

Isle of Wight Council Adult and Community Services

Issue 3

Summer 2005

HOUSING NEWSLETTER



Inside this issue:

Social Housing on the island	2
Lettings of Social Housing for last year	3
Register Reviews	3
Housing Benefit advice	4
Homeless Statistics	5
Homelessness Prevention	6
Contact Details	8

This is the third newsletter that we have created, to keep people who are accepted as homeless or on the Island Housing Register informed of what is happening in Housing Services.

Front Desk Service at Law Centre

As mentioned previously, all initial homeless enquiries and housing problems should be directed in the first instance to the Law Centre, Exchange House, St Cross Lane, Newport on 524715 so that they can try to prevent homelessness, signpost people to correct departments and give people their housing options.

From here, if you are in need help from the Council, they will refer you to the relevant officer for assistance. The Law Centre is open from 9am to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4pm on Fridays.

Review of Housing Register Points System

We are about to undertake a revision to the points system which will give additional priority to length of residence on the Island.

We are interested in people's views on how the points system operates, so if you have any suggestions, please write to us at Housing Services, 7 High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1SS.

What do you want to know?

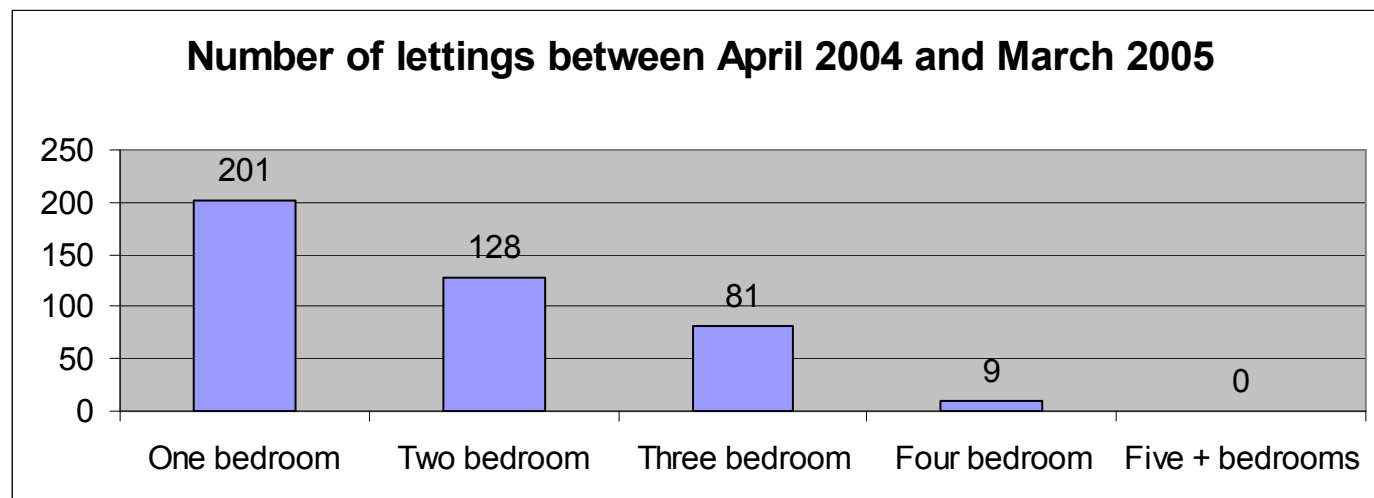


If you feel there is something that should be in this newsletter that would be of use to others, or information you would like to have, please write to us with any suggestions at Housing Services, 7 High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1SS.

Please find below a list of social housing properties on the Island through the four main housing associations, most of the family sized units are two and three bedroom, there are less than 100 four bedroom properties, 4 five bedroom properties and 1 six bedroom property; most of the sheltered housing are one bedroom.

