Homelessness

Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Housing Issues Paper

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What is a Local Housing Strategy and a Housing Issues Paper?

All local authorities have Local Housing Strategies (LHS) in place to plan how they will address housing matters across the local area. Scottish Borders is currently shaping its **Local Housing Strategy for 2023-2028** and have created **four housing issues papers** to discuss key issues facing the Borders.

This is one of four housing issues papers and focusses on:

Homelessness
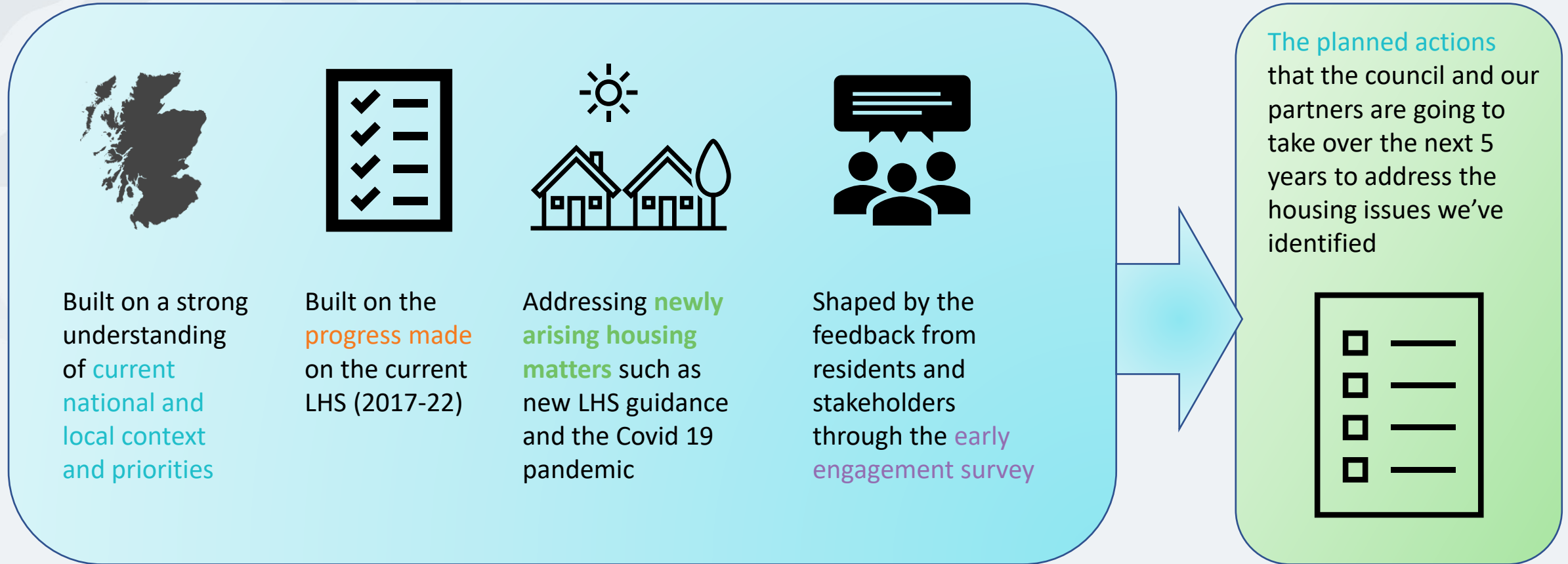
The other three papers focus on:

- Housing Delivery and Place Making

- Particular Needs and Specialist Provision

- Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Housing Quality

We are seeking the views of stakeholders and residents about the papers to make sure that they meet expectations, to see if we have missed anything and to see if there are a better ways of the council carrying out its duties in relation to housing. We are seeking views through a survey and multiple workshops with residents and stakeholders.

Content: Housing Issues Papers

Scottish Borders Council have created the housing issues papers as follows:

Built on a strong understanding of current national and local context and priorities

Built on the progress made on the current LHS (2017-22)

Addressing newly arising housing matters such as new LHS guidance and the Covid 19 pandemic

Shaped by the feedback from residents and stakeholders through the early engagement survey

The planned actions that the council and our partners are going to take over the next 5 years to address the housing issues we've identified

