



HIGHLAND Homeless Trust

Evaluation Report 2010/11

The Provision of Direct Access Accommodation in Inverness

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INTRODUCTION

Between 1 November 2010 and 1 May 2011 the Highland Homeless Trust, Blythswood Care and the Inverness churches developed and extended existing service links and partnership working in the Inverness area to take forward a new model of supervised direct access accommodation for homeless and roughsleeping individuals. The service focussed on addressing the unmet social, housing, health and employability concerns of service users that were excluded from accessing rights based, mainstream social and housing services. The service was a collaborative effort between faith based groups and organisations, voluntary agencies and individuals. The development of this service was intended and designed to create opportunities for social disadvantage to be addressed in conjunction with the delivery of social, medical and nursing care provided by Highland Council, NHS Highland and a range of specialist voluntary agencies.

Integral to the provision of the supervised direct access accommodation was a significant programme of volunteer development and training. This included formal and informal training inputs conducted by Highland Homeless Trust, NHS Highland and voluntary organisations. Training inputs to volunteers covered accommodation inductions, Health & Safety, food hygiene and preparation, employability, harm reduction activities, First Aid, dealing with aggression, Basic Infection Control and client confidentiality, among others.

This report provides an account of the work carried out and highlights an analysis of use and continuing unmet need within Inverness. The report includes a number of brief case studies to highlight the personal impact that the Direct Access Accommodation service had on individual lives.

During the coldest, darkest winter months of 2010 and 2011, the Direct Access Accommodation service provided a safe, secure and welcoming place for men and women of all ages, and all nationalities, who might otherwise have found themselves with no alternative but to sleep rough.

BACKGROUND

The Direct Access Accommodation operated for those who were ineligible to receive statutory welfare benefits and/or local authority housing services or otherwise found themselves temporarily unable to access accommodation. Many individuals referred to the service presented with histories of challenging or destructive behaviour which would not be considered acceptable in many homelessness services. The Accommodation was directed at establishing a housing solution for individuals who did not have access to public funds and could not secure housing without charitable assistance.

Case Study 1

“Margaret” is a young Latvian girl who came to Scotland to work as an au pair. Unfortunately her offer of employment appears to have been a ruse used to lure her to the Highlands under wholly false pretences. Almost immediately following her arrival in Scotland an attempt was made to rape her and force her into the sex industry. Fortunately “Margaret” was able to escape and report her ordeal to the police but then found herself homeless, unemployed and alone.

“Margaret” was referred to the Direct Access Accommodation by the police and went on to stay for over 100 nights. During that time she was supported to apply for work and to recover from her horrible ordeal. “Margaret” has subsequently decided that she would like to stay in Scotland and has now secured employment and a flat.

“Margaret” is now successfully rebuilding her life and is grateful beyond words for all of the support and assistance provided to her in Inverness. She does not know how she would have coped had the service not been made available to her.

The provision of the direct access accommodation was subject to ongoing evaluation and analysis to track trends and to determine the most effective methods of intervention and support. Evaluation and analysis involved quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure individual outcomes were understood. Continuation of the service beyond 30 April 2011 is dependent on evaluation of changes to benefit legislation.

The Health and Safety of the General Public, service users, volunteers and staff was considered paramount throughout the period of service. At the inception of the service disqualifying factors for admission to the accommodation were defined as:

- Persons who have a history of sex offences and who are assessed as presenting a significant unmanageable risk to staff
- Persons who have a history of violent offences and who are assessed as presenting a significant unmanageable risk to staff
- Individuals with legal restraints that preclude them from entering social spaces
- Individuals with a serious life-threatening medical problem that may require immediate emergency medical treatment.

The Direct Access Accommodation Service was initiated to provide a place of safety, accommodation and food within an environment that encouraged the development of complementary skills including:

- Building Healthy Relationships
- Attending Behaviours - Listening Skills
- Anger and Stress Management
- Identifying Assertiveness Styles & Techniques
- Thinking Skills - Rational vs. Irrational
- Identifying Levels of Trust
- Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Language and communication skills.
- Giving & Receiving Feedback

In applying the admission criteria and encouraging complementary skill development, staff from Highland Homeless Trust and Highlander Hostel worked to ensure that those using and servicing the Direct Access Accommodation were safe, secure and not routinely exposed to risk or threatening behaviour.

ACCOMMODATION AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The basic aim of the Direct Access Accommodation was to provide safe and secure overnight accommodation and a hot meal to those with no recourse to statutory welfare benefits or local authority housing services, and to anyone who might otherwise be rough sleeping through acute housing problem.

Case Study 2

“Rosie” is a young Polish lady who came to Scotland to find work. While in Scotland “Rosie” experienced several episodes of mental health problems and eventually became unable to manage her situation, leading to her losing her job and accommodation. “Rosie” ultimately

found herself in prison and, following release, was referred to the accommodation by Highland Council staff who had found her sleeping rough.

Unfortunately "Rosie's" troubles continued in the accommodation where she stayed for 50 nights. "Rosie" was grateful for the safety and security afforded by the accommodation but increasingly found herself in agitated states. "Rosie" was eventually able to access mental health services and has subsequently made a good recovery.

"Rosie" has now secured a flat in Inverness and is looking for work having put many of her troubles behind her.