Apse Heath	86 properties	83 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Arreton	11 properties	8 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Bembridge	104 properties	68 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Binstead	214 properties in total	171 family sized units	23 sheltered units
Bouldnor	25 properties in total	25 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Brading	139 properties in total	112 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Brighstone	28 properties in total	24 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Calbourne	6 properties in total	4 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Chale	76 properties in total	57 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Chillerton	22 properties in total	20 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Cowes	422 properties in total	288 family sized units	72 sheltered housing
East Cowes	483 properties in total	362 family sized units	70 sheltered housing
Freshwater	345 properties in total	229 family sized units	41 sheltered housing
Godshill	72 properties in total	47 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Gurnard	21 properties in total	0 family units	21 sheltered units
Havenstreet	8 properties in total	1 family unit	No sheltered housing
Lake	323 properties in total	147 family sized units	54 sheltered units
Merstone	7 properties in total	7 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Mottistone	2 properties in total	2 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Nettlestone	3 properties in total	3 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Newbridge	21 properties in total	16 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Newchurch	16 properties in total	16 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Newport	1,393 properties in total	931 family sized units	149 sheltered housing
Niton	33 properties in total	20 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Rookley	11 properties in total	11 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Ryde	984 properties in total	569 family sized units	84 sheltered units
Sandown	372 properties in total	247 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Shalfleet	18 properties in total	15 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Shanklin	369 properties in total	255 family sized units	31 sheltered units
Shorwell	19 properties in total	13 family sized units	No sheltered housing
St Helens	34 properties in total	10 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Thorley	15 properties in total	15 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Totland	115 properties in total	83 family sized units	No sheltered housing
Ventnor	393 properties in total	205 family sized units	64 sheltered units
Wootton	41 properties in total	30 family sized units	10 sheltered units
Wroxall	120 properties in total	90 family sized units	17 sheltered units
Yarmouth	35 properties in total	26 family sized units	No sheltered housing

Lettings of social housing properties on the Island through the four main housing associations



Of the 419 lettings last year:

99 were to sheltered or warden assisted accommodation.

98 were to transfers within or between Housing Associations

This means that there were 222 lettings to general applicants last year.

As at 28th June 2005 there are 4,574 applicants on the housing register

Permanent Accommodation—Register Reviews

Following the change with the Isle of Wight Housing Register in 2004, every applicant that was recorded on the Register was issued with a new application form during the previous summer in order to make sure their details were up to date.

A process of regularly reviewing and renewing every application is now starting and everybody with a current application on the Isle of Wight Housing Register will receive a renewal questionnaire.

Any application whose renewal has not been returned to Housing Services within 28 days of the date sent out, will be archived on the Housing Register.

This means that unless an application has been recorded as reviewed and renewed, it may not be considered for short-listing for any vacancies that come up on the Island.

It is therefore vital that if you still wish to be considered for an offer of housing from the Register, you return your renewal form as soon as possible after you have reviewed it, and no longer than 28 days after, to ensure you remain live on the register.

If you have any questions, please contact our office on 823040 for advice.

Don't forget to tell us if you move and change your address

Housing Benefit

Verification for new claims

Benefit cannot be paid until claimants have supplied the necessary evidence and proofs to support of their application. Evidence and proofs must be supplied for all of the areas requested in the application form and notes included with the form detail what is required. All proofs must be in the form of original documents and be relevant to the period of the application.

The five key areas where evidence and proof are required are:

- Identity and national insurance number
- Evidence of liability
- Proof of income
- Proof of capital
- Household evidence

There are local offices that accept and verify applications, all claimants are given a checklist detailing information received and highlighting information still required. This checklist is also a receipt for the application form, please ensure that this is kept in a safe place in case it is required at a later date for proof that a claim has been submitted.

Occasionally it will be necessary to request further information once detailed scrutiny of the claim has been made. Where further information is needed claimants are asked to supply this within seven days or to contact the council if they cannot meet this deadline. **Payment of benefit cannot be made until all required information is provided.**

If a claimant provides all of the required evidence and proofs at the time they hand in the application form Housing Benefit aim to process the claim and notify them of any entitlement within a maximum 21 days.

Change of circumstance

All changes in circumstances must be reported in writing as soon as they occur. This is the responsibility of the claimant or the person who is receiving the payment if they are aware of a change in circumstance that could effect the amount of benefit paid. Any change in circumstance must be verified so the necessary proof will be required.

Discretionary Housing Payments

The budget for discretionary payments is a cash limited budget and aims to meet the needs of claimants with exceptional circumstances for a short period of time only. It enables the award of an additional payment where the housing benefit is not sufficient to cover the liability.

Applicants are required to complete an income and expenditure form and to give detailed reasons for requesting a discretionary payment. Any award will only be for a short period of time to enable the claimant to make suitable alternative arrangements to meet their rental liability.



Tough on Rent Arrears

As part of your agreement you are required to pay your rent for your accommodation. It is also your responsibility to provide all the information needed by Housing Benefit to complete your claim.