2017-2022 Local Housing Strategy actions

Outcomes	Strategic Actions
Use effective housing options and preventative intervention to successfully prevent homelessness	Develop and analyse client group profiles for homeless applicants to identify reasons for homelessness, housing support needs and how to target prevention activity to specific groups
	Monitor the strategic homelessness approach through the newly established Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership, and delivery of the new Rapid Re-Housing Transition Plan
Improve access to & impact of Housing Options model	Conduct research and analysis of the reasons behind sustainment outcomes for previously homeless households to ensure that effective support models are identified and are made more widely available
	Improve access and links to education, training or employment opportunities within homelessness and resettlement processes
	Implement a common approach to housing options which stimulates collaboration, considers all tenures, focuses on prevention and early action and creates a single point of access
	Develop a range of Housing Options pathways tailored to the needs of specific client groups and communities
Improve access to a range of settled accommodation options	Improve access to a better range of settled accommodation options for homeless households
Lessen the impact of residing in temporary accommodation	Review the strategy for temporary accommodation to ensure financial sustainability and to continuously improve customer outcomes
	Explore ways to expand the range of transitional accommodation options for homeless households
Promote independent living & tenancy sustainment through effective delivery of housing support duty	Improve access to health and social care services for homeless people, particularly for those with complex needs by working with integration partners
Improved availability of housing support services	Monitor availability and impact of housing support for young people and other vulnerable client groups

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Achievements in 2017-21

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
• Establishment of Housing Options Protocol for care leavers	• A new Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership was established	• RSLs have made changes to their Allocations Policies that will help to resolve homelessness quicker	• Borders Homelessness and Health Partnership (BHHSP) members have been on the front line of the Covid-19 pandemic
• Work is underway to establish the new Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership	• The Council and its partners developed a Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan	• The Council and its partners commenced implementation of its Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan	• No B&B accommodation used as temporary accommodation within the Scottish Borders during 2020/21
• 158 households were prevented from becoming homeless.	• The needs of vulnerable Young people have been considered through the development of Young People's Housing Need Study	• The Through Care After Care (TCAC) Supported Accommodation Project reach its 10 year anniversary. 91% of care leavers who stayed there went on to maintain successful tenancies	• 90% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless, secured settled accommodation
• 63% of unintentionally homeless households were permanently rehoused.	• Only 4% of new homelessness assessments had applied within the previous year	• During 2019/20 the Housing support team received 388 new referrals.	• During 2020/2021 the Housing support team received 256 new referrals.
• Only 4.5% of new homelessness assessments had applied within the previous year	• 78% of unintentionally homeless households were permanently rehoused.	• 91% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless secured settled accommodation	• 15 additional temporary homeless accommodation properties were acquired from RSL

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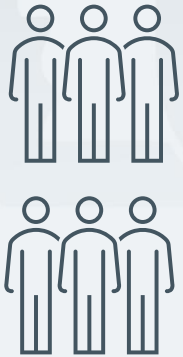# Legal, Regulatory, and Policy Context

The Homelessness issues paper is written with consideration of the following legal, regulatory, and policy priorities:

UK	Scotland	Scottish Borders
• Homelessness: Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2019)	• The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 • The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 • Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 amendment • Homeless etc (Scotland) Act 2003 (Commencement No.4) Order 2019 • The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) • Ending Homelessness Together • Ending Destitution Together • Housing to 2040 • Housing First	• Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans • The Housing Needs and Aspirations of Young People • Health and Social Care Integration Strategy 2018-22 • SESPlan Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2022

What we know

Homelessness Assessments

- The number of homeless applications has remained steady since 2011/12 as a result of a proactive approach to prevention through the delivery of the Housing Options approach
- Almost two thirds of homeless assessments are from single people (38% male and 21% female)
- Just over a fifth of homeless assessments are from single parents (18% female and 8% male)
- 33% of homeless assessments included households with children (212 households)
- 27% of homeless applicants were young adults aged 16-24 (176 households)
- The most common reasons for homelessness relate to a dispute in the applicant household (20% non-violent and 12% violent); and the applicant 'asked to leave' by their landlord or household (31%).
- The number of repeat homelessness assessments has remained at a similar level over the past ten years, with the current percentage being 4% (6% nationally).
- The average time (days) from assessment to closure for applications assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in the Scottish Borders is 136 days – this is similar to the past four years. This is lower than the national figure which is 224 days.
- 90% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness were provided with settled accommodation (82% nationally)

Specific Groups

- The number of young people presented as homeless has remained steady over the past five years but the Scottish Borders has the 5th highest number of young people assessed as homeless as a proportion of the population. It is 17 per 1,000

- Discharge from prison/ hospital/ care/ other institution accounts for 5% of homeless assessments in 2020/21.