The Direct Access Accommodation was made available for a period of 6 months, beginning 1 November 2010 and ending 1 May 2011, and provided accommodation, support and philanthropic services on the following basis:

- Highland Homeless Trust and Blythswood Care in partnership with Inverness churches provided direct access, short stay accommodation free of charge to individuals with no right of access to mainstream social and housing services in the Inverness area.
- The direct access accommodation operated to provide a place of safety and was free of alcohol and drugs at all times.
- The direct access accommodation also provided food, support and clothing in collaboration with voluntary and faith based organisations.
- Highland Homeless Trust was responsible for managing access to the accommodation, and worked on behalf of all partners to develop and co-ordinate a range of referral pathways to encourage multi-agency involvement in developing the accommodation's objectives and to maximise opportunities for personal development and sustained health and wellbeing.
- Access to the accommodation placed no obligation on the part of service users to engage with any support or housing provider.
- The provision of direct access accommodation was not intended to supersede or replace any service user's personal responsibility to provide a permanent home for themselves and their dependents.

The Direct Access Accommodation actively worked to develop links between the partners and other agencies like Job Centre Plus, Highland Council, NHS Highland, Northern Constabulary, training providers and others to address the specific social needs of individuals presenting as roughsleeping and/or homeless. The service focussed on addressing unmet social needs, avoiding social problems escalating out of control, and providing necessary support to isolated and vulnerable people living with dependency or mental health problems to access their social, housing, health and employability rights and services in the longer term.

Case Study 3

"Alan" is a young Polish man who moved to Scotland to work in the hotel and catering industry. Having successfully secured employment in a popular west highland hotel, "Alan" was very worried when he lost his position and accommodation during a lull in visitors to the area. "Alan" quickly found his savings exhausted as he attempted to provide for himself without an income, employment or access to welfare benefits.

As a decent, young and hardworking young man, "Alan" was appalled to find himself homeless and in need of support from others. Fortunately the Direct Access Accommodation Service provided by the Inverness churches, Blythswood and Highland Homeless Trust was able to accept a referral from Highland Council to accommodate "Alan" and prevent him from having to sleep rough.

“Alan” has spent 131 nights in the accommodation and has recently found work. He is now working to provide for himself again, and is actively looking for affordable accommodation.

“Alan” was hugely relieved to be referred to the Direct Access Accommodation and has been particularly grateful for the help and assistance provide to him when he literally found himself down and out against all his efforts. “Alan” has specifically asked for everyone involved in providing the Direct Access Accommodation to be thanked for helping him.

The service also linked to the Highland Homeless Trust’s Social Club, which provides food, camaraderie and social networking as a focal point for those service users unable to engage with statutory services, and who may have continuing drug misuse or mental health issues. The Direct Access Accommodation maintained comprehensive records of care, support, referrals and client outcomes. Where appropriate, records of care and support were maintained according to Highland Homeless Trust policy and subject to regulatory inspection.

The agreed objectives for the Direct Access Accommodation were to:

- Establish a supportive framework to allow vulnerable service users to directly access accommodation
- Establish a range of referral pathways to actively enable statutory agencies and voluntary organisations to refer homeless individuals to the direct access emergency accommodation.
- Develop and implement a person centred motivational / health behaviour change supporting approach to the service delivery of direct access accommodation.
- Enable service users and clients to realise the benefits of sustainable, positive lifestyle change.
- Provide support to homeless clients to build confidence in undertaking health promoting regimes and healthy living activities.
- Encourage and facilitate independent attendance at learning, employability and healthy living activities.
- Develop individual capacity to implement self-reflective reviews of progress towards achieving social and health outcomes.
- Develop and monitor partnership working and provide statistics and other reports to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness.
- Access, develop and make available language and translation services to ensure service user needs are accurately identified and addressed.
- Make referrals to projects, agencies and organisations as required to address individual needs.

VOLUNTEERS AND STAFFING

The Direct Access Accommodation was initiated on 1 November 2010 and operated for 182 nights until the morning of Monday 2 May 2011. During this period accommodation was provided free of charge to anyone representing a need pending enquiry of personal circumstances. In addition, all residents and others were offered a two-course meal which was served each evening, and residents also benefitted from a continental breakfast that was available each morning.

The accommodation provided toilet facilities, showers, kitchens, cooking facilities, television room, access to Internet and games to all residents and was available on a 24/7 basis. Residents did not have to leave the accommodation during the day and were free to remain safe, warm and dry throughout the day and night.

All of the meals were provided by volunteer teams from local churches, voluntary organisations, families and individuals who gave their time, energy and skills to provide food for everyone living in the accommodation. 237 volunteers from over 25 different churches, organisations and families were involved in catering at the Direct Access Accommodation. Menus and hygiene supervision were co-ordinated by Mr David Warmbath throughout the 6 month period while the volunteer teams were co-ordinated by Mrs Issy Freudenthal from Blythswood Care. Food Hygiene Training for the volunteers was provided by Mrs Margaret Ross of the Salvation Army, free of charge, as the Salvation Army's gift to the project. Special thanks are due to Mrs Ross who travelled from Aberdeen to provide this training and to David and Issy for their commitment over a protracted period of time.

Case Study 4

“George” is a middle aged Polish man who has been homeless for more than two years. Prior to being referred to the Direct Access Accommodation by Highland Council, “George” had been rough sleeping and spending much of his time drinking.

“George” was allocated accommodation in the middle of November 2010 and went on to stay 165 nights. During that time “George” was encouraged to control his drinking and provided with essential toiletries and fresh clothing to improve his physical condition. Highland Homeless Trust staff also worked with “George” to enable his access to medical services.

“George” responded positively to the help and support he received while living at the Direct Access Accommodation and featured in press reports about the accommodation and the services it provided, where he highlighted his own personal story and the benefits of the support and accommodation he received.

“George” has now found employment in a popular Inverness restaurant and was allocated temporary homeless accommodation by Highland Council following changes in legislation that took effect on 1 May 2011.

“George” is now looking forward to finding a flat of his own where he can settle down and build a life for himself. “George” is very, very grateful to all “the bosses” who have helped him over the last few months.

