should be to bring housing closer to the needs of specific groups at risk of homelessness and a multi agency strategy utilising existing frameworks and a similar approach to Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) should be adopted.

Supported Accommodation Implementation Group
2 February 2012