

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE - 28 OCTOBER 2013

**REPORT ON: SCOTTISH NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR INFORMATION AND ADVICE PROVIDERS,
TYPE 1 ACCREDITATION**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 421-2013

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise members that the Housing Department's Homeless Services Unit has achieved accreditation at Type 1 of the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers. Accreditation is for the period 2013 – 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Note that national accreditation has been achieved
- ii) Note the attached Accreditation Report

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. None

4. MAIN TEXT

4.1. Scottish National Standards are the accreditation agency for all statutory and voluntary sector advice providers. Accreditation can be gained at Type 1, 2 or 3 level depending on the nature of advice work carried out. For local authorities Type 1 advice provision is the most appropriate level.

4.2. The Housing Department's Homeless Services Unit sought accreditation at Type 1 level and the service was audited in September 2013. The audit involved looking at processes and procedures in place in the service to ensure that the public receive a high quality and consistent advice service. Accreditation has been achieved for the period 2013 – 2017.

4.3. Following audit the Homeless Service has been accredited in 12 different topics of housing advice. The National Standards auditor noted a number of strengths within the service and other than noting there was some under recording of training made no recommendations for improvement. Full details of the areas of accreditation and the audit process are contained in the draft accreditation report appended.

4.4. In addition to service accreditation as a whole, all HSU staff, as individuals, have undertaken training and are qualified to National Standards advice provision at either Type 1 or Type 2. Achievement of accreditation and training in the National Standards ensures that the service can provide the most appropriate and relevant advice to persons presenting as threatened with homelessness. This approach is consistent with the Department's homelessness prevention strategy and ensures that high quality consistent advice and referral can be used at an early stage to identify and resolve housing issues before they escalate to crisis presentations.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

There are no major issues.

6. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services and all other Chief Officers have been consulted on the preparation of this report. No concerns were expressed.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. None.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

DATE: OCTOBER 2013



**Scottish National Standards
for Information and Advice Providers
Type I Audit Report**

September 2013

**Dundee City Council
Homeless Services Unit**

Stephen Rhind

1 INTRODUCTION AND AUDIT OUTCOME

Dundee City Council Homeless Services Unit is based at the Lily Walker Centre, 105 Ann Street, Dundee. The centre includes temporary accommodation units and is open on a 24-hour basis. The statutory assessment of homeless applications is carried out in the Centre, as are functions in respect of the prevention of homelessness.

1.1 AUDIT OUTCOME

The on-site audit visit took place on 6th September 2013 and was undertaken by Douglas Bain.

Following the audit visit, it was concluded that the advice service provided by Dundee City Council Homeless Services Unit meets the requirements of the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers (the Standards).

Dundee City Council Homeless Services Unit is accredited the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers in the topics and for the types of service shown below until September 2017.

Housing topics accredited

Topic	Topic	Accredited
2.1 Rent Arrears		
2.2 Mortgages/Secured Loans		
2.3 Housing Benefit		
2.4 Council Tax Reduction		
2.5 Disrepair in Rented Housing		
2.6 Housing Options		
2.7 Discrimination in Housing		
2.8 Eviction		
2.9 Anti Social Behaviour		
2.10 Harassment and Illegal Eviction (includes race discrimination)		
2.11 Homelessness		
2.12 Relationship Breakdown		
2.13 Rent: Private Sector		

2.14	Security of Tenure	I	I
2.15	Statutory Tenancy rights	I	I
2.16	Housing Repair Improvement and Adaptations		

2. AUDIT OUTLINE

2.1 AUDITING QUALITY OF ADVICE

The quality of advice auditors seek to assess the quality of advice given by the agency. The key mechanism for this is staff interviews. Auditing of quality of advice primarily looks at Standards 2.1, 4.1, 4.3, 5.4, and 5.5 with the remaining Standards covered by the process auditor. The audit may touch on other Standards, where appropriate.

The quality of advice audit comprises:

- interviews with staff members
- discussion of competence based scenarios with staff members
- observation of advice work
- inspection of key documents
- inspection of the library, legal resources, leaflets and other materials

This enables quality of advice auditors to identify whether the organisation is complying with the Standards.

2.2 AUDITING PROCESSES

The purpose of the process audit is to review evidence of documented processes and procedures which underpin the delivery of a good quality advice service. The process audit is split into two parts:

- a 'desk-top audit' which is carried out when the initial audit application form is submitted and
- the audit visit

2.3 PERSONNEL INTERVIEWED

During the visit the auditor interviewed:

- Ian Dobson, Homeless Services manager
- Andy Whitelaw, Homeless Prevention & Temporary Accommodation Team Leader
- Sarah Henderson, Senior Supervised Accommodation Officer
- Traci Sandeman, Prevention Officer
- Katrina Henderson, Prevention Officer
- Alison Martin, Prevention officer

- Alan Sinclair, Homeless Assessment Team Leader
- Ross Lyons, Homeless Officer
- Parveen Jamil, Homeless Officer
- Nicky Sinclair, Administrator
- Annette Tosh, Administrator

2.4 PRINCIPAL DOCUMENTS INSPECTED

The auditors examined the following documents:

- All of the documents referred to in the application documentation were made available to and inspected by the auditor. In addition there were demonstrations of the agency's IT setup including the dedicated HSU intranet pages plus the Dundee City Council intranet and internet web pages. The information systems used by the agency were also demonstrated, and the Dundee CATS local agencies and referrals database.

3. AUDIT FINDINGS

3.1 STRENGTHS

The agency had previously been accredited under the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice and the present audit was for reaccreditation against the Standards. The agency's preparation for audit was exemplary, and the agency had clearly not rested on its laurels following its original audit. One example of this was the introduction of 'Masterclasses' in the Prevention Team whereby the quality of the information provided and particular problem scenarios were discussed within the team with a view to ensuring the best quality service. Communications within the HSU were generally good and it was noted that there was a very strong team dynamic.

3.2 AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS – Quality of Advice

a) Training

While staff training provided is more than sufficient to satisfy the Standards, the auditor was of the view that there might nevertheless be some under-counting of training hours by virtue of the non-appearance of the weekly Wednesday 8.20-9.30am training sessions in the staff training logs.

Recommendation: The agency is simply invited to review the matter.

(Standard: 5.3)