If Housing Benefit cannot complete your claim you are responsible for the whole rent.

If you get into rent arrears, then your home is in danger as you may be evicted and lose your accommodation.

Homeless Statistics— During April 2004 and March 2005, 450 people applied as homeless, of these 317 were accepted

Categories of people who were accepted as homeless between April 2004 – March 2005

Families with children	227
Elderly	58
Mental Illness	49
Physical Disability	30
16/17 year old	7
Special—Domestic Violence	5
Having been in care	4
Households homeless in emergency	2
Formerly in care, aged 18-21	2
Special—Other	2
Fleeing home due to violence	2
Having served in HM Forces	1
Having been in custody/on remand	1
TOTAL	317

Reasons for homelessness in people who were accepted as homeless between April 2004 – March 2005

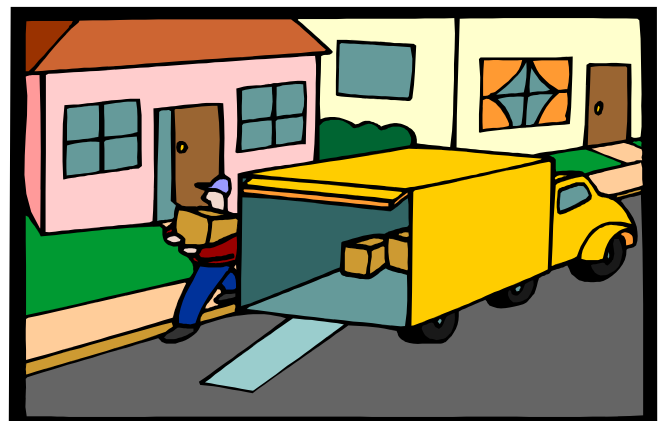
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	109
Parents not willing to accommodate	92
Relationship breakdown—Non Violent	28
Relationship breakdown—Violent	37
Other—homeless in emergency/abroad etc	21
In institution/care	12
Other forms of harassment	5
Other forms of violence	5
Violent breakdown—associated persons	5
Mortgage arrears	3
TOTAL	317

New Initiative—Assistance to find permanent accommodation



This is being offered initially to families who have been in temporary accommodation for the longest period of time, however, if you think that this might be of interest please do contact us. Our contact details are on the back of this newsletter.

We recognise that many people still have very long waits in temporary accommodation. In addition to this because of the very heavy demand for housing association properties it is sometimes the case that when properties do become available they are not in people's ideal area of choice. We are therefore offering financial assistance to people in temporary accommodation to secure a private rented home.



Homelessness Prevention

We now have two Homelessness Prevention Officers within Housing Services who can advise on ways to prevent you losing your home.

We are keen on preventing homelessness wherever possible and have a number of schemes to assist people and prevent them losing their homes, such as our Private Rented Scheme where we may be able to assist families with a deposit to secure private sector accommodation, and a Fix It fund to help sort out other problems.

The most important thing is to get advice as early as possible, so if you have problems with rent arrears, have been issued a Notice to Quit, or have any other issues with your tenancy, please contact the Law Centre on telephone 527415. Early intervention may prevent homelessness, so you should seek advice as soon as possible. Here is a list of the number of people we assisted between April 2004 and March 2005.

Prevention Measures	Number Assisted
Deposit	82
Found Private	12
Landlord rescinded notice	8
Supporting People Referral	7
Liased with Housing Benefit	14
Mrs Fix It	8
Secured an RSL Hard to Let	3
Assisted at Court Desk	2
Liased with landlord/parents	6
Offered Permanent Accommodation	2



We have also implemented a number of schemes to try and reduce the number of people coming through as homeless, these include:

- Home visiting in all homeless cases
- Mediation for parental exclusions—Mediators from New Forest Mediation Service will talk with the young person being excluded and their parents and try and resolve any issues they have to keep them in the parental home.
- A review of our Court Order requirement. This policy was brought in during July 2004 and a number of people and landlords were consulted in January 2005 to get their views of the requirement. Following on from this we have amended this requirement and would now look to negotiate more time with landlords rather than insisting on a court order before we will accept a duty to provide temporary accommodation. However, if we cannot negotiate any more time and there is nowhere for the person being asked to leave to go then we reserve the right to insist on a court order.

Audit Commission Inspection—Our progress so far

In October last year the Audit Commission published its final report on the Isle of Wight's homelessness service. The service was rated "fair" with "excellent" prospects for improvement.