Support workers from Highland Homeless Trust assisted volunteers each evening to care for vulnerable people living in the accommodation and also attended the accommodation during the day and night, as required, to ensure that service users received the advice and help their personal situation demanded. In addition, management and staff from the Highlander Hostel assisted the service and came to befriend and provide significant comfort to service users in many ways that had not been anticipated. In this regard it would be remiss not to recognise the particular contribution of Mr Robert Norris and Mr Daniel Dudzinski from Highlander Hostel.

Constructive working relationships were maintained throughout the period of service with all service users and this made it possible to extend service delivery beyond simply accommodation and food to address many of the personal issues underpinning service users' vulnerability. Individual needs were identified and many practical issues were resolved to improve the service user's quality of life during the course of the service provision.

SERVICE USER PROFILE

The Direct Access Accommodation provided a significant service that met a residual social need by removing rough sleepers from the streets of Inverness for a six month period. It is possible to say that during the winter of 2010/11 no individual was forced to rough sleep in Inverness because they were unable to access some form of housing service.

The service profile during the period of delivery was:

Total service users: 27 (4 female)
Total number of bed spaces available: 1,456
Total number of bed spaces provided: 1,447 (159 to females)
Total number of meals provided to residents: 1,103
Total number of meals provided to non-residents: 127
Total instances service was used: 1,574

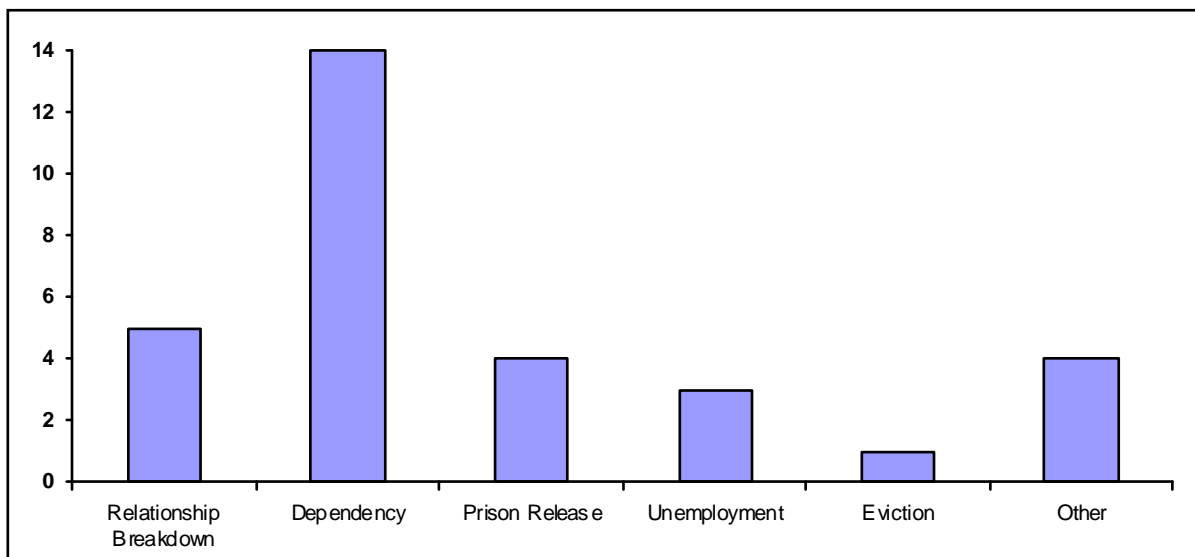
Average length of stay in the accommodation: 56 nights (34 nights for females)
Longest stay in the accommodation: 178 nights
Shortest stay in the accommodation: 1 night (n=6)

Average number of residents each night: 8
Average number of meals provided each evening: 6

The average age of service users was 40.
The youngest service user was 21 years of age and the oldest 67 years.

Reasons for Homelessness (Figure 1)

Figure 1 below provides a summary of the stated reasons for homelessness where provided by service users. Dependency, relationship breakdown, prison release and other were the key reasons provided.

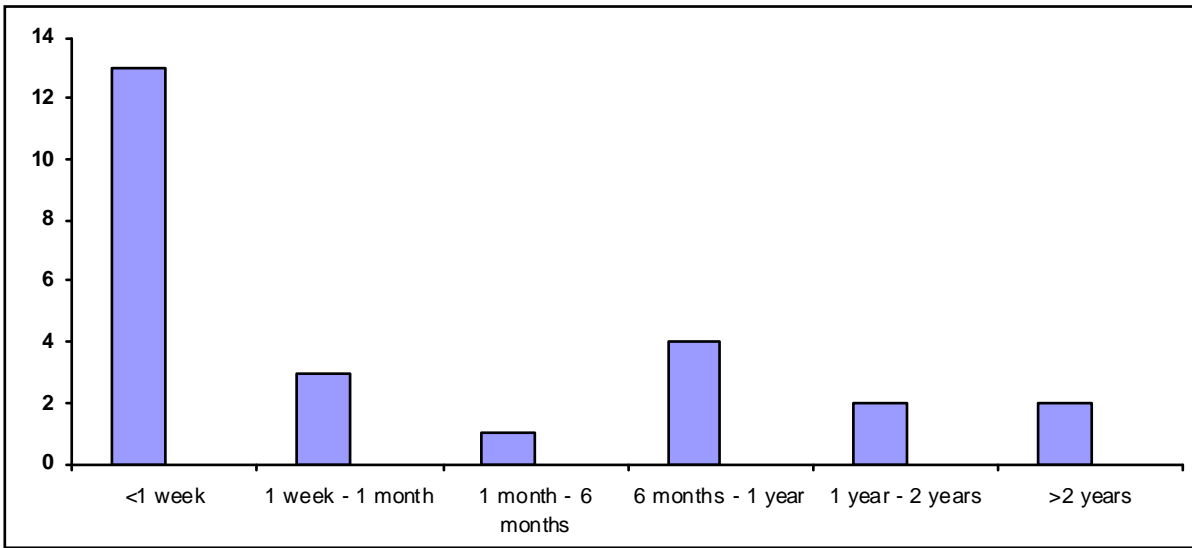


It should be noted that Figure 1 does not represent the fact that many service users presented with multiple needs.

