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**Report to: Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting: 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

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**Subject: Homeless Performance Update**

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**Report by: Strategic Director (Place)**

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## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. This report is to provide an update to the Committee on Homelessness presentation rates and performance in managing such presentations.
- 1.2. A further paper on planned Homeless Prevention activity will be brought to Audit and Scrutiny Committee later in the year.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Committee:
  - Notes the performance information contained whilst commenting and challenging as appropriate.
  - Notes that to September 2023 the national statistics show an increase across Scotland in all key homeless indicators.
  - Notes that homeless presentation rates in Clackmannanshire in 2023/24 have remained at a similar level to those in 2022-23.
  - Notes that despite high presentation rates the proportion of households in temporary accommodation across Clackmannanshire is below the national average.
  - Note that the length of time which people have to spend in temporary accommodation within Clackmannanshire is below the national average.
  - Note the increased pressures and demands on the service and the plan to provide members with an update on homeless prevention activity at the first Housing Performance Meeting to be held following recess.

## **3.0 Considerations**

- 3.1. The Scottish Government's national statistics publication for Homelessness in Scotland in 2022-23 showed that Clackmannanshire Council has the third highest rate of application by population in Scotland.
- 3.2. This is not a new development; Clackmannanshire has been amongst the highest presentation rates for as long as the current statistical records, beginning in 2002, show. Indeed, in the period 2004-2006

Clackmannanshire had the highest rate in Scotland at more than double the national average for homeless presentation.

- 3.3. There are many variables at play and it is difficult to determine why application rates are higher in Clackmannanshire. Comparisons between different authority areas are not always possible given differing recording and intake methodologies rather than the stated reason for the homeless application.
- 3.4. Many areas with pockets of deprivation and insufficient affordable housing, like Clackmannanshire, suffer from high levels of homelessness but Clackmannanshire remains at the high end of the scale. Clackmannanshire Council's Homeless Service has been, and remains, particularly accessible and we are confident that the figures collected in Clackmannanshire are accurate and that all homeless applicants are correctly identified and appropriately recorded.
- 3.5. Numbers of applications have dropped over the years, from a peak of 1,157 in 2005/6 to a low of 459 in 2016/17. In 2022/23, 593 applications were received and a similar figure of 589 applications have been received in the year to date from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (Appendix 1 – Table 1).
- 3.6. The most common reasons for homelessness presentations in Clackmannanshire are 'asked to leave' (19%) most commonly by family members, and 'relationship breakdown' (28.5%) (Appendix 1 Table 3). This is in line with the national position (Appendix 1 Table 3a).
- 3.7. Other areas of concern include the fleeing of non-domestic violence (6.2%) and within household violent or abusive disputes (6%) as illustrated in the tables provided. Further research is required to examine these issues and the Council and partners overall approach in interventions in this area.
- 3.8. The relatively high volume of applications does place a strain on the authority with respect to the provision of temporary accommodation. The appendix to this report reflects this position, but also illustrates that the potential impact is mitigated to some extent with above average performance in the time taken to resolve applications (when compared to the national average for 2022-23). For example, despite presentation rates higher than the national average, the proportion of households in temporary accommodation is below the national average.

#### **4.0 Key Performance in Homelessness**

- 4.1. Appendix 1 provides performance overview information relevant to Clackmannanshire Council's current homelessness position.
- 4.2. The Scottish Government's national statistics publication for Homelessness in Scotland for this current financial year 2023-24 will not be made available until later in the calendar year, comparison with other local authorities nationally is not then available at this time.
- 4.3. The Scottish Government published the statistics bulletin Homelessness in Scotland: update to 30 September 2023, providing mid-year homelessness information for Scotland (Appendix 1: Table 2). These latest figures show

that homelessness is a growing challenge for all local authorities. This is largely due to issues such as the high cost of living, and pressures on the housing system nationally in terms of availability, accessibility and affordability of housing.