The Audit Commission recognised that we had responded to the challenge of reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, thought that good quality advice was being provided and that we were beginning to develop initiatives to prevent homelessness occurring. However the Commission also considered that we had some way to go before our service could be considered good. At the time of the report homelessness on the island was still increasing, it was considered that we did not keep people particularly well informed as to their situation or give a service giving sufficient focus to the needs of those seeking our help.

The Council accepted the Commission's report and produced an action plan to ensure that our service continued to improve. Here are some of the steps we have taken.

By concentrating our efforts on preventing homelessness in the first place through the work of the advice team at the Law Centre and our homeless prevention officers we have managed to bring about a reduction in the number of people becoming homeless. This has meant that fewer people have had to be accommodated for long periods of time in bed and breakfast and more have been helped to find other accommodation.

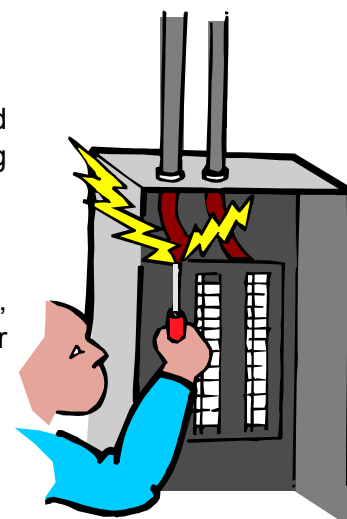
We have commenced a programme of home visits to those in temporary accommodation to check that the property is being properly managed and maintained. We are also using this opportunity to review people's situation and discuss permanent re-housing options. In addition we shall continue to issue our newsletter and questionnaires. We do however want to encourage greater involvement from people who have used our service. If you might be interested in becoming involved in any way please contact us to discuss further, contact details on last page.

Housing Health & Safety Ratings System

The Housing Health & Safety Ratings System is the Government's new approach to the evaluation of potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. It is a replacement for the Housing Fitness Standard. The HHSRS can identify up to 29 different hazards that may occur around the home, and the Housing Renewal Section will have a variety of enforcement options available to help resolve unsatisfactory matters.

Tenants are still required to occupy the property in a tenant like manner, and are expected to try and resolve any matters with their landlord before involving the Local Authority.

For further information, there is a leaflet available from Housing Services, telephone 823040, or details can also be found on the internet at either www.iwight.com or www.odpm.gov.uk.





*Isle of Wight Council Adult and
Community Services*

Housing Services Section
7 High Street
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1SS

Telephone 01983 823040
Fax 01983 823050
Email housing@iow.gov.uk
Web: www.iwight.com

Changes within the Homelessness Team

Since the last issue of this newsletter, Martyn Pearl has left as Head of Housing and he has been replaced by Margaret Howard.

We have also taken on a new Housing Needs Manager, Phillip Taylor; a new Housing Officer, Laura Rice, and a new Prevention Officer, Jacqui Foster.

Staff within the Homeless Team

Management

Margaret Howard	Head of Housing	Via 01983 823061	
Phillip Taylor	Housing Needs Manager	Via 01983 823040	philip.taylor@iow.gov.uk

Officers

Martyn Stanley	Senior Housing Officer	01983 823041	martyn.stanley@iow.gov.uk
Di Palmer	Housing Officer—West side of Island	01983 823042	di.palmer@iow.gov.uk
Caroline Fleming	Housing Officer—West side of Island	01983 823043	caroline.fleming@iow.gov.uk
Wendy Salter	Housing Officer—East side of Island	01983 823044	wendy.salter@iow.gov.uk
Laura Rice	Housing Officer—East side of Island	01893 823065	laura.rice@iow.gov.uk

Homeless Prevention

Hannah Field	Homeless Prevention Officer	01983 823065	hannah.field@iow.gov.uk
Jacqui Foster	Homeless Prevention Officer	01983 823063	jacqueline.foster@iow.gov.uk

Housing Register

Mary Snow	Housing Registration Officer	01983 823045	mary.snow@iow.gov.uk
-----------	------------------------------	--------------	--

Administration

Tim Bateman	Housing Support Officer	01983 823048	tim.bateman@iow.gov.uk
Jem Seaward	Housing Support Officer	01983 823047	jem.seaward@iow.gov.uk
Debbie Townsend	Housing Support Officer	01983 823062	debbie.townsend@iow.gov.uk