A key aim of the Direct Access Accommodation was to encourage men and women to access accommodation from where they could address underlying issues contributing to their homelessness, unemployment and/or inability to sustain a tenancy.

Period of Homelessness (Figure 2)

Figure 2 below provides a summary of the stated period of homelessness prior to entering the accommodation where provided by service users. Periods of less than 1 week were the most common.



A key aim of the Direct Access Accommodation was to meet the immediate housing needs of men and women. Figure 2 suggest that the Direct Access Accommodation met this objective in addition to the needs of those with more chronic housing problems.

Type of Accommodation Used Immediately Prior to Homelessness (Figure 3)

A large number of service users were from the target group of rough sleepers.

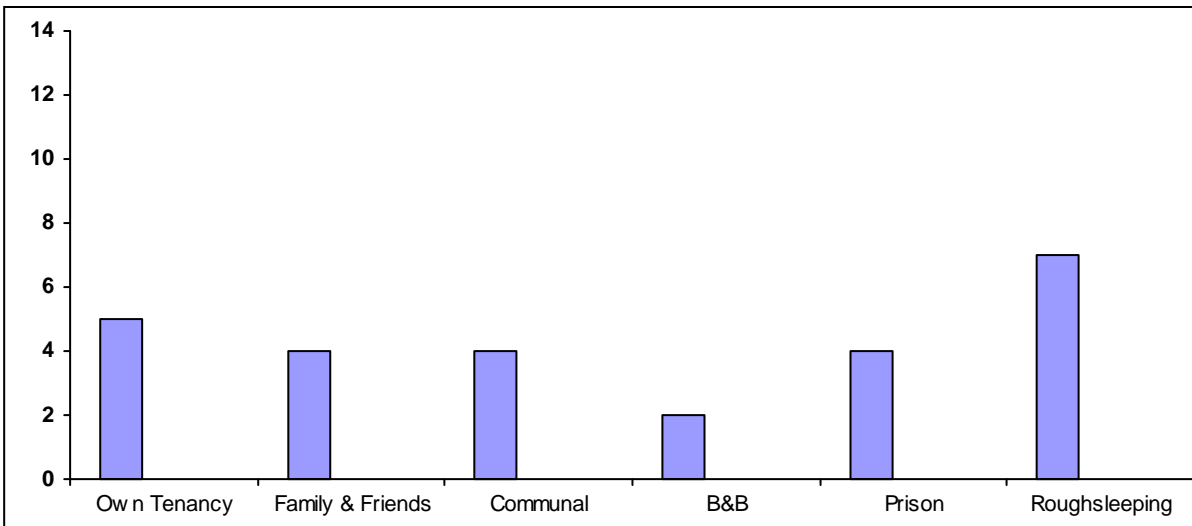


Figure 3 shows that a broad range of previous accommodation types were used by service users immediately prior to entering the Direct Access Accommodation. The majority of service users were however roughsleeping immediately prior to entering the accommodation.

A key aim of the Direct Access Accommodation was to prevent men and women with no right to statutory welfare benefits or local authority housing services from roughsleeping. Figure 3 suggest that this objective was met.

Case Study 5

“Robert” found himself roughsleeping in the summer of 2010 after losing his job and accommodation. “Robert” admits his situation wasn’t helped by drinking and also that he was increasingly finding it difficult to deal with his life and take on the challenge of finding his feet and rebuilding his life.

As a Latvian national with no recourse to statutory benefits or housing entitlement, “Robert” was referred to the Direct Access Accommodation by Highland Council shortly after it opened on 1 November 2010. “Robert” subsequently spent 172 nights in the accommodation and received clothing from Blythswood Care, toiletries and support from Highland Homeless Trust, and regular food from volunteers and Inverness churches.

“Robert’s” situation improved dramatically while living in the Direct Access Accommodation. With easy access to showers and bathrooms “Robert” was able to maintain his personal hygiene, and the fresh clothing provided by Blythswood Care helped him regain his composure, dignity and self-respect.

During his time at the Direct Access Accommodation “Robert” was able to gain employment and begin to re-build relationships and communicate with his family in Latvia. On 1 May 2011, “Robert” became entitled to statutory welfare benefits and accommodation and was placed in temporary accommodation on 2 May 2011 by Highland Council. “Robert” now has a job and is looking for affordable accommodation in Inverness with a view to his wife and family joining him at some point in the future.

Despite being a man of few words “Robert” is at pains to ensure that his thanks are relayed to everyone who has helped him rebuild his life over the last few months.

The nationalities of service users using the Direct Access Accommodation is shown in Figure 4. The number of service users defined collectively as “People from Abroad” is significantly more than from Scotland or other parts of the U.K. because the service was specifically directed at meeting the needs of individuals with no recourse, or entitlement, to statutory services.

