



## **Short Term Housing Support & Homelessness Public Social Partnership**

# **Guidance on Making a Referral for General Short Term Housing Support (STHS)**

**Updated 01.10.18**

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## Introduction

It is essential with the ever increasing demand on the resources of the housing and social care sectors in Fife that Short Term Housing Support (STHS) services are used efficiently and to full effect to ensure we continue to deliver the highest standard of service to those individuals and families in housing crisis.

Fife Council's Housing Services and the commissioned housing support providers are experiencing a significant increase in the number of inappropriate referrals being made - including referrals being made to as a 'stop gap' because long term support or other services are not available to the applicant. This is having a detrimental effect on housing support resources, resulting in referrals which *are* appropriate and would benefit from housing support, having to be placed on a waiting list because the required services are not available immediately. This is placing some individuals at risk of their circumstances deteriorating further potentially increasing their risk of homelessness.

Fife Council's commissioning team and the Short Term Housing Support & Homelessness Public Social Partnership in Fife are committed to working effectively with referrers and all sectors of Health and Social Care to ensure appropriate referrals are made for housing support. The aim of this guidance is not to be restrictive but rather proactive in ensuring that the right people within our communities receive the right service with the minimal of delay.

It should be noted that this guidance excludes any support referrals to Fife Women's Aid as these referrals are made directly to the organisation and not via the central referrals point (Trust in Fife/FORT).

Many individuals and families maintain an independent lifestyle despite facing a disability, long term health condition or difficult circumstances. It is therefore critical that no referral is rejected simply on the grounds of a condition or disability alone. No matter what the circumstances referrals must meet the criteria for housing support and, in the case of short term housing support, referrers should be able to evidence that the individual has the ability and desire to work towards independence. It is for this reason that we are unable to accept referrals for individuals with a dementia diagnosis or for individuals who are living in (or in the process of moving into) residential care.

It is therefore essential that referrers include as much detail as possible about the individual's needs and circumstances leading up to the referral, the past and present support needs and potential to become independent within the remit of STHS.

The original sole aim of the Short Term Housing Support services remains as was under the 2003 Supporting People funding regime - ***for the purpose of enabling service users with short term housing support needs to maintain their tenancy and become independent in doing so.***

Updated 01.10.18

## **Section 1 – the process; eligibility for STHS; prioritising referrals; exiting the service**

### **1.1 Administration process:**

- Centralised referral and allocation system. All referrals must be sent to Trust in Fife (Lead Agent for the Homelessness & Short Term Housing Support Public Social Partnership) STHS Allocations Team and not directly to housing support providers. Referrals are received by the STHS Allocations Team via: the FORT CRMS system; Trust in Fife's web-based system (used by non-Council staff with no access to FORT CRMS); or paper referral for those with no online access.
- When a referral is received, the STHS Allocations Team ensures the referral form and risk assessment have both been completed in full. Risk information is also checked on the SWIFT system.
- STHS Allocations Team checks the information given within the referral form to assess a level of priority for each request for STHS using the criteria in this guidance document.
- All referrals completed correctly and within criteria will be placed on the waiting list awaiting allocation to a housing support provider.
- Incomplete referrals on FORT CRMS are rejected and the referrer notified of reason. Where incomplete referrals are received from alternative routes, the referrer will be contacted and the information corrected over telephone/email.
- STHS Allocations Team will check the referral against the criteria. If housing support tasks are not requested (as per the tick box selection section on the referral form), the referral will be rejected.
- ***Whilst every effort is made to allocate the provider of the applicant's choice, applicants cannot wait for a particular provider to become available, due to the lengthy delays incurred and the negative effect this places on the individual.***

### **1.2 Eligibility for Short Term Housing Support (This excludes any referrals to Fife Women's Aid as these referrals are made directly to the organisation)**

