



A Standard for Temporary Accommodation Results of the CIH Scotland Survey

March 2008

The Chartered Institute of Housing

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the professional body for people involved in housing and communities. We are a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. We have a diverse and growing membership of over 20,000 people – both in the public and private sectors – living and working in over 20 countries on five continents across the world. We exist to maximise the contribution that housing professionals make to the wellbeing of communities. Our vision is to be the first point of contact for - and the credible voice of - anyone involved or interested in housing.

CIH Scotland has more than 2,000 members working in local authorities, housing associations, housing co-operatives, Communities Scotland, voluntary organisations, the private sector, educational institutions and the Rent Registration Service. The CIH aims to ensure members are equipped to do their job by working to improve practice and delivery. We also represent the interests of our members in the development of strategic and national housing policy.

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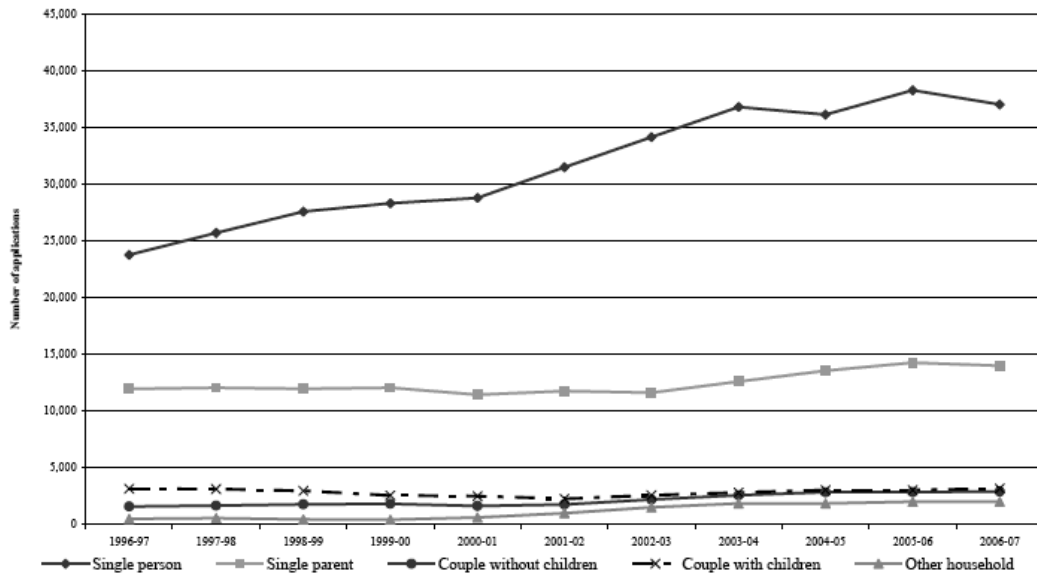
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Context

In December 2007, CIH Scotland issued the *Action Plan. A Standard for Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households*¹. It set out a proposal that all temporary accommodation for homeless households should be expected to achieve a national standard. It gave an indication of what such a standard should cover.