- 4.4. Nationally, there have been increases across all key homelessness indicators:
- The number of live/open cases has increased by 10% to 30,724. These are people/households that local authorities have accepted a homelessness duty to, who are waiting on an offer of permanent accommodation.
  - The number of new homelessness applications in the 12 months to 30 September 2023 increased by 7% nationally.
  - The number of households in temporary accommodation in Scotland increased by 8% to 15,625.
  - The number of children in temporary accommodation in Scotland also increased by 8% to 9,860.
- 4.5. The Council had 345 live homeless cases as of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024, with 43 cases under-offer. This number of live cases is a 7.5% increase from the 321 cases at 2022/23 year end. Work has been done to increase the staffing resource within this area following approval gained at Council in June 2023 to recruit to positions of Housing Officers and although this has not reduced the overall caseload it has reduced down the number of cases being managed by each staff member and allowed valuable time to be afforded to in person homeless tenancy visits, a key role of the Housing Officer.
- 4.6. At time of writing this report there are 142 households in temporary accommodation, this compares to 127 households at 2022/23 year end equating to a near 12% increase. 33 current households have children, the majority of households are single male adults (Appendix 1 – Table 4). All households with children are staying in self contained flats within Clackmannanshire, none are in B&B style accommodation.
- 4.7. In terms of average length of stay in temporary accommodation, the national average for the 12 months to 30 September 2023 was 216 days. In Clackmannanshire the average duration of stay is 150 days.
- 4.8. Average homeless case duration is not covered in detail in the Scottish Government's mid-year report. Our average case duration in 2022-23 (the time taken from assessment to closure of application) was 200 days with 58% of those persons being found homeless then rehoused in local authority stock and 17% with our RSL partners. The national average at 2022/23 was 266 days.
- 4.9. Performance management of all steps in the homelessness journey is critical to the success of the whole system, and ensuring that the delicate balance between having sufficient suitable temporary accommodation without impeding on availability of destination homes is a challenge each day for our staff.

## 5.0 Prevention Activity

- 5.1. The service has limited capacity to focus on strategic homeless intervention activity and to review, the related, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP). Progress on implementation of the RRTP actions has been limited due to a lack of available resources and those resources having been redirected to Covid related activities during the pandemic. The primary focus, at this time, is to focus on statutory requirements relating to the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) and Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA).
- 5.2. It is proposed that during the recess, possible prevention activities are further examined with colleagues, primarily in the People Directorate including the Family Wellbeing Partnership, a briefing for members on what may be deliverable and actionable could then be held at the first Housing Performance Meeting to be scheduled after recess.
- 5.3. In brief some of the prevention considerations may include –
  - exploring opportunities to work collaboratively with other service areas, the third sector and the local employability partnership to target funding where it can best help to support early prevention and intervention. The reasons for homeless presentations highlighted in sections 3.6 and 3.7 are areas of practice that our collective intervention activities need to focus on.
  - architectural changes to managed temporary accommodation blocks. This would involve increasing the occupation density of those blocks by splitting existing units into a greater number of smaller, self-contained, units. Work is required with a range of specialist advisers to explore the viability of this option.
  - setting up of new tenancies for homeless persons leaving temporary accommodation but who do not meet the exacting requirements to qualify for grant assistance from the Scottish Welfare Funds. This group often lack the financial means to set up a home and this can delay their move from temporary accommodation and have a detrimental impact upon tenancy sustainment, increasing the potential for repeat homelessness. The service is considering the guidance relating to the Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan (RRTP) grant fund to understand if this could be enacted to address this issue. If possible, this might create an opportunity for the Council to work with third sector furniture recycling services and, thus, assist with the community wealth building agenda.
  - recruitment to key positions within the Strategic Housing and Housing Support teams in line with the approved Housing Restructure. Delivery of money advice services will be a key focus for the team.

