

**THIS STATEMENT OF BEST PRACTICE IS CURRENTLY BEING REVISED AND
UPDATED**

Accommodating Homeless Ex- Offenders

Interim Statement of Best Practice in Joint Working between Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association

April 2007

1. Purpose of Agreement

To put in place arrangements for the provision of suitable accommodation for persons convicted of serious offences who are supervised by Glasgow City Council Social Work Services within the community. In the main the offenders to whom these arrangements will apply are likely to be homeless or at risk of homelessness. This is because they have no accommodation available to them after release from a custodial sentence, or accommodation that is available to them cannot be occupied because of adverse family or community reactions as a result of their offending. Mostly therefore the first point of service contact for this group will be through services for homeless people.

2. The Client Group

The main group of offenders to whom these principles will be applicable are those convicted of serious offences, including serious violence, sexual offences and offences against children. In cases such as these the risk of homelessness is high (for reasons given above) and adverse community reaction may be anticipated which makes assessment and allocation more problematic. The offender usually will be a Social Work client either because of the need for statutory supervision and support following release from a custodial sentence, or because supervision in the community has been ordered by the Courts through sentence such as Probation. In a few instances these will be cases which are not statutorily allocated, but because of the high risk of harm they represent, are jointly managed by the Police and Social Work. Additional factors such as Restriction of Liberty Orders ('electronic tagging') may require to be addressed in housing arrangements. In a high number of cases, especially those offenders requiring to register following conviction for sex offences there will be a significant Police involvement with Social Work in risk assessment and management.

3. General Principles

Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association agree the following general principles as applicable to work with this client group.

- Enhancing public safety is central to the process of supervision and resettlement of serious offenders
- Public safety is enhanced through the management of risk rather than by driving offenders 'underground', which results in a consequent loss of

contact and ability to trace to monitor conduct, along with a loss of ability to supervise and challenge their offending behaviour

- Public safety is also better achieved when assessment and decision making regarding accommodation takes place within a planned, systematic process rather than as a short term crisis measure. For those returning to the community following prison sentences this planning time is usually available
- A situation of personal stability - to which settled accommodation contributes significantly - is itself normally a prerequisite to reducing risk of re-offending. It not only allows supervision and monitoring to be carried out more effectively, it provides a platform for work to address offending behaviour and contributes to the development of more positive lifestyle factors
- The rights of offenders to privacy and confidentiality are equal to those of other citizens provided this is compatible with avoiding re-offending and promoting public safety.

4. Information Sharing

- 4.1** Whilst it is important to safeguard confidentiality it is also important that those who *need to know* information in order to deal with situations sensitively and in the interests of public safety have the necessary information.
- 4.2** Glasgow City Council (GCC) will not normally disclose case information about clients who are offenders, outside Social Work Services, unless GCC Social Work Services believe that serious harm might result from not sharing information about the risk(s) the offender presents. In such cases information may be shared with specified staff either within GCC or outwith GCC on a 'restricted' basis. Disclosure of any such information will be at Social Work Services' sole discretion and will be dependent on their assessment of the level of risk posed in each case. This risk assessment will have been jointly agreed between Social Work and Strathclyde Police. In relation to data protection issues disclosure of such information must be defensible in terms of prevention of the likely possibility of crime.
- 4.3** It must be remembered that, in these cases, information available to Social Work Services may have been sourced from other services, such as the Police, whose own data protection and confidentiality requirements must be respected.
- 4.4** Senior designated officers within Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) and Social Work Services will be identified and agreed between the parties for purposes of sharing information referred to in Para. 4.1 above. Normally this would be the Community Housing Manager or their depute, but in particularly high risk cases or in cases where there is likely to be a high level of media interest, more senior members of staff may be required to be involved in this process.
- 4.5** The relevant provisions contained in the Statement of Best Practice relating to Sharing of Information will apply. Information on a client will not be disclosed by GHA or GCC to letting initiatives, tenants' associations, community organisations, tenant/community group members of GHA or LHO management committees or any other third party organisation or individual without the express consent of the information provider.

