

ANGUS COUNCIL

Housing Committee –18 November 2004

**SERVICES FUNDED WITH HOUSING ACT 2001 IMPLEMENTATION
FUNDING (HOMELESS PROVISIONS)
REVIEW OF PROGRESS**

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

ABSTRACT

This report advises members of the progress of projects funded with Housing Act Implementation Funding (Homeless provisions) to meet specific objectives contained in the Angus Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 during the period 01 April 2003 and 31 March 2004

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that members note the progress made by voluntary sector agencies in progressing certain key objectives of the Angus Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 with Housing Act Implementation Funding (Homeless provisions).

2. BACKGROUND

The Scottish Executive awarded Angus Council £1,167,900 over the financial years 2001/02 to 2003/2004 to implement new or enhanced duties arising from the implementation of the homeless provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

In addition, in the same period, the Scottish Executive made £104,000 available to Angus Council under the Rough Sleepers Initiative to meet the social justice milestone that no one should have to sleep rough by 2004.

As noted in Report 227/04, Angus Council will receive £596,000 from the Scottish Executive in each of the next two financial years to enable the Council and its strategic partners to progress the aims and objectives of the Angus Homelessness Strategy 2004-2009.

3. PROJECTS FUNDED

Angus Council entered in to service level agreements with voluntary sector agencies to take forward certain aims and objectives of the homelessness strategy. The Agencies concerned are –

- Angus Citizens Advice Bureau
- Augment

- Starter Packs Angus
- Furniture Recycling Project Angus

In total, £43,000 was allocated to the four voluntary sector agencies during 2003-2004. This report outlines the respective projects progress towards meeting the aims and objectives as outlined in the project's service level agreements in the period 01 April 2003 and 31 March 2004.

4. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

A review of the implementation of the Angus Homelessness Strategy was completed in April 2004 (Report No. 429/04 refers). Report No. 429/04 outlines considerable progress in achieving key objectives of the strategy including progress of the agencies funded via service level agreements.

Day to day monitoring of the Furniture Recycling Project Angus' progress towards meeting the service specification lies with the Quality Assurance and Compliance Officer (Special Needs). In addition, the Furniture Recycling Project Angus was subject to quarterly monitoring by the RSI multi-disciplinary steering group with representation from the Departments of Housing, Finance and Environmental and Consumer Protection.

It is difficult to quantify the value for money that Angus Council receives from their financial support of these projects as project outcomes go beyond the number of persons assisted or the quantities of items supplied although these remain relevant indicators of performance.

The work of the projects can have a significant impact on the lives of the individuals they assist and it is not always possible to place a financial or monetary value on that impact. For example, it is difficult to identify the gain a person receives from being provided with furniture to establish a new tenancy and to ascribe a monetary figure to that gain.

The impact of the projects and the gains they bring to peoples lives will be measured over the current financial year (2004-2005).

5. PROGRESS OF THE PROJECTS

The achievements of the projects are outlined in Appendix A.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Although the Council has committed itself to provide additional funding to each of these projects in its Local Outcome Agreement for 2004-05 and 2005-06, these costs will be contained within Housing Act Implementation Funding (Homeless Provisions). As such, there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that in following the recommendations contained in this report, the Council would not be acting in any way that is incompatible with human rights legislation.

8. CONSULTATION

In preparing this report, there has been consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Law and Administration, Director of Social Work and Health and the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection.

9. CONCLUSION

It is difficult to measure the financial value gained from investing resources in the projects specified because it is difficult to place an exact financial sum against the impact the projects have on the quality of life of service users and wider society

Financing these projects has enabled the Council to meet some of the aims and objectives of the Angus Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 and its local outcome agreement with the Scottish Executive.

These projects have promoted the social inclusion of homeless and other vulnerable people in Angus by ensuring access to good quality, recycled household goods, furnishings, starter packs, and housing information, advice and assistance, adding to the quality of life for many of the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups living in Angus.