Service User Country of Origin (Figure 4)

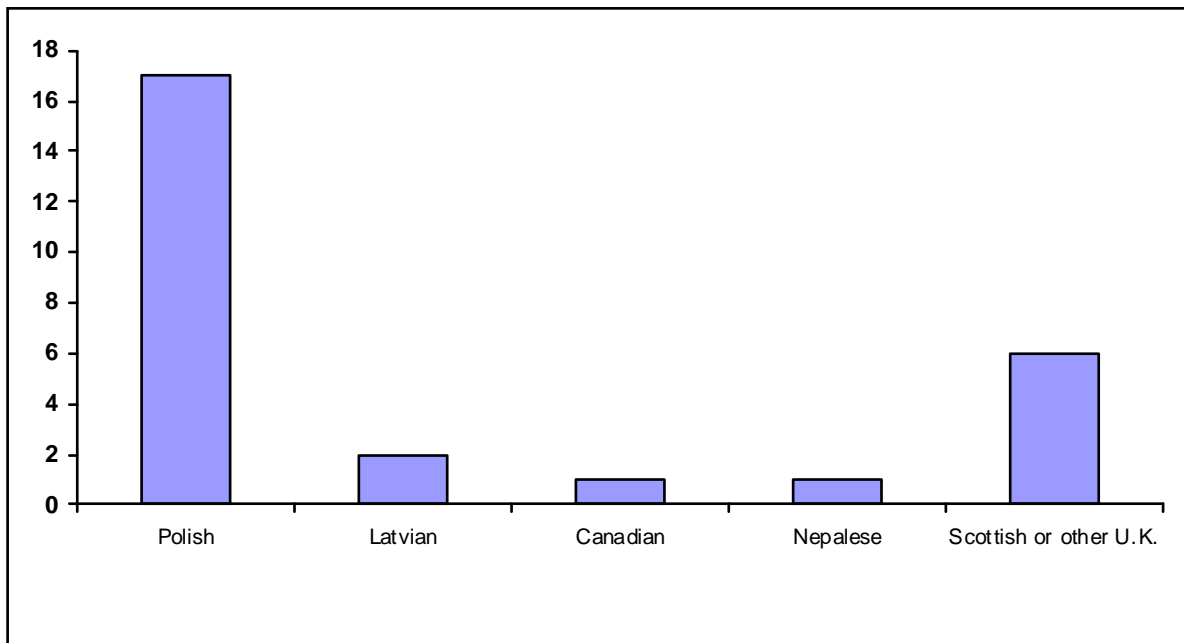


Figure 4 shows that the majority of service users attending the Direct Access Accommodation were Polish. Poland is an A8 country (see below).

Many of these individuals had come to Scotland to find work and had at some point been employed but had ultimately found themselves without work and homeless. No individual expressed any interest in returning to their country of origin, despite their homelessness and other social problems, at any time during the period of service.

Case Study 6

“Fred” is a middle aged Polish gentleman who lives in Inverness in accommodation provided to him by Highland Council. Unfortunately “Fred’s” domestic skills are quite poor and he was referred to the Direct Access Accommodation not for accommodation but for companionship and food. “Fred” had been discharged from hospital following a significant illness and had been isolated in his accommodation and unable to cook and provide for himself.

“Fred” benefitted directly from the generosity of the churches and other volunteer groups who provide him with meals throughout the 6 month period. Indeed “Fred” received over 75 meals during the period.

As well as assisting “Fred” to a speedy recovery, the Direct Access Accommodation afforded him with the opportunity to socialise and to receive ongoing support in coping with his recuperation.

The Direct Access Accommodation has been able to help a number of men and women in situations like “Fred” during the last six months.

As suggested by Figures 1 and 2, dependency problems and acute housing need appear to have subsequently affected the lives of many of the service users after having arrived in Scotland leaving service users displaying multiple and often complex social needs.

Number of Nights spent in Care Shelter (Figure 5)

Figure 5 below shows the number of nights that service users used the accommodation.

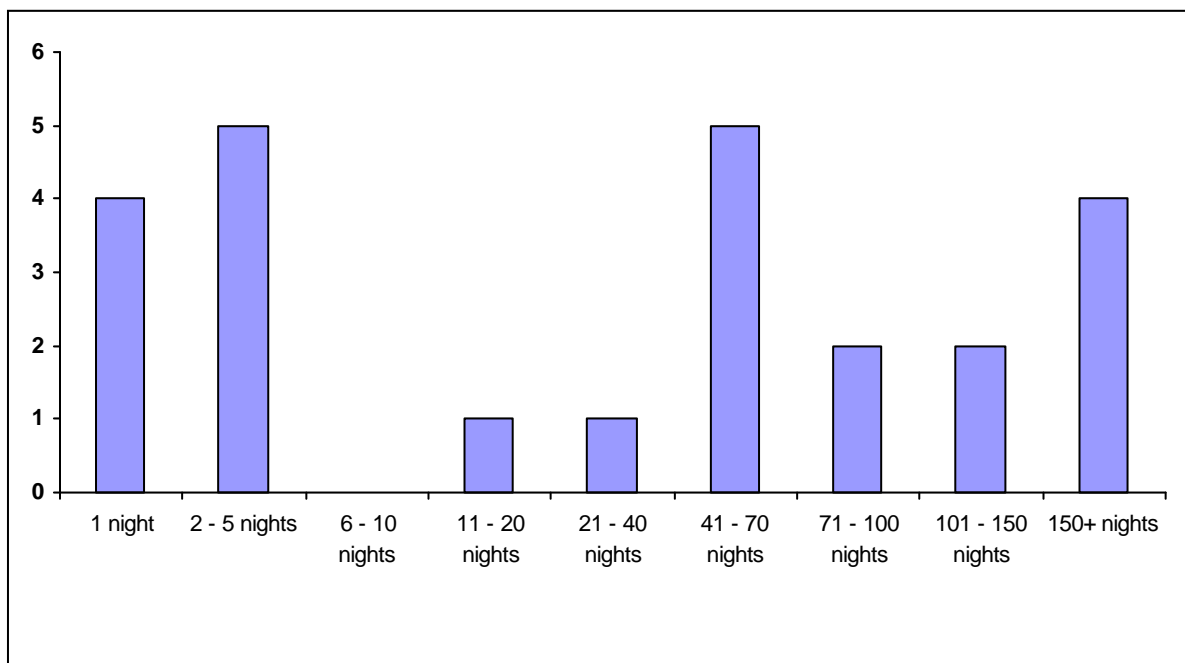


Figure 2 suggest that periods of homelessness prior to entering the Direct Access Accommodation were relatively short for most service users, i.e. less than 1 week. Figure 5 however shows that the majority of service users spent significant periods of time living in the Direct Access Accommodation, the average length of stay being 56 nights (34 nights for females).