- Adult over 16 years of age. No upper age limit.
- Applicant requires enabling short term housing support to assist them to (i) sustain their accommodation (tenure-neutral) and (ii) become independent within a short period of time, as per the tasks listed in Section 2.
- Applicant requires short term housing support for the purpose of promoting their own independence, being enabled to undertake tasks themselves and move towards independent living (rather than having tasks 'done' for them). It is for this reason that we are unable to accept referrals for individuals with a dementia diagnosis or for individuals who are living in (or in the process of moving into) residential care.
- Service provided is short term only and is for period of 1 year with service user needs-led extension after 1 year up to a maximum of 2 years. The STHS provider will withdraw no later than the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the service commencing. Any service provision beyond this date cannot be funded via the Short Term Housing Support & Homelessness Public Social Partnership or by Fife Council Housing Services. This has been the formal policy of the STHS service since its inception in April 2003.
- Service provided is for a maximum of 5 hours support per week (up to 10 hours where joint visits are required).

### **1.3 Individuals requiring Long Term Housing Support**

**(This excludes any referrals to Fife Women's Aid as these referrals are made directly to the organisation)**

- Applicants requiring only Long Term Housing Support tasks cannot be accepted into the service.
- The exception to this is when the referrer identifies any short term enabling tasks which the STHS provider can support the individual with (within a timescale specified by the provider during the assessment process). However, please note we are unable to accept referrals for individuals with a dementia diagnosis or for individuals who are living in (or in the process of moving into) residential care.
- The provider will carry out these named, specific short term tasks with the individual for an identified number of weeks.  
***The tasks and length of service to be provided remain the decision of the provider and not the referrer.***

At this stage the provider will also give the service exit date (in writing to the service user and the referrer) and can signpost the referrer/service user to apply for Long Term Housing Support from Social Work Services/ Health & Social Care Partnership.

#### **1.4 Accepting urgent referrals onto the *priority* waiting list for housing support provider assessment:**

Incoming referrals are initially checked over by the STHS Allocations Team and placed on the waiting list in order of priority and in date order. Those meeting the priority categories (for quicker assessment) are placed at the top of the waiting list in date order.

The priority categories are as follows:

1. Crisis response to prevent homelessness (Prevention First referral). This means that the applicant is at tangible risk of losing their accommodation within 6 months (e.g. substantial rent arrears, Notice to Quit, residing in temporary accommodation).
2. An adult within the household is considered by Social Work Services to be an Adult at Risk (this will usually be highlighted on the SWIFT hazard system). Applicants who do not meet this SW criteria but are considered to be a vulnerable adult by the referrer (e.g. attempts of suicide / suicide ideation / subjected to financial abuse; referrer has submitted a Cause for Concern to Social Work Services; MARAC client) are also given priority.
3. A child within the household is considered by Social Work Services to be a Child at Risk (this will usually be highlighted on the SWIFT hazard system).
4. Applicant is a current service user of the Disabled Persons Housing Service (Fife) Hospital Options Project (referral will be from DPHS Fife).
5. Applicant is currently being supported by a commissioned housing support provider in Fife and requires transfer to an alternative provider for any reason (including the current provider being decommissioned).

Where an applicant is not considered to currently meet 1 of the above priority elements, their referral is placed on the regular waiting list for assessment, in date order.

When reaching the top of the waiting list (whether as a priority referral or a regular referral), the applicant will be allocated to a provider for assessment. The housing support provider will assess the referral under all the areas detailed in Section 2.

#### **1.5 Withdrawal of Short Term Housing Support service**

- Application for STHS will be closed if applicant has not been available for assessment within 1 calendar month of the referral being allocated to the STHS provider.
- Service will be withdrawn if the service user disengages.
- Service will be withdrawn when outcomes have been met or prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of service commencing (whichever is sooner).

## Section 2

### Short Term Housing Support Tasks *(This excludes any referrals to Fife Women's Aid as these referrals are made directly to the organisation)*

STHS can be provided to individuals requiring **enabling support in their home to achieve independence** with one or more of the following tenancy support tasks:

- Maximise income - **Guidance** on the following: budgeting, bill payments, accessing income maximisation ('Benefit') checks, applying for benefits, accessing energy efficiency (fuel poverty) advice, applying for welfare funding.
- Living environment - Support **to get into a routine with daily living tasks** such as healthy eating/cooking, food hygiene, cleaning, laundry, recycling, garden maintenance, dealing with correspondence and form filling, property upkeep; arranging repairs to household appliances; guidance on setting up home; guidance on arranging disability adaptations.
- Buying food – Support with shopping is strictly time limited and only as part of initial stages of budgeting and/or healthy eating support. If service user cannot achieve independence with shopping, advice and information will be given on appropriate services to meet their needs (e.g. shopping services, online ordering).
- Support to attend appointments – strictly time limited and agreed with service user depending on ongoing assessment of confidence/other factors