## **6.0 Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO)**

- 6.1. The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014 (UAO) came into force in 2014 and set out types of homeless accommodation deemed as unsuitable for families with children, or pregnant woman. Examples of unsuitable accommodation included: B&Bs, hostels, shared accommodation, or accommodation outwith the local authority area. The Council is deemed to have breached the order if a household is in unsuitable accommodation for more than 7 nights.
- 6.2. In 2020 the order was extended to apply to all homeless households. Due to the Covid-19 response implementation was delayed until 30 September 2021.
- 6.3. Prior to lockdown Clackmannanshire Council did not have any households in B&B or hostels. We had a small number of single applicants staying in shared flats in Stirling, who were moved back to Clackmannanshire as quickly as possible. Since March 2020 we have stopped this accommodation being used as shared, with only one household placed in each flat. We have continued to work extremely hard to ensure children or pregnant applicants are not placed in unsuitable accommodation.
- 6.4. At February 2024, the Council had 23 households in temporary accommodation outwith the local authority area (13 of these are self contained flats which are only unsuitable due to being outwith the area) and 4 households in unsuitable accommodation within the area. (Appendix 1 – Table 5). The use of unsuitable accommodation is at the highest it has been this year with a 58% increase in the 6 months from September 2023 to February 2024. The pressures noted in section 8.2 have contributed to this increase.
- 6.5. The service has discussed the “outwith area” matter with the Scottish Government arguing that the indicator would unnecessarily penalise small authorities such as Clackmannanshire, and would suggest poor performance where none existed. Larger Scottish authorities could displace an individual applicant by as much as 200km without breaching this test.
- 6.6. It was proposed that a more appropriate test would focus on the applicant’s access to support and family networks, work and travel links, one of the reasons why there is little temporary accommodation in more remote parts of Clackmannanshire. The Scottish Government were not persuaded by our proposals and, consequently, our breach of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order continues to be reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of our Annual Assurance Statement submissions to the Regulator, the most recent of these provided on 31st October 2023. In the year to 30 September 2023, there were 4,305 breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order by 25 local authorities.
- 6.7. As part of the Engagement Plan for 2023-2024 the Regulator visited the authority in December 2023 and met with the Housing team to discuss the challenges faced in complying with the UAO and our pressures more generally in managing homeless caseload. Whilst the Regulator was satisfied that sufficient assurance was able to be provided in respect of the manner in which the authority manages homelessness full and formal

feedback is yet to be provided. Given the scale of the problem we can expect that the Engagement Plan for 2024-25 will include for continued assessment of our management of homelessness.

- 6.8. A detailed analysis of Clackmannanshire's approach to homelessness accommodation provision and applicant's discharge to permanent accommodation was included in our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, presented to Council back in March 2019. It was determined that the Council's needs based allocations policy, and that of our partner Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), played a positive part in reducing homelessness by offering an alternate route to accommodation for people with a range of housing needs. The evidence suggested that the housing system in Clackmannanshire was working well but suffered from a significant shortage of affordable housing. Little has changed in the time period from then until now.
- 6.9. The above finding creates a dilemma; with insufficient permanent accommodation to meet needs the demand for temporary accommodation grows. Removing existing stock to increase the number of homeless accommodation units only exacerbates the shortage of permanent accommodation. The service currently let 66% of void properties to homeless households, this has increased year on year from 47% in 2019/20. Increasing this percentage further would adversely affect the number of mainstream properties available for take up by those moving from homeless temporary accommodation to a mainstream tenancy.
- 6.10. There is a clear need to increase the numbers of affordable housing units within Clackmannanshire. There are of course other avenues which can be explored to help reduce homelessness demand and the service will seek to bring these forward as part of a future paper on Homeless Prevention activity, there is however no doubt that a continued focus to increase the number of housing units available to the authority must be maintained.