These figures, and Figure 3, suggest that service users were using short term strategies to address their accommodation needs prior to the Direct Access Accommodation opening, e.g. sofa surfing, with family and friends, communal facilities like hostels, and B&B where that could be afforded.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 combine to suggest that the service users have been significantly affected by a shortage of affordable accommodation.

Throughout the period that the Direct Access Accommodation operated, Highland Homeless Trust staff discussed housing, social and medical needs with the service users and worked to encourage reduced alcohol consumption, healthy eating and attention to clothing and personal hygiene.

STATUTORY WELFARE BENEFITS

On 1 November 2010 when the Direct Access Accommodation opened, "Persons From Abroad" and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals, including those designated "A2" and "A8", had no right or entitlement to statutory welfare benefits or local authority housing services unless entitlement had been gained previously through the Worker Registration Scheme ('WRS').

On 1 May 2011 the Worker Registration Scheme was abandoned. From that date A8 nationals have been able to access income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit by signing on as a jobseeker with Jobcentre Plus and meeting the requirements imposed on U.K. citizen jobseekers. From 1 May 2011 A8 workers in work have been able to access in-work benefits regardless of whether previously registered with the Worker Registration Scheme.

Prior to 1 May 2011 out of work A8 jobseekers could not access benefits because they would have been unlikely to meet the qualifying criteria for registration with the WRS or to have completed enough time in registered work to meet employment qualifying criteria.

On 1 May 2011 the rights of A8 nationals were brought in line with the rights of other EEA nationals. However, in practice, the actual position of A8 nationals, i.e. citizens of the eight countries that acceded to the European Union on 1 May 2004: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, is neither as clear nor definitive as one might think.

Bulgarian and Romanian nationals ('A2 nationals') face a different set of restrictions that remain in place beyond 1 May 2011. A2 nationals require worker authorisation (a work permit) if they wish to work in the U.K., unless they enjoy an exception. The easiest way for A2 nationals to get access to the statutory welfare benefits system is to become self-employed, because there is no restriction on self-employment for these nationals, unlike the restrictions placed upon their employment.

Some A2 nationals are allowed to work if they have had permission to work in the UK in the past or are family members of U.K. citizens or other EU migrants. In particular, the A2 family members of A2 nationals who are self-employed, self-sufficient or students also have a right

to work and can obtain residence documentation from the UK Border Agency. Restrictions on A2 nationals are likely to continue indefinitely if the Westminster government decides that there is a 'serious disturbance to the labour market'. This means that A2 nationals are not likely to gain entitlement to statutory welfare benefits or local authority housing in the near future.

Case Study 7

"James" is a Canadian who found himself in a very difficult situation on arrival in Inverness on Christmas Day with no money and nowhere to live. While wandering in Inverness "James" encountered Street Pastors who were able to immediately refer him to the Direct Access Accommodation for food, accommodation and a place of safety.

After 3 nights in the accommodation over the Christmas period, "James" was able to access his bank accounts and have money wired to him to enable his return home. The Direct Access Accommodation and Street Pastors timely intervention avoided "James" being forced to sleep rough during a particularly inclement period of weather when temperatures fell to minus -15°C.

As a 'Person From Abroad' "James" was not entitled to help from statutory services and was relieved and grateful for the help and support provided to him by all of the volunteers and voluntary organisations that came together to provide the service he desperately needed over the Christmas period. "James" left for Canada with a very positive view of Inverness and tirelessly expressed his thanks for the help he received.

Other "Persons From Abroad" (PFA) are unaffected by changes to European Union Regulations applied in Scotland on 1 May 2011. These individuals have no right to statutory welfare benefits or local authority housing and citizenship is based largely on visa regulations implemented by the UK Border Agency.

Returning to A8 nationals, significant problems will continue from 1 May 2011 for all A8 nationals that are economically inactive, who are not able to work, or not able to sign on as 'jobseekers' with Jobcentre Plus, i.e. those individuals that cannot meet the requirement to demonstrate that they are seeking work and/or are unable to demonstrate that they have retained former WRS status. Individuals will find themselves in this position if they are not currently able to seek work due to health reasons and have never completed 12 months' work under the WRS in the past.

People with no entitlement under WRS or via employment conditions, will be able to argue that they are entitled to benefits as 'permanent residents' where they can demonstrate that they have lived in Scotland for the past five years or more. Those relying on 'permanent residence' will be required to show documentary proof of their residence for a period over five years either as workers, self-employed persons, as self-sufficient persons and/or students. Those who have worked but did not register are unlikely to be recognised as 'permanent residents'. Those with limited proof of their residence are also likely to face significant problems.