**As part of the provision of core tenancy support tasks, guidance can also be given on the following areas:**

- Assist service user to engage with professionals and access other services to improve their personal health (e.g. registering with a GP/ dentist, mental health, addiction services, befriending).
- Support to increase confidence to leave client's home/ use public transport.
- Accessing community groups to reduce social isolation.
- Assist service user to access education, volunteering or employment opportunities; assistance to complete forms.

**Housing support providers are not required to use staff cars to take service users shopping or to appointments.**

Short term housing support is enabling support for the purpose of promoting independence and cannot provide 'doing for' assistance with the following:

Cleaning, washing dishes, laundry, ironing, cleaning windows, doing shopping, social visits, getting service user out of their house, issuing or prompting medication, counselling, befriending, specialist mental ill health or addictions support, bathing, cooking, shopping service, form-filling service, bill payment service, any care at home-type services, decoration service, house removals, house clearances, emptying rooms (e.g. where items have been hoarded). Referrals also cannot be accepted for individuals with a dementia diagnosis or living in (or moving into) residential care. More information on when we can't accept a referral is provided in Section 3.

### **Section 3 – Inappropriate referrals for Housing Support services**

**This excludes any referrals to Fife Women's Aid as these referrals are made directly to the organisation**

**Referrals for Housing Support will be rejected in the following circumstances:**

**A) Referral Process (*referral will be rejected at point of receipt by the STHS Allocations Team – referrer will be required to correct the referral information and resubmit*)**

1. Insufficient or missing details, including NI number, date of birth, etc.
2. Risk assessment has not been completed.
3. Details of support needs are unclear or insufficient information provided necessary to make a decision regarding applicant's need for assessment (for example, if support tasks required are not clearly listed).
4. Contact details of person making referral are not included.
5. The applicant is found to have duplicate entries on FORT CRMS. (*ie. Failure to complete an appropriate search on FORT CRMS prior to creating a new case file. In this case, referrer will be rejected and referrer required to resubmit their referral via the original FORT CRMS case file and transfer the duplicated information*).
6. The referral is for an individual with a dementia diagnosis.
7. The referral is for an individual living in (or in the process of moving into) residential care.

**B) Referral for Short Term Housing Support (*referral will be rejected by the assessing STHS provider*).**

1. The referral does NOT clearly specify housing support needs as per the categories on the form.
2. The applicant did not agree to a referral being made or is found to have been coerced into accepting a referral to STHS as part of a broader agreement. (*e.g. threat of action from another service or as part of a tenancy agreement*)
3. The applicant will be unable to become fully independent due to a long term debilitating illness that requires long term support (*e.g. stroke, neurological conditions, enduring serious mental illness, dementia, Korsakoff's syndrome, loss of mobility or physical function, etc.*)
4. *The applicant is living in (or in the process of moving into) residential care.*
5. The applicant is unable to be physically present or does not have the ability to participate in the support tasks (*e.g. housebound, other physical or mental impairment where the referral is for support for shopping, attending appointments, household chores, etc.*)
6. The applicant is suffering from an enduring illness or disability and was previously being supported long term by an informal carer or family member prior to the referral to STHS.
7. The applicant is suffering from an enduring illness or disability and was previously being supported long term by long term commissioned housing support via Social Work Services / Health & Social Care Partnership.
8. The applicant does not have capacity and is unable to participate fully in making decisions regarding their daily living and lifestyle.
9. The referral is solely for needs such as: befriending, shopping, assistance with transport, housework or personal care tasks etc. (refer to Section 2, page 5).
10. Referral is for support with transport to attend a regular medical or care appointment (*STHS provider acting as patient transport/taxi service*).
11. Referral is for the purpose of organising a house/garden clearance or removal.