## **7.0 Accommodation & Process Review**

- 7.1. As detailed above we have real challenges with temporary accommodation provision.
- 7.2. There are currently a large number of Void including Off The Shelf (OTS) buy back properties awaiting refurbishment works. Approval gained at Council in late June 2023 allowed for additional financial and external contractor resource capacity to be made available to address the issue with aim of driving down the number of empty properties carried.
- 7.3. Progress in this area has been slower than originally anticipated and this has impacted on our ability to allocate properties to those who require them, however, we are confident that notable improvement will be evident by the end of the first quarter of the new financial year. We will commit to bring an update on void property and OTS buy back performance to June Committee.
- 7.4. Reporting of on all areas of housing performance against the outcomes of the Social Housing Charter will be provided to the Scottish Housing

Regulator via our Annual Return of Charter , this is required by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024, the service aim is to bring this report to Council ahead of submission.

- 7.5. The Service continues to monitor the local housing market for properties which might boost our own stock of suitable accommodation, in 2023/24 we increased by 100% the number of properties purchased from the market from 20 units to 40 units in year. As part of the HRA Capital Budget for 2024/25 (approved by Council in February 2024) there is provision for purchase of a further 40 units within financial year 2024/25.
- 7.6. Owing to complex Housing Benefit subsidy rules, the Council's ownership of its own temporary accommodation remains, by a significant margin, the most financially viable delivery method.
- 7.7. Use of non-Council owned accommodation results in a subsidy payment loss from DWP with that loss showing within the Partnership&Performance (P&P) Service budgets. The recent increase in use of accommodation out with area impacts upon P&P's ability to meet its savings targets.

## **8.0 Additional Pressures**

- 8.1. Homelessness is a growing challenge for all local authorities. This is largely due to issues such as the high cost of living, and pressures on the housing system nationally in relation to availability, accessibility and affordability of housing.
- 8.2. Other factors have impacted our ability to provide housing; the presence of RAAC found within a small proportion of the councils housing stock, the temporary re-location of our gypsy travelling community from Westhaugh to within our domestic housing stock and the necessity to find suitable accommodation for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine have all added increased pressure on housing supply at a time when it is in high demand.
- 8.3. Recent cuts made to the budget for the delivery of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) make reaching the Scottish Governments target of 110,000 affordable homes to be built nationally by 2032 an extremely challenging one.
- 8.4. Construction industry supply chain disruption and external contractor pricing (which although stabilising) has remained high and has settled at post covid inflation levels. This calls into question the affordability of new build housing development with tender prices for these works returning high and in some instances above the benchmark threshold set by the Scottish Government for providing affordable housing supply grant funding. The slow progress of development does not help to tackle increasing waiting list demand.
- 8.5. The service continue to work with the Scottish Government and our local RSL partners to try to deliver new housing supply in line with the programme outlined within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024-29 agreed at Council in November 2023.
- 8.6. Changes to the private sector rent cap from 1st April 2024 may lead to rising private sector rent costs with a number of tenants at risk of becoming homeless. There is also the potential for some private landlords to leave the

market if an acceptable return from rents cannot be achieved and this contributing to a reduction in the number of properties available for private let.

- 8.7. The Scottish Governments removal of the “local connection” test and suspension of the referral process between local authorities has not as yet impacted significantly on homeless presentation numbers with more movement from within the county to other local authority areas than there has been into the area. In most cases where presentations have been made this has been for emergency overnight temporary accommodation only with no follow up application then made for permanent housing within the County. The service continues to liaise closely with neighbouring local authorities in this matter.

## 9.0 Sustainability Implications

- 9.1. None

## 10.0 Resource Implications

- 10.1. Financial Details

- 10.2. The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate.

Yes

- 10.3. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report.