5. Risk Assessment and Management

- 5.1** When ex offenders are returning to the community on statutory orders or licences they are normally placed in temporary accommodation arranged via the Glasgow Homelessness Partnership - Prison Casework Team. The same procedure applies to ex offenders who become homeless and are on community sentences such as probation. When a potentially suitable area is being considered, possible addresses are identified by the Homelessness Partnership and these are checked in terms of their suitability and potential risk by Social Work Services Criminal Justice and the Police. In those cases where there is a significant risk (such as those outlined at 5.2 below) the identification of an address or addresses and information on the risk will be shared with the Community Housing Manager [CHM], who will be able to raise any concerns, share any new relevant information or suggest a better location. A similar procedure is followed for moves to permanent accommodation. In this instance the Section 5 referral will come directly to the CHM and will specify that this is an ex-offender who may pose a significant risk. Where the CHM is unavailable, the person in charge of the LHO will deal with the case. Once specific suitable accommodation has been identified and approved information sharing with GHA should be in terms of 4 above.
- 5.2** As part of the Sex Offender Protocol between GCC and Strathclyde Police all offenders who are subject to the requirement to notify under the Sex Offenders Act are risk assessed. Using all relevant information available to them Social Work and the Police determine the risk of re-offending posed by a particular offender. It should be emphasised that the specific risk posed by any individual needs to take into account who would be considered at risk, what the likely risk would be and what safeguards are or need to be put in place to minimise any potential harm to the public or to staff. In the event of such risk factors being related to any planned accommodation move, for example to GHA owned temporary furnished flat or permanent let, this risk assessment will be notified to the designated GHA officer in order that an appropriate response in terms of staff or public safety can be made by GHA.
- 5.3** Further information will be disclosed by GCC Social Work Services on a case-by-case basis according to the need for information sharing to facilitate housing decisions and promote public safety through risk management measures.
- 5.4** Communication of information will normally be verbally to the designated officer. Where there are particular issues relevant to accommodation, the GHA officer should be invited to the ongoing risk management meetings between Social Work and the Police in respect of these issues as part of the Protocol arrangements.
- 5.5** Once accommodation has been secured for an offender GHA and Social Work Services will notify to each other the name and work location of the responsible officer to be contacted in the event of problems arising in respect of the tenancy. Should problems arise which cannot be immediately resolved to the satisfaction of both agencies, either agency may convene a case conference to determine appropriate resolution of problems. This should initially be at local management level.

- 5.6 The arrangement of case conferences, whether in respect of initial allocation or subsequent problem resolution will be convened by Social Work Services (although this may be at the request of GHA). This includes sending out all notices to the relevant persons to attend, arranging the meeting room, taking minutes and distribution of minutes to relevant services.
- 5.7 **It is particularly important that** Social Work notify GHA in respect of clients covered by this procedure when the person ceases to be supervised by Social Work Services. In the case of those still considered high risk there is the expectation that they would continue to be subject to monitoring and information sharing by both the Police and Social Work via the Social Work /Police Protocol and/or the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs) set up under the Management of Offenders Act (2005). This protocol will be kept under review as local arrangements for the operation of MAPPA are established.
- 5.8 **It is emphasised strongly that good communication between GHA and GCC Social Work Services is an essential prerequisite to early identification of risk factors, ensuring rapid response and effective risk management on the basis of a shared responsibility.**

6. Special Arrangements

6.1 SACRO Supported Accommodation Scheme

- a) The SACRO scheme is a supported accommodation scheme for offenders, using temporary furnished flats presently provided by GHA and managed by GCC Homelessness Partnership. These flats are either allocated to SACRO and sub-let temporarily, with support, or are directly allocated to the client with support provided by SACRO. The support service is funded through Criminal Justice Social Work allocations. All offenders accommodated through this programme are subject to statutory supervision through Criminal Justice Social Work staff.
- b) The role of accommodation provider to this programme is currently GHA. A continuing role for GHA will be in making additional accommodation units available by way of replacement for any units which have previously been utilised for the purposes of the scheme and are no longer available for this purpose for whatever reasons including a tenancy becoming permanent.