- The number of applications and assessments of veterans has remained at the same level over ten years

- On average 64 women presented as homeless following incidences of domestic abuse each year in the Scottish Borders (over a ten year period). In 2018/19, 65 women presented as homeless, this is 22% of all single females and single female parents.

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Homelessness Prevention / Housing Options

- The number of households approaching the prevention has been steadily decreasing, which is similar to the national trend.

- In 2019/20 there were 423 approaches to prevention services, this reduced by 27% from 2018/19

- 79% of prevention actives include clients being informed of rights under homelessness legislation

- The majority of prevention activity is Type I – Active Information, Sign-posting and Explanation

- 35% of all prevent approaches are helped to stay their current accommodation or to access a new tenancy

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Temporary Accommodation

- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a 20% increase in the number of temporary accommodation placements from 2019/20 to 2020/21 (12% increase nationally). To achieve this homelessness services and RSLs worked in partnership to increase the availability of temporary homeless accommodation by 15 properties

- Since to 2014/15, the average length of stay in temporary accommodation is 113 days

- The aim is to reduce the use of temporary accommodation but this will be reviewed due to the legacy created by the pandemic and the current Ukrainian programme.

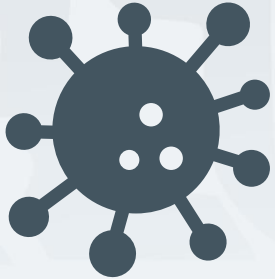- Scottish Borders has not used bed and breakfast accommodation since September 2019

Housing Support

- The Housing Support Service forms part of the Council's Homelessness and Financial Support Team and consists of an internal Housing Support team and a commissioned service.

- 395 cases were opened in 2019-20

- 388 cases referred to housing support received support in 2019-20

- Over 82% of cases closed received a positive outcome

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Covid-19

- 29% increase in the 'Homeless Queue' - the number of applicants assessed as Homeless or TWH open to homelessness services on the 31st March 2020 compared to 31st March 2022. This had been reducing prior to the pandemic.

- 30% increase in the number of households residing in temporary homeless accommodation. (31st March 2020 compared to 31st March 2022)

- 21 % reduction in available RSL housing stock in 2020/2021 when compared to 2019/2020 (data from 4 main RSL's)

Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan (RRTP)

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was set up by the Scottish Government in October 2017 to produce short and long term solutions to end homelessness and rough sleeping. The cornerstone of recommendations is a transition to a Rapid Rehousing approach, of which Housing First is a component.

Scottish Borders Council developed a five-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) working with key local partners in December 2018. Rapid Rehousing Plans link into Local Housing Strategies and Strategic Housing Investment Plans and offer each local authority and key partners an opportunity to re-assess how permanent and settled housing options are secured for every potentially homeless and homeless household.

The vision for Rapid Rehousing in the Scottish Borders is:

- Homelessness is prevented wherever possible but where homelessness cannot be prevented a settled, mainstream housing outcome is secured as quickly as possible.

- When temporary accommodation is needed it will be mainstream, furnished accommodation within a community, and time spent in it will be minimal, with as few transitions as possible.

- Housing First will be the first response for people with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantages. We will work in collaboration with Health and Social Care Partnership, and other relevant services, to ensure tenancies are supported and sustained.

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Rapid Rehousing is a key component of the whole-system approach whereby the responsibility for tackling homelessness lies not just with Local Authorities but with housing providers, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support. The Covid-19 emergency has delayed the full application of resources and has consequently impacted on the development of the Borders RRTP.

As a result of the delays and impact of Covid-19 and updated emerging guidance, it was agreed that the RRTP action plan should undergo a review to reconsider the priorities of the BHHSP in light of the pandemic. Following the initial response to the pandemic, focus moved to the RRTP and work began on the 'Ending Homelessness Together' commitments, by progressing the Scottish Borders RRTP with Housing Associations and Health and Social Care partners.

RRTH Achievement so far:

- Introduction of a Housing Intervention fund to improve the housing options available to applicants who are in need of intervention due to rent arrears and who often face the prospect of being homeless.

- Introduction of a Homeless Intervention fund which is accessible by front line workers within the homelessness team to use in the prevention or resolution of homelessness. Given the varying and complex reasons for homelessness, any application which demonstrates a contribution to the prevention or faster resolution of homelessness is considered.

- The launch of one year peer mentor support project that is currently ongoing.

- The launch of a two year Housing First pilot

- A temporary increase in the % of RSL let's allocated to homeless households to support reducing the 'homelessness queue'.

