

Blog for Challenge Poverty Week: Homelessness Prevention

Preventing homelessness in the first place is a priority and one of four strategic objectives of the [Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan \(RRTP\)](#) which sets out the homelessness strategy in Edinburgh. The RRTP, agreed by Committee on 18 September 2020 set out a number of actions relating to prevention, in particular related to early intervention.

A Homelessness Prevention Working Group was established to take forward prevention activity set out in the RRTP and seek to identify new prevention activity. The group continues to have cross Council representation and third sector representation via Strategic Homeless Action Partnership Edinburgh (SHAPE). A refreshed workplan setting out the priorities for the year ahead is currently being developed.

One of the first things the group did was to establish the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) who provide a multi-disciplinary response for Council tenants who are at serious risk of eviction action and are not engaging with their locality Housing Officer. The aim of the MDT team is to actively reach out to the tenant, offering joined up support to sustain the tenancy and prevent homelessness. Referrals to the service are received from locality housing teams.

The MDT team initially consisted of a dedicated housing / homelessness specialist, a debt advisor and an income maximisation officer supervised by a team leader, with support from adult and children's social work and family and household support. Of the 178 cases that the team have closed, 56% of households engaged with the service or another agency and 85% of those households remain in their home.

There has also been a focus on supporting households at risk of becoming homeless from the Private Rented Sector. A Private Rented Sector Team was established in November 2019 and consists of a team leader, 4 housing officers and an income maximisation officer. The team work with private landlords and lettings agents to establish the PRS as an ongoing housing option for potentially homeless or homeless households.

Since March last year the PRS team have prevented homelessness for 302 households by helping them to remain in their current PRS tenancy or by supporting them into a new PRS or Mid-Market Rent (MMR) tenancy. A further 43 households, assessed as homeless prior to the PRS team having contact, were supported by the PRS team to access either PRS or MMR tenancies.

A post was also established in preparation for the Prevention Duty, particularly the likely duty for wider public sector bodies to 'ask and act' with regards to someone's housing and homelessness situation. The focus of this has been to develop training for internal and external partners to use their existing conversations with people to identify a risk of homelessness. The partnership and prevention officer has delivered 32 sessions to 354 attendees in the past year.

The above is only a flavour of all the homelessness prevention activity underway, for further details please see the latest [Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan – Annual Update on Progress](#) or email Edinburgh_RRTP@edinburgh.gov.uk