

# West of Scotland HOUSING OPTIONS HUB



## Welcome to the first newsletter of the West of Scotland Housing Options Hub

It covers our journey so far (from 2011 until now) and we hope you find it useful. If you have any questions or comments please email [claire@ghn.org.uk](mailto:claire@ghn.org.uk)

## A Bit About Housing Options (And Hubs)

Housing Options is an approach to preventing homelessness that aims to maximise the choices available to people about where they live, intervening as early as possible to:

- Sustain housing solutions and prevent housing crisis;
- Identify all options across all tenures as the solution may lie somewhere we don't normally look;
- Empower customers to make informed choices;
- Meet housing and other relevant needs through strong partnerships;
- Assist customers to meet their housing aspirations.



The Hub's Protocol Signing event October 2012

The Housing Options approach has been strongly endorsed by the Scottish Government which has funded the development and implementation of regional hubs across Scotland with the aim of partners coming together to share best practice, test new ideas and commission training and research.

The West of Scotland Hub is one of 5 alongside hubs in the North and Islands, Tayside, Fife & Central, the East of Scotland and the South of Scotland.

## A Bit About Who We Are

The West of Scotland Housing Options Hub is made up of 9 partner organisations representing 7 local authority areas:

- East Dunbartonshire Council: Grant Mackintosh;
- East Renfrewshire Council: Lisa Burrett;
- Glasgow City Council: Gary Quinn;
- North Lanarkshire Council: Julie Hunter and Aileen Gormley;
- Renfrewshire Council: Ann Carruthers;
- South Lanarkshire Council: Tracy Lindsay;
- West Dunbartonshire Council: Jennifer MacMahon;
- Wheatley Group (GHA): Catherine Wilkie;
- Scottish Government: Marion Gibbs

## Agreeing Some Principles

The Hub has been meeting regularly since 2011 when everyone was in the early stages of developing their Housing Options services. From the beginning we recognised that, while the contexts within the 7 local authority areas were different, we wanted to set out an agreed understanding and establish a set of underlying principles that we would all work towards.

To help inform a set of shared principles we consulted widely with a range of partners across all of the local authorities, including organisations such as the Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations, local Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Scottish Government. We hosted three stakeholder consultation sessions at which we:

- discussed learning from other parts of the UK; and
- collectively considered how to deliver a person centred approach in housing options.

The terms of this shared commitment across the West of Scotland was set out in our Protocol document which was launched by Margaret Burgess MSP, Minister for Housing and Welfare in October 2012.

## Taking The Protocol Forward

Our work over the past 2 years has focused on turning the common understanding we set out in the Protocol into practical achievements.

To do this we have developed an action plan for the Hub to set out a clear agreement on making best use of the funding from the Scottish Government. While all Hub partners are at different stages of development, we all work towards our overarching action plan.

There are two key elements that we have made good progress on.

### Training

Our Protocol states that “partners recognise that staff with the right knowledge, skills and abilities will be critical to the deliver of housing options ... [we] recognise the importance of training and commit to sharing training and delivering joint training where appropriate”

As such, the development of high quality training for frontline staff has been at the top of our agenda. We are delighted to have started working in partnership with Tayside, Fife and Central Hub to commission a training toolkit covering the following key themes:

- Introduction to Housing Options;
- Accessing Accommodation;
- Maintaining Accommodation;
- Health & Wellbeing;
- Income & Affordability; and
- Employment & Training.

Real progress has been made over recent months and we hope to be in a position to start delivering high quality training during 2015 and we look forward to telling you more about it in future editions of the newsletter.



## Monitoring our Performance

Our Protocol states that “partners recognise the importance and benefits associated with a joint performance management framework to monitor progress and manage change and commit to developing this.”

To ensure that we are in a strong position to evidence where we are achieving positive outcomes and where we need to continue to improve we have commissioned a short term piece of research to develop a Performance Monitoring Framework to be used by all Hub members. This framework will incorporate a set of core indicators, definitions and supporting principles that partners can benchmark against to improve performance.

This work is currently ongoing and we should be completed early in the New Year.

## Developing Housing Options Guidance

The Scottish Housing Regulator recently carried out a thematic inquiry into the development and delivery of Housing Options across Scotland. One of the key recommendations from this inquiry was that national Housing Options guidance should be developed. Since promoting and sharing learning is one of the key principles of our protocol a number of West Hub members have been part of the Steering Group to take forward the development of the guidance.

This work is nearing completion and is due to report at the end of the year.

## Ideas For The Future

While our recent focus has been on training and monitoring performance, we also have a number of other areas of work that we hope to develop throughout 2015. While still in the early stages, we aim to:

- Develop a website for the West Hub;
- Host a stakeholder event to engage with more of our partners; and
- Carry out a series of thematic studies (initially on people’s transitions from prison) that help us continue to learn from each other’s practice and ensure that we deliver consistent, high quality interventions across the whole hub.

We’ll hopefully be able to tell you more about these ideas in the next edition of the newsletter early in 2015.