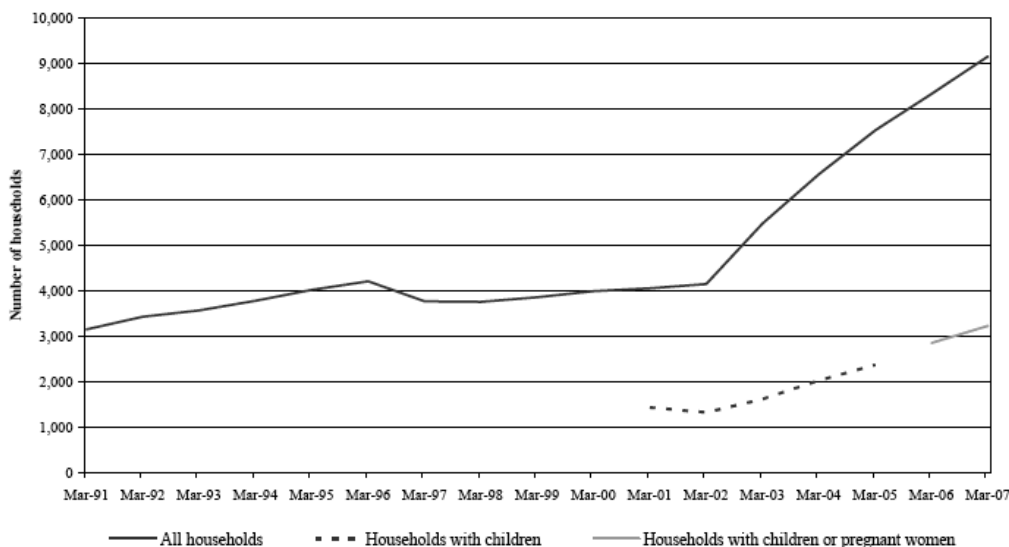
The *Action Plan* was developed in light of the rise in homelessness since 2001/01 and the consequent increase in the number of homeless households being placed in temporary accommodation. See Appendix 1 for breakdowns by local authority area.

Applications to local authorities under the Homeless Persons legislation by household type



(Source: Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: national and local authority analyses 2006-07, Scottish Government, October 2007)

Number of households in temporary accommodation in Scotland



(Source: Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: national and local authority analyses 2006-07, Scottish Government, October 2007)

¹ CIH Scotland. *Action Plan. A Standard for Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households*. CIH in Scotland <http://www.cih.org/scotland/policy/APATemporaryAccommodationforHomelessHouseholds.pdf>

Survey Results

The survey was conducted at the beginning of March 2008 to determine the views of CIH members and other housing professionals on the need for a set standard for temporary accommodation in Scotland.

Respondents

Respondents were equally split between housing professionals from local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) a few from the private housing sector and the voluntary sector and some from the 'other' category covering national housing organisations, housing academics, researchers, housing students and tenants groups. The vast majority are members of the CIH and work in a range of housing fields.

What type of organisation do you work for?

Local authority	40%
RSL /housing association	41%
Private landlord	2%
Voluntary agency	3%
Other, please specify	12%

Are you a member of the CIH?

Yes	90%
No	10%

What is your primary role within your organisation?

Strategy/policy	27%
Housing management/maintenance	39%
Homelessness	15%
Support services	8%
Development	7%
Tenant participation	3%
Other	17%

Views on a Standard

The first question asked respondents whether they supported or did not support the introduction of a standard. An overwhelming response of 97%² were in favour of standards as described in the CIH *Action Plan*.

Do you support the introduction of a standard for temporary accommodation as described in the CIH Scotland Action Plan?

Yes	97%
No	3%

Respondents were given an opportunity to give reasons for their view. Some are included below.

² 98% of CIH members who responded support a standard

“Some temporary accommodation is neither suitable nor temporary. We have incidences of families being in "temporary" accommodation for years. Some B&B spaces are worse than hostels. No children should be expected to live like this in a developed country in the 21st century”

“There needs to be a common standard throughout the service, not just the basics but accommodation that is fit for purpose”

“It is important that tenants of temporary accommodation enjoy the same standards of property and management as those in the social sector.”

“Although it brings cost issues as well as a certain amount of staff time, ultimately those staying in temporary accommodation should be able to retain their dignity, know that they are in a safe environment, and know that their basic needs are met. Staying in temporary accommodation often happens at times in life, when people are incredibly vulnerable and the standard of service and accommodation should not worsen their circumstances or impede improvement to these circumstances”

“Whether temporary or permanent accommodation everyone should demand and expect the highest standard.”

“There is already serious stigma and wrong public perception about "the Homeless" which have to be borne by homeless people at a time when they may be very vulnerable. They may also have to accept accommodation which is less than suitable in terms of location, so as a minimum, the actual physical standard of the accommodation should be guaranteed as far as possible.”