In summary, little changed for A2 nationals and "Persons From Abroad" on 1 May 2011. These individuals will continue to experience difficulty gaining employment rights and entitlement to statutory services and benefits. For A8 nationals the situation has changed in relation to entitlement to statutory welfare benefits. On 1 May 2011 any A8 national can register as a jobseeker with Jobcentre Plus for benefits purposes. If they meet the same conditions imposed on U.K. citizens, they should be able to access income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING SERVICES

To obtain housing however is a different matter to obtaining statutory welfare benefits. "Persons From Abroad" and A2 nationals have no right to local authority housing services. To access housing services from the local authority, A8 nationals will have to first demonstrate entitlement to statutory welfare benefits and, second, meet defined local authority criteria to demonstrate that the local authority has a duty to provide secure settled accommodation.

The current criteria applied by Highland Council, which must all be met in order of sequence, are:

1. Applicant must be actually or potentially homeless.
2. Applicant must be unintentionally homeless.
3. Applicant must have a local connection.
4. Applicant must be in priority need, i.e.
 - Households where there are dependent children;
 - Households where there is a pregnant woman;
 - Applicants who are under 22 years of age;
 - Households becoming homeless as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or any other disaster;
 - Vulnerable households.

Highland Council's Homelessness Policy identifies individuals in the following categories as being capable of assessment as vulnerable and eligible for award of priority need status:

- Anyone under 25 years of age who has previously been in the care of a local authority at any time in their life;
- Anyone under 21 years of age who, due to the circumstances in which they are living, runs the risk of sexual or financial exploitation, or involvement in the serious misuse of alcohol, volatile substance or any drug (whether or not a controlled drug within the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (c.39)
- Anyone at risk of domestic abuse (within the meaning of section 33(3) of the 1987 Act)
- Anyone considered to be vulnerable because of old age;
- Anyone suffering from a mental illness; personality disorder; learning disability; physical disability; chronic ill health; or having suffered a miscarriage or undergone an abortion;
- Anyone having been discharged from a hospital, a prison or any part of the regular UK armed forces;
- Anyone who by reason of their religion, sexual orientation, race, colour or ethnic or national origin runs the risk of violence, or is, or is likely to be, the victim of a course of conduct amounting to harassment;
- Households who may have various low level concerns or issues in their lives but no one major reason for automatically being considered as being in priority need will be awarded priority need status;
- Other special reason.

It should be noted that an applicant claiming vulnerability under the Homelessness Policy could find themselves with a non-entitlement to statutory welfare benefits where it can be shown that the applicant is not actively seeking work, which is an implicit feature of any claim of vulnerability.

Case Study 8

“Jean” was referred to the Direct Access Accommodation by the police after a major breakdown in a relationship. “Jean” was unable to continue living with her partner and found herself living with family and friends temporarily over the New Year period. This arrangement quickly deteriorated and “Jean” found herself homeless on New Year’s Day.

Fortunately the police were able to refer “Jean” to the Direct Access Accommodation where she was safe and secure for a short period of a few days before being able to access statutory services and temporary homeless accommodation.

The Direct Access Accommodation has been able to help 6 men and women in positions similar to “Jean’s” over the last six months.

Where an applicant can demonstrate that all of the above priority conditions are met, Highland Council will provide the individual with Temporary Homeless Accommodation. Where an applicant is entitled to statutory welfare benefits but cannot demonstrate that all of the above conditions are fully met, Highland Council is likely to decide that a housing duty exists but that there is no ‘priority need’ to provide Temporary Homeless Accommodation. Where the council does not have an obligation to provide Temporary Homeless Accommodation, and unless there are special circumstances, homeless applicants will be asked to leave temporary accommodation 28 days after they receive their homeless decision letter. In such cases the expectation is that the applicant must meet their own housing need through private sector rented accommodation or some other solution.

SUMMARY EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The basic aim of the Direct Access Accommodation was to provide safe and secure overnight accommodation and a hot meal to those with no recourse to statutory welfare benefits or local authority housing services, and to others who might otherwise be rough sleeping through temporary housing problem.

During the coldest, darkest winter months of 2010 and 2011, the Direct Access Accommodation service provided a safe, secure and welcoming place for men and women of all ages, and all nationalities, who might otherwise have found themselves with no alternative but to sleep rough.

The Direct Access Accommodation was initiated on 1 November 2010 and operated for 182 nights until the morning of Monday 2 May 2011. All residents, and others, were offered a two-course meal which was served each evening, and residents also benefitted from a continental breakfast that was available each morning.

The accommodation provided toilet facilities, showers, kitchens, cooking facilities, television room, access to Internet and games to all residents and was available on a 24/7 basis. Residents did not have to leave the accommodation during the day and were free to remain safe, warm and dry throughout the day and night.

237 volunteers from over 25 different churches, organisations and families were involved in providing food to vulnerable at the Direct Access Accommodation. Support workers from Highland Homeless Trust attended the accommodation during the day and night, to ensure that service users received the services, advice and help their personal situation demanded. In addition, management and staff from the Highlander Hostel assisted the service and provided significant comfort to service users.

During the winter of 2010/11 no individual was forced to rough sleep in Inverness because they were unable to access some form of housing service.

Analysis of service users suggest that periods of homelessness prior to entering the Direct Access Accommodation were relatively short for most service users, i.e. less than 1 week. However the majority of service users then spent significant periods of time living in the Direct Access Accommodation with the average length of stay being 56 nights (34 nights for females). This suggests that service tended to use short term strategies to address their accommodation needs prior to the Direct Access Accommodation opening, e.g. sofa surfing, with family and friends, communal facilities like hostels, and B&B where that could be afforded.

On 1 May 2011 the Worker Registration Scheme was abandoned and “Persons From Abroad”, A2 nationals and A8 nationals have been subject to different regulations in regard to statutory welfare benefits and local authority housing services. From 1 May 2011 A8 nationals in work have been able to access in-work benefits regardless of whether previously registered with the Worker Registration Scheme. “Persons From Abroad” and A2 nationals have been largely unaffected by the regulatory changes.