Yes

- 10.4. Staffing

## 11.0 Exempt Reports

- 11.1. Is this report exempt? Yes  (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

### 11.2. Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

- (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box )

- Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all
- Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life
- Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential
- Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish



(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

**12.0 Equalities Impact**

12.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes

**13.0 Legality**

13.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

**12.0 Appendices**

14.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

Appendix 1 – Homeless Performance Data

**13.0 Background Papers**

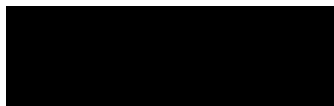
13.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes (please list the documents below)

**Author(s)**

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**Approved by**

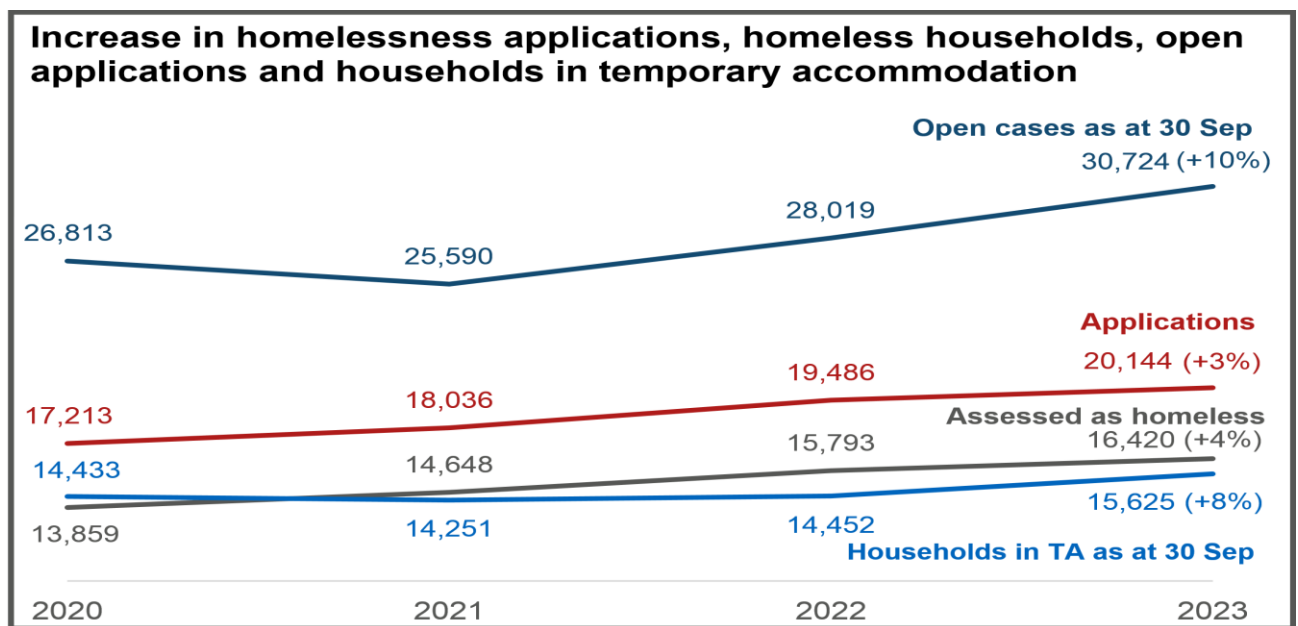
<b>NAME</b>	<b>DESIGNATION</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
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## Appendix 1 – Homeless Performance Data – March 2024

**Table 1: Number of Homelessness Applications 2014-2024**

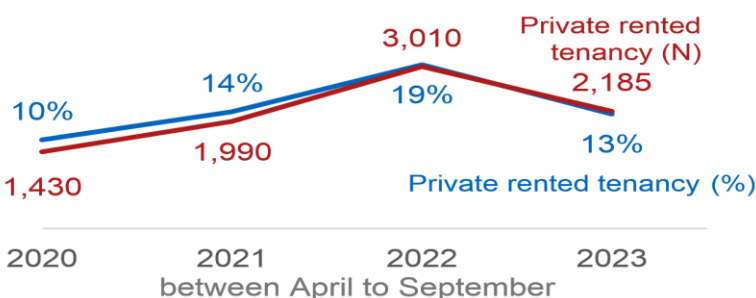
2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 to date
457	472	459	515	553	523	502	551	593	589