- The introduction of a Crash Pad within the homelessness temporary accommodation stock to improve the management and efficiency of the temporary accommodation stock.

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Housing First

A two year Housing First pilot was launched within the Scottish Borders in October 2021, the pilot aims to support 30 households during this time. Although many people see homelessness as a housing issue, for many of the Housing First cohort homelessness is symptomatic of a greater range of challenges.

Housing First provides ordinary settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs, recognising that a safe and secure home is the best base for recovery, it offers personalised, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address wider needs.

Secure tenancies are provided by four locally based RSL's; Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association and Waverley Housing. Housing First support is provided by Cyrenians.

The positive benefits of having a secure base in housing can be felt in sectors such as employability, substance use, health and community justice. Additionally, the impact of a positive relationship with a Housing First support worker can act as a conduit to making better use of relationships with other professionals

Referrals for the pilot are currently identified by the SBC's Homelessness Team to address the outstanding demand for this support in that domain, however, referrals may be considered from other sources when supply has met this demand.

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Early Engagement Survey

Held between 1st October to 30th November 2021 for households and organisations

Aim → To find out what the main housing issues and priorities for the region were for households and organisation

How → A survey published through social media, press release and working with RSL tenant groups and other community Groups

Outcome → 330 responses (301 from individuals and 29 from organisations)

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Notable findings

68% Thought that homelessness was an issue (**38%** thought it was a small issue and **30%** thought it was a big issue)

Respondents were asked to rank a number of housing priorities; these are the responses to questions relating to homelessness:

What do you think are the top five housing priorities in the Scottish Borders? *(1 being the greatest priority)*						
Priorities	1	2	3	4	5	Total Selected as Priorities
Local residents are able to afford to either rent or buy a property in the location of their choice	35%	13%	8%	9%	11%	75%
There is a range of housing options available to suit the different needs of people in the community	8%	12%	10%	10%	8%	48%
Households have the ability to reside in a home that is the right size and meets their needs	1%	1%	2%	3%	8%	15%

Source: LHS 2023-2028 Early Engagement Survey Results

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Comments

'There needs to be better communication between the IJBs and housing to ensure the current individuals within our communities are receiving the correct level of support to ensure tenancy sustainability. Private landlords must be held more accountable regarding stock condition and affordability if we are ever going to positively tackle homelessness in the area. After the pandemic more people are suffering from mental health problems investment must be prioritised to help these individuals e.g. more supported accommodation.'

'There has to be some recognition of locality for homeless people. I have come across people forced to move from Peebles to Kelso as they are only entitled to one offer and if they refuse this then the Homeless service won't assist them further. The Borders is a huge area and this cuts people off from their social supports.'

'A commitment to ensuring that domestic abuse victims can have good housing choices, a review of current safe housing options.'

'Adults and young people at risk who are also vulnerable are not usually safely placed in wider homeless accommodation where there are other people who may present a risk to them. There is an acknowledged lack of safe homeless availability for these groups. There is also a shortage of local supported housing for younger adults with disability, mental health, addiction or other support needs.'

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What are the issues?

- The length of time households are homeless

- The supply and demand of one bedroom properties – housing applicants having difficulties accessing one bedroom properties

- The demand for housing for larger families, meaning experiencing homelessness for longer periods

- Dealing with the ongoing impact of the pandemic and implementing the RRTP

- Increasing reliance on temporary accommodation throughout the pandemic which has continued beyond the pandemic

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What are the issues? (cont.)

- An increasing number of homelessness households awaiting permanent housing throughout the pandemic which has continued to rise beyond the pandemic

- The complex support needs, beyond housing support, of the homeless population and difficulties in accessing support

- Accessibility and affordability of the private rented sector particularly for single people and/or people on low incomes

- High demand for accommodation in the Eildon Locality

- The low supply of accommodation in the Tweeddale locality

Housing to 2040:
what are the actions around Homelessness?

Action 9: Prevent and end homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping

- Continue to implement the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan and develop our work further up to 2040.

- Roll out nationally a programme to facilitate access to the private rented sector for homeless households.

- Commission research into housing insecurity and hidden homelessness.

- Implement the recommendations in 'Improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse'.