“Homeless households should have access to the same range of accommodation that is available to the general public. However RSLs should strive to ensure that temp accommodation standards reflect current guidelines for mainstream stock. This means that we should think about things like SHQS when selecting temp accommodation but it doesn't mean that resourcing temp accommodation in less desirable locations is per se inappropriate.”

“There is a need for standardisation for all temporary accommodation services throughout Scotland. This is apparent when, as an RSL, we are working with different authorities operating different methods and standards. This will provide clarification for all partners and service users and can only benefit and improve the current services provided. This may however have implications for cost and the supply of temporary accommodation.”

“It is essential that people who are experiencing homelessness have a decent standard of accommodation since they may have multiple problems to deal with.”

“Homeless households should not have their situation worsened by poor living conditions while they await a permanent tenancy.”

“There are currently too many Private lets in a poor state of repair.”

“All our accommodation meets recently introduced HMO requirements and achieving and maintaining this is expensive and time consuming. To add any other layer of regulation is entirely unnecessary. The level of regulation presently is unwieldy and without any increase in resources to meet obligations services are under threat”

“Having worked in homelessness for many years and seen some of the temporary accommodation provided it is long overdue.”

“With the pressures on accessing permanent accommodation, homeless households are often spending longer in temporary accommodation. For whatever period they are staying there the accommodation constitutes their home and this should be reflected in minimum standards in the same way as permanent accommodation is.”

“For many homeless people "temporary" accommodation is not temporary, it lasts for many weeks, months or even years. It is therefore vital that we ensure that this is accommodation of the highest standard available.”

In answer to the question on what a standard should cover there is clearly overwhelming support for it to include both physical standards and service delivery standards. The figures have an element of double counting in them as a number of respondents selected one or both of the first two options (“physical standards”, “service delivery standards”) and the final option (“both”). However, overall 82% of respondents support a standard that covers both the physical condition of the accommodation and the types of services and support offered to the homeless households.

Do you agree that standards should include the physical aspects of the accommodation (eg room size, security, accessibility) and the service delivery aspects of the accommodation (eg tenancy support, written procedures, monitoring and reporting)?

Physical standards	15%
Service delivery standards	11%
Neither	2%
Both	82%

On the subject of whether a standard should apply to all types of temporary accommodation 85% agreed that all types of temporary accommodation should be required to meet the standard. Those who did not agree that both aspects should be required to meet the standards generally felt that local authority or RSL temporary accommodation was already of a high standard. Others said the cost issues of ensuring all temporary accommodation is up to standard would be too high and some thought it may be impossible for some accommodation to meet the standard. A small number of comments suggested there is a view that sufficient regulation in place from other bodies covering some of the provision such as the Care Commission, environmental health, HMO licensing etc.

Other respondents gave views on the scope of the standard and what accommodation it should apply to:

“If the accommodation is on an emergency basis, ie following a catastrophe, then more or less anything is acceptable. We have seen people on the floors of town halls after fires, floods and storms. But where we have reasonable chance of knowing about this in advance there should be reasonable provision of space and care.”

“No child should be expected to be away from school and schoolwork for more than 2 or 3 days, no person should be expected to share toilet facilities other than on a first night basis. If we don't regulate then some people will return to Dickensian standards.”

“Particularly the condition of B&B accommodation needs to be addressed. Albeit that local authorities do not want to use B&B it is an inevitability with the current targets set to abolish Priority Need by 2012. It is well known that the current standards are very poor and this needs to be addressed at a higher level.”

All accommodation ideally should conform to a minimum standard. Standards should be more rigorous in regards to family accommodation or accommodation for those with specific vulnerabilities (age, mental health, physical disability). I don't think that standards should be so intense that overnight only accommodation or emergency response accommodation is unsuitable.

As we move towards 2012 Local Authorities are being pushed towards discharging their homelessness duties through ever increasing use of the private sector. The pressure to secure private sector leases will enhance the call for more regulation of the private sector. It is therefore

prudent to ensure relevant standards of temporary accommodation are in place at the earliest opportunity.

“We require to be confident on the qualities of accommodation provided regardless of tenure/proprietor type.”