Ron Ashton
Director of Housing

Note:- The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied upon to any material extent in preparing this report:

Reports by Director of Housing:

- Housing Act Implementation Funding – Homelessness – Local Outcome Agreement Progress Report: Report No 617/03
- Rough Sleeper's Initiative (RSI) Award of Grant 2004-2005 – progress of Furniture Recycling Project Angus: Report No 51/04
- Housing Act Implementation Funding: Report 227/04
- Review of Homelessness Strategy: Report No. 429/04

APPENDIX A

PROGRESS OF THE PROJECTS

A. FURNITURE RECYCLING PROJECT ANGUS (FRPA)

Funding stream: Rough Sleeper's Initiative

Resources during the £26,000
period 01 April 2003
and 31 March 2004:

Service Aims And Objectives

The service objectives of Furniture Recycling Project Angus include to:

- develop coordinated local furniture provision
- develop a partnership agreement with other locally based furniture and household goods providers
- promote community awareness of, and involvement in, recycling and redistribution
- explore volunteering and training opportunities for disadvantaged unemployed people
- explore ways to develop service user involvement
- explore ways to develop the service according to the needs of service users across Angus
- develop a variety of partnerships that will enable progression of all other objectives
- assess the extent and pattern of material disadvantage.
- work with people who are homeless, who may be at risk of homelessness or who have experience of homelessness
- work with people who are in need of practical assistance to establish and sustain a tenancy
- improve the conditions of service users home life by improving access to high quality recycled furniture

What has Furniture Recycling Project Angus achieved?

The Project saw rapid development during 2003-2004. Members will appreciate the substantial investment in back office policies and procedures necessary to the development of any new project.

- Development Officer appointed
- warehouse premises acquired
- suitable transportation acquired
- recruitment and selection (driver etc.)
- partnership agreement in place with Furniture Project Tayside to provide –
 - 1 day per month financial support
 - 1 day per month administration support
 - ongoing access to marketing and publicity material
 - ongoing training and development opportunities

- ICT support, training and physical database

There have been considerable delays in moving to fully operational status due to delays in processing Disclosure Scotland checks and difficulties with the warehouse premises. Nevertheless, the project anticipates it will be fully operational by November 2004.

Table 1 provides information on the number of people assisted with household goods between July 2003 and March 2004.

Table 1. Number of people assisted with household goods (by age cohort)

Children	16-24 yrs.	25-34 yrs.	35-44 yrs.	45-54 yrs.	55-64 yrs.	65+ yrs.	Not specified	TOTAL
22	5	6	1	5	1	0	16	56
Source: Furniture Recycling Project Angus (2004): Management Information								

A total of 24 households (34 adults and 22 children) were provided with assistance with household goods between July 2003 and March 2004.

In addition, Furniture Recycling Project Angus has provided items predominantly sofas for 11 of the Council's furnished tenancies. Furniture Recycling Project Angus was asked to provide items not covered by furnished tenancies grant.

B. ANGUS CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU (ANGUS CAB)

Funding stream: Housing Act Implementation Funding (Homeless provisions)

Resources during the £10,000 period 01 April 2003 and 31 March 2004::

Service Aims And Objectives

The overall aim of the Service is to provide a high quality, independent support, advice, information, advocacy and representation service to people across Angus in need of housing information and advice. The objectives of the Service are to:

- work with people who are or have experience of homelessness or require housing information and advice to prevent homelessness.
- provide a well promoted, responsive independent service.
- identify the most appropriate 'type' of service provided and to work towards achieving agency and advisor accreditation by Homepoint.
- develop mechanisms which will identify those who are at risk of becoming homeless to assist in the prevention of homelessness.
- liaise with a range of agencies to provide a variety of support options.
- provide a range of information and advice that may assist a person with a housing issue or potential housing issue.
- explore ways to increase the flexibility of the service according to the needs of service users across Angus.

- develop a variety of partnerships which will enable progression of all other objectives.

What has Angus Citizens Advice Bureau achieved?

In total, Angus Citizens Advice Bureau received 11,813 new cases during 2003-2004, 8% (945 cases) of which were housing related¹. Members should note that Angus Citizens Advice Bureau receive referrals from many agencies. These figures do not represent the total number of cases referred directly by Housing.

Angus Citizens Advice Bureau provides information, advice and assistance in many areas including –

- housing benefit
- housing-related debt
- housing-related discrimination or intimidation
- homelessness
- threat of homelessness
- housing-related costs
- house condition
- environmental or neighbourhood issues
- tenure

It is difficult to quantify the impact the provision of independent housing information, advice and assistance has on the lives of clients referred to Angus Citizens Advice Bureau. The provision of timely housing information and advice can prevent homelessness from occurring.