If the welfare and housing tests were applied to the individuals who have used the Direct Access Accommodation service between 1 November 2010 and 1 May 2011, one would find that the majority of service users would find they are:

1. Entitled to work in Scotland.
2. Entitled to operate as self-employed in Scotland.
3. Entitled to claim statutory welfare benefits.
4. Are likely to have a right to settled accommodation.
5. Do not meet the Priority Needs Test
6. Are not entitled to Temporary Homeless Accommodation.
7. Are expected to meet their own housing needs.

In summary, the changes to legislation on 1 May 2011 are likely to have little effect on the long term housing prospects of individuals who used the Direct Access Accommodation. It is very likely that the majority of service users will continue to be classed as homeless but will not be provided with Temporary Homeless Accommodation by Highland Council after their homeless applications have been reviewed and decided. The onus will be on the service users to meet their housing need.

In conclusion, there is almost certainly a need for the provision of a Direct Access Accommodation service in the future, and a significant prospect of it being used by similar numbers to that over the winter of 2010/2011. It may be however that service users with entitlement to statutory welfare benefits will be in a position to contribute to the cost of such a service provision.

Clearly a great deal of work has been implemented in Scotland to generate housing solutions which seek to eradicate rough sleeping in Scotland. The fact that the problem of rough sleeping remains is very real and represents a pernicious social issue that highlights a continuing need for Direct Access Accommodation services in the future.

APPENDIX

VOLUNTEERS AND CATERING TEAMS

The Direct Access Accommodation Service would not have been possible without the contribution of the Inverness Churches' Group. All members of this group are thanked for their work and contribution. The following individuals should be recognised for performing particularly onerous roles:

- Co-ordinator: Mrs Vivian Roden
- Treasurer and Fundraiser: Mr Bob Glover
- Catering Co-ordinator: Mr David Warmbath

INVERNESS CHURCHES' GROUP ON HOMELESSNESS

The churches group was made up of representatives of numerous churches operating in the Inverness area. Representatives from the following churches contributed their skills, knowledge and time to make the Direct Access accommodation a reality:

- Ardersier & Petty Church of Scotland
- Cawdor Church of Scotland
- Crown Church of Scotland
- Croy & Dalcross Church of Scotland
- Culduthel Christian Centre
- Culloden: The Barn Church of Scotland
- Daviot & Dunlichity Church of Scotland
- Dores & Boleskine Church of Scotland
- East Church of Scotland
- Free North Church
- Inshes Church
- Kilmorack & Erchless Church of Scotland
- Kinmylies Church of Scotland
- Maryburgh & Killearnan Free Church
- Methodist Church
- Moy, Dalarossie & Tomatin Church of Scotland
- Ness Bank Church of Scotland
- Old High St Stephen's Church of Scotland
- St Mary's Catholic Church
- St Ninian's Catholic Church
- Salvation Army

CATERING TEAMS:

Catering teams from churches, voluntary organisations, organisations, families and couples provided invaluable assistance and support by devoting their time and energy to provide meals and companionship to service users. They came from:

- David & Susan Anderson Team
- Ardersier & Petty Church of Scotland
- Black Isle Volunteers
- Blythswood Care
- British Red Cross
- Cawdor Church of Scotland

- Christian Healing Team
- Crown Church of Scotland
- Croy & Dalcross Church of Scotland
- Culduthel Christian Centre
- Culloden: The Barn Church of Scotland
- Kevin and Heather Donnachie Team
- East Church of Scotland
- Highland Homeless Trust
- Hilton Church of Scotland
- Kinmylies Church of Scotland
- Elspeth MacQueen Team
- Moy, Dalarossie & Tomatin Church of Scotland
- Ness Bank Church of Scotland
- Old High St Stephen's Church of Scotland
- St Columba New Charge Church of Scotland
- St Mary's Catholic Church
- St Ninian's Catholic Church
- The Sisters

For many volunteers this was the first time they have worked directly with homeless people. 237 volunteers supported the Direct Access Accommodation and worked together to meet the practical needs of vulnerable people.

FINANCE

Mr Bob Glover, Treasurer and Fundraiser for the Inverness Presbytery, played a pivotal role in raising the necessary funds to establish and maintain the Direct Access Accommodation. Working with Mrs Alex Gilchrist, Highland Homeless Trust, Bob carefully and tirelessly ensured that financial contributions were received from a large number of church groups, organisations and private individuals, and that all expenses incurred in sustaining the accommodation for a six month period costs were met through charitable effort.

Special thanks are due to the Members of Highland Council for their significant donation to the service provision that was applied through the Inverness Common Good Fund on behalf of the people of the City of Inverness.

Other individuals, churches, organisations and companies who contributed financially to the service provision included:

Charitable Trusts

Co-op	£2,000.00
Crerar Hotels	£5,000.00
Gannochy Trust	£4,000.00
Highland Council (Inverness Common Good Fund)	£15,000.00
Lloyds TSB	£6,000.00
Rank Foundation	£1,500.00

Churches and individuals

Dalneigh & Bona	£421.86
East Church	£25.00
Free North	£70.00
Mr & Mrs Kerrsmith	£125.00

Kilmorack	£542.72
Laggan	£150.00
J MacLennan	£45.00
Other churches, individuals and Gift Aid	£8,979.00

The most significant operational outgoing was for accommodation costs. Running costs were minimised through the generous provision of support from churches, organisations and volunteers who at their own expense covered the majority of catering expenses. Additional clothing and toiletry supplies were provided by Blythwood Care and Highland Homeless Trust, respectively.

Final expenditure amounted to £32,498.83, which is equivalent to accommodation costs of approximately £22.32 per person per night.