“We need to set boundaries and promote best practice, therefore we should work to agreed service standards and encourage those who use our services to work with us to improve overall standards.”

“I think that the standard would be a target to achieve and aim for, but it would be easier to meet for some Accommodation providers than others. So I would suggest that assistance of sorts be given, financial support, and realistic timescales set to achieve these standards. Buy in by stakeholders would be achieved also if support was provided to achieve the standards.”

“No matter the range of accommodation there should be equality across service delivery. Accountability is also an issue since public money is being spent housing temporary households”.

“I think this [a standard] will safeguard people if there is more reliance on the private sector in future as proposed in Firm Foundations.”

“A sense of social justice and inclusion should be considered for all households, regardless of the temporary nature of the property or the individuals who will live in it. Good quality, well managed and maintained housing is a right for all.”

“Some authorities have to use private landlords to meet their homeless requirements. It is important that private landlords as well as social landlords are regulated. They will be receiving the money for accommodating the homeless household therefore their properties should be of an acceptable quality and standard.”

“I don't see the point of some types of temp accommodation being excluded; it makes a mockery of the situation and creates an uneven playing field and extra expense for those that comply.”

“So that all temp accommodation meets a set standard as there are varying standards of accommodation in the local authority I work in.”

“Large amounts of Housing Benefit get paid for places which are of poor standard.”

Introducing a Standard

Respondents were asked about how a standard should be introduced and were given a range of options with the ability to select more than one. The options covered whether there is a need for it to be done through legislation or whether bringing it in via guidance and the regulation framework for homelessness services was an option. A minority were in favour of achieving it via legislation. The majority would like to see a standard brought in and enforced via, guidance, local strategies and ultimately the Scottish Housing Regulator's regulation and inspection function.

What process do you think should be utilised to enforce temporary accommodation standards generally?

Regulation and Inspection	52%
A revised Code of Guidance	55%
Homelessness and Housing Strategies	43%
Statute	25%
None	1%
Other	7%

With regard to the private rented sector, which the Scottish Government is considering an enhanced role for³, respondents were less clear on how a standard should be imposed suggesting further consideration in this area is required.

Would you like to see the introduction of temporary accommodation standards in the private sector linked to any of these mechanisms?

Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme	25%
Housing (Scotland) Act 2006	29%
Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004	11%
A combination of mechanisms	57%
None	3%
Other	7%

Conclusion and recommendations

There appears to be widespread support for setting a standard for temporary accommodation. In light of the responses this support would cover all forms of temporary accommodation and both the physical condition of the accommodations and service / support provided to the household.

The current Scottish homelessness legislation has been hailed as the most far reaching and positive homelessness legislation in Europe with the target of ensuring all homeless households have a right to permanent accommodation by 2012. As progress is made toward it, there is a risk that the accommodation and services available to homeless households will become less suitable if standards are not agreed and set at an early stage.

Firm Foundations the Scottish Government's discussion paper on the future of housing foresees a greater role for the private rented sector in housing homeless households. In moving in this direction respondents have been quite clear that standards will be an issue.

With the recent Scottish Budget settlement and the new concordat with local authorities ring fencing from much of the homelessness budget and the entire Supporting People budget has been removed. This will mean that critical services to homeless households, such as tenancy support, will be competing with other financial pressures. The introduction of a standard will help support housing professionals in helping homeless households, by ensuring that quality provision can be assured now and into the future.

The CIH believes that both the quantity and quality of the responses received from members and the wider housing sector gives a clear mandate to the CIH to pursue the development of standards for temporary accommodation.

In light of the results it is recommended that the Scottish Government builds on the findings of the survey by:

- Working with stakeholders to begin developing a standard for temporary accommodation in Scotland, and from this
- Consulting widely on a draft standard,
- Consulting widely on proposal for how it should be implemented and monitored.