**Table 2: Scottish Government published statistical bulletin Homelessness in Scotland: update to 30 September 2023, mid-year homelessness information for Scotland.**

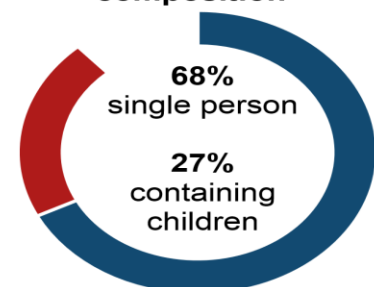


9,860 children in temporary accommodation as at 30 Sep 2023, an 8% increase compared to as at 30 Sep 2022 (9,125).

### Decrease in number and proportion of households becoming homeless from private rented tenancy, likely due to legislation



### Homeless household composition



### Rough sleeping

1,408 applicants reported rough sleeping during the previous three months (7% of all applications)

888 applicants reported rough sleeping the night before (4% of all applications)



82% of unintentionally homeless households secured settled accommodation

**Table 3: Number and Reasons for Homeless Presentations – Clackmannanshire Council 2023-24 to date.**

<b>Reason for Application</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024 to date</b>
Applicant terminated secure accommodation	2	9	5
Asked to leave	135	145	115
Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution	20	34	25
Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent	170	159	169
Dispute within household: violent or abusive	41	48	35
Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order from Environmental Health etc.)	0	1	4
Fleeing non-domestic violence	37	28	37
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	2	1	6
Harassment	31	25	30
Loss of service / tied accommodation	3	4	6
Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy	41	31	36
Other reason for leaving accommodation / household	38	53	63
Other reason for loss of accommodation	16	20	22
Overcrowding	3	10	9
Termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments	12	25	27

**Table 3a: Percentage and Reasons for Homeless Presentations – Clackmannanshire Council and Scotland 2022-23.**

<b>Reason for Application</b>	<b>2021-22</b>		<b>2022-23</b>	
	<b>Clacks</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Clacks</b>	<b>Scotland</b>
Applicant terminated secure accommodation	0%	2%	2%	2%
Asked to leave	25%	26%	24%	25%
Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution	4%	5%	6%	5%
Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent	31%	21%	27%	21%
Dispute within household: violent or abusive	7%	14%	8%	12%
Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order from Environmental Health etc.)	0%	0%	0%	1%
Fleeing non-domestic violence	7%	4%	5%	4%
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	0%	0%	0%	1%
Harassment	6%	3%	4%	2%
Loss of service / tied accommodation	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy	7%	7%	5%	9%
Other reason for leaving accommodation / household	7%	8%	9%	8%
Other reason for loss of accommodation	3%	6%	3%	6%
Overcrowding	1%	2%	2%	2%
Termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments	2%	2%	4%	2%

**Table 4: Households In Temporary Accommodation as at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

Children in Temporary Accommodation:

Household with Children	33
Household Without Children	109

Full breakdown:

Row Labels	Count of HL1_Household_Type
Couple with children	5
Couple without children	4
Other with children	3
Other without children	2
Single parent: Female	18
Single parent: Male	7
Single Person: Female	28
Single Person: Male	75
Grand Total	142

**Table 5: Households in Unsuitable Accommodation as at February 2024.**

	Stirling (self contained flat)	Stirling (B&B)	Falkirk (B&B)	Kirkcaldy (B&B)	Alloa (B&B)	Total
Jul-23	12	4	0	1		17
Aug-23	9	2	0	1		12
Sep-23	11	6	0	1		18
Oct-23	12	4	0	1		17
Nov-23	12	3	0	1		16
Dec-23	12	4	0	2	1	19
Jan-24	12	6	1	1	1	21
Feb-24	13	5	5	0	4	27