Nevertheless, Angus Citizens Advice Bureau contributes towards meeting the Council's statutory duty under s.2 of the 2001 Act to ensure that information, advice and assistance is available, free-of-charge, to everyone who needs it.

In addition, Angus Citizens Advice Bureau represents a source of assistance to applicants through the homeless assessment process who disagree with the decision made on their application. Angus Citizens Advice Bureau is cited as a source of independent information and advice and a place to seek assistance in perfecting their appeal.

C. STARTER PACKS ANGUS (SPA)

Funding stream: Housing Act Implementation Funding (Homeless provisions)

Resources during the £6,000
period 01 April 2003
and 31 March 2004:

What is 'Starter Packs Angus'?

began as a direct response to the serious problem of homeless and needy individuals and families trying to access and sustain a tenancy when they are

¹

Source: Angus Citizens Advice Bureau (2004) Management Information

unable to provide themselves with basic household goods. Being without the necessities for setting up house, or going into debt to acquire them, often results in tenancies failing and people caught in a cycle of repeat homelessness. The service provided by Starter Packs Angus is intended to help break that cycle.

Service Aims And Objectives

The overall aim of Starter Packs Angus is to deliver a service that provides small household goods to people in need across Angus. The objectives of the Service are to:

- work with people who are or have experience of homelessness
- work with people who are in need of practical assistance to secure a tenancy
- improve the conditions of service users home life
- promote home energy efficiency
- develop volunteering opportunities within the project
- explore ways to develop service user involvement
- explore ways to develop the service according to the needs of service users across Angus
- develop a variety of partnerships which will enable progression of all other objectives.

What has Starter Packs Angus achieved?

Table 2 provides information on the number of people assisted with a starter pack between April 2003 and March 2004.

Table 2. People assisted with starter packs (by age cohort and gender)

	Gender			TOTAL
	Male	Female	U/K	
Adults				
16 & 17 years	-	-	23	23
18-25	9	7	-	16
25-59 years	48	27	-	75
60 years +	4	1	-	5
TOTAL	61	35	23	119
Children	75	60	-	135

Source: Starter Packs Angus (2004): Management Information

A total of 119 households (including 135 children) were provided with a starter pack between July 2003 and March 2004. Starter Packs were provided across each of the burghs of Angus except Monifieth from which there was no demand.

D. AUGMENT

Funding stream: Housing Act Implementation Funding (Homeless provisions)

Resources during the £1,000 period 01 April 2003 and 31 March 2004:

What is 'Augment'?

Augment is a voluntary sector organisation working to support service users with mental health problems in Angus. Angus Council provided funding to Augment in 2003-2004 to carry out service user consultation with people currently affected by homelessness. With the assistance of Augment's Involvement Officer, volunteers with mental health problems who have previous experience of the homeless service carry out consultation with current homeless service users. The volunteers feed this information back to Angus Council.

Service Objectives

Augment's key objectives are to seek opportunities to develop, encourage and support service user involvement and to develop a range of effective systems for the provision of information, consultation feedback and the implementation of recommendations to –

- increased service user involvement in a planned and co-ordinated manner, appropriate and agreed with service users
- develop an implementation plan following the planning process
- establish methods of good practice.

What has Augment achieved?

Meaningful consultation and involvement with homeless service users is difficult. Homeless people are one of the most socially excluded and marginalised groups in society and do not easily engage with service providers.

A consultation exercise was designed and conducted to evidence the level of involvement service users required about specific aspects of the homeless service. In short, the study aimed to identify the areas where users felt they should be consulted about developments and proposals or actively involved in decision-making processes. The distinction between consultation (generally passive information provision) and active involvement (determining how policy is developed) was explained and opinions recorded on the level of consultation or involvement required in areas such as –

- decoration of temporary accommodation
- measuring the quality of the homeless service
- how the 'house rules' in temporary accommodation are drafted.

Housing is currently studying the results of this survey to see how these comments can be channelled in to service development and day-to-day service delivery. Further exercises are planned with emphasis being placed on the active involvement of users in developing service standards for homeless services.

Members may note that the Council's outcome agreement with Augment was highlighted as a key example of positive practice in the recent Pathfinder inspection of Angus Council's landlord and homelessness functions.