³ As set out in the Scottish Government's Discussion Document *Firm Foundations: The future of housing Scotland*

Appendix 1

Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: Number of applications under the Homeless Persons legislation by local authority: 1996-97 to 2006-07

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Change 05-06 to 06-07	
												Number	%
Scotland	40,989	43,135	45,723	46,023	45,004	46,540	52,043	56,635	57,396	60,436	59,096	-1,340	-2
Aberdeen City	1,916	1,739	1,797	1,800	1,584	1,516	1,579	1,840	1,623	2,076	2,321	245	12
Aberdeenshire	1,303	1,169	1,252	1,354	1,243	1,147	1,161	1,187	1,391	1,467	1,636	169	12
Angus	947	961	1,108	1,227	888	950	1,213	1,406	1,539	1,252	1,117	-135	-11
Argyll & Bute	534	474	394	347	341	493	668	905	977	1,119	995	-124	-11
Clackmannanshire	520	577	579	613	649	742	966	1,005	1,125	1,160	1,069	-91	-8
Dumfries & Galloway	1,085	1,168	1,072	1,397	1,305	1,374	1,593	1,578	1,693	1,621	1,561	-60	-4
Dundee City	1,037	1,024	1,029	1,051	861	929	957	1,154	1,461	1,940	2,086	146	8
East Ayrshire	591	789	815	662	658	703	950	1,017	1,185	1,252	1,185	-67	-5
East Dunbartonshire	482	440	399	417	400	453	517	640	554	602	655	53	9
East Lothian	1,049	1,080	930	948	896	830	834	890	999	1,113	1,127	14	1
East Renfrewshire	286	274	204	342	377	377	395	397	404	368	373	5	1
Edinburgh, City of	3,575	3,795	4,119	4,342	4,410	4,233	4,912	5,485	5,171	5,040	5,507	467	9
Eilean Siar	156	173	160	119	140	103	171	216	260	246	273	27	11
Falkirk	1,116	1,064	1,281	1,409	1,376	1,346	1,506	1,632	1,624	1,974	1,937	-37	-2

Fife	2,454	2,824	3,867	3,388	3,262	3,684	3,762	3,984	4,125	4,164	4,351	187	4
Glasgow City	12,014	12,665	13,150	12,645	12,202	13,244	13,006	12,719	10,682	11,216	10,493	-723	-6
Highland	898	979	928	816	954	985	1,389	2,103	2,308	2,459	2,192	-267	-11
Inverclyde	282	386	463	370	433	409	661	698	839	877	724	-153	-17
Midlothian ¹	427	370	466	424	363	401	444	544	610	637	655	18	3
Moray	272	403	305	280	298	348	715	629	986	1,126	804	-322	-29
North Ayrshire	740	984	1,034	1,152	1,067	1,240	1,802	1,825	1,724	1,636	1,512	-124	-8
North Lanarkshire	1,668	1,838	2,083	1,986	1,982	1,949	2,670	3,139	3,998	4,091	3,749	-342	-8
Orkney	91	105	133	163	124	157	147	166	207	192	176	-16	-8
Perth & Kinross	515	523	667	863	1,006	960	1,223	1,455	1,468	1,342	982	-360	-27
Renfrewshire	714	659	652	662	897	971	1,021	1,478	1,697	1,634	1,663	29	2
Scottish Borders, The	639	656	471	516	542	585	593	857	801	991	954	-37	-4
Shetland	203	166	148	126	181	194	166	187	162	191	224	33	17
South Ayrshire ¹	958	903	933	1,064	1,028	1,015	984	1,018	1,081	1,026	834	-192	-19
South Lanarkshire	1,795	2,038	2,007	1,977	1,968	1,873	2,369	2,496	2,278	2,412	2,400	-12	0
Stirling	883	938	1,028	917	799	777	848	859	1,036	1,053	1,090	37	4
West Dunbartonshire	831	701	645	869	1,121	1,020	1,256	1,231	1,431	2,270	2,401	131	6
West Lothian	1,008	1,270	1,604	1,777	1,649	1,532	1,565	1,895	1,957	1,889	2,050	161	9

1. Figures for 2006-07 represent an underestimate due to technical difficulties in submitting HL1 data.

(Source: Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: national and local authority analyses 2006-07, Scottish Government, October 2007)