- Develop homelessness prevention legislation to ensure public bodies across Scotland have responsibilities for preventing homelessness.
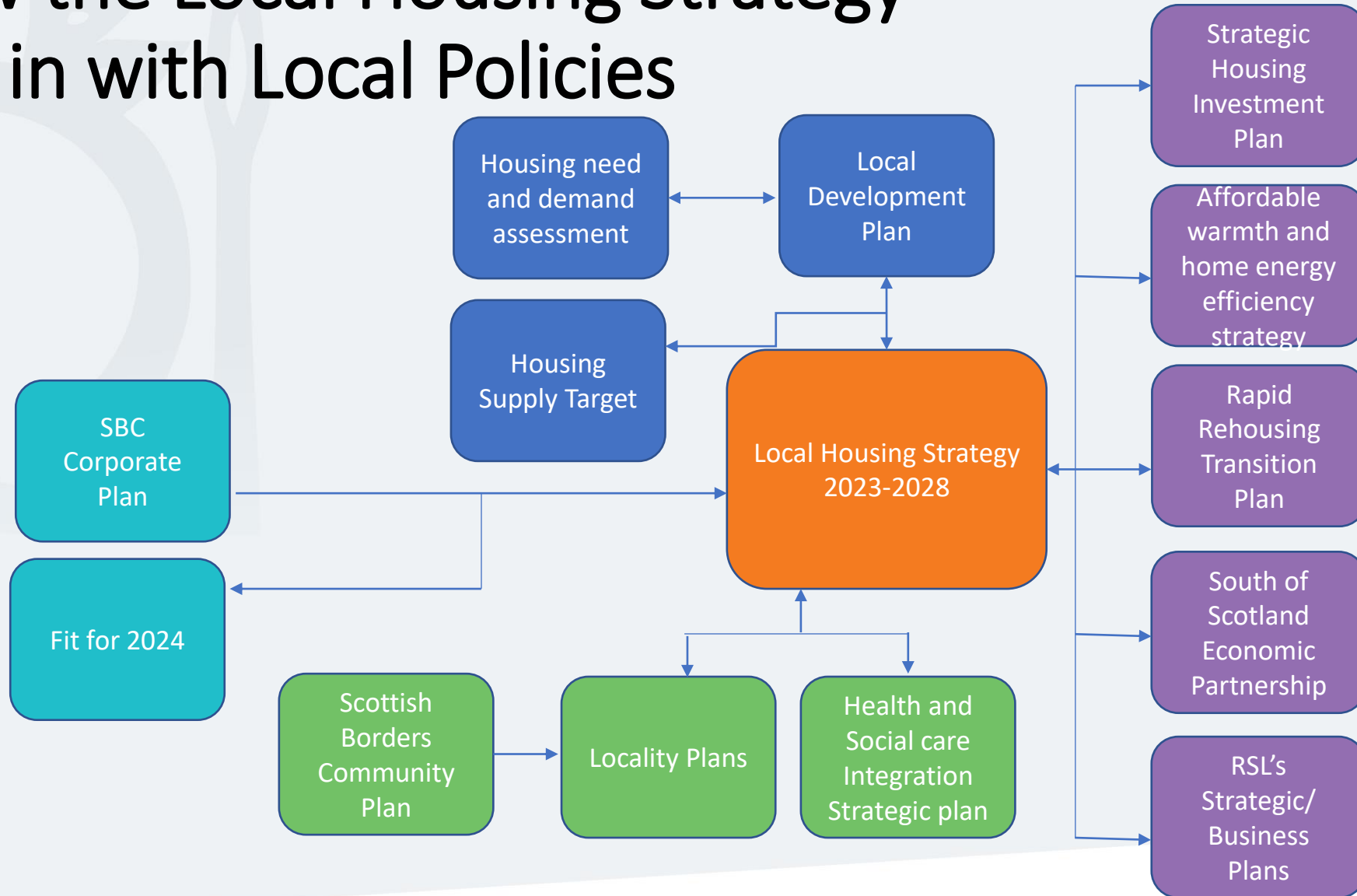
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Housing to 2040:
what are the actions around Homelessness? (cont.)

- Ensure the next National Performance Framework review includes explicit consideration of homelessness.

- Secure better integrated responses from homelessness and substance use services.

- Establish a national learning network to ensure a more joined up approach to homelessness.

- Continue to press the UK Government to remove the barriers it has put in place to supporting people with no recourse to public funds or give us the power to act.

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How the Local Housing Strategy Fits in with Local Policies

Next Steps

Survey

Scottish Borders Council (SBC), aided by Altair Consultancy and Advisory Services Ltd https://altairltd.co.uk/, will conduct **surveys** with Scottish Borders residents and stakeholders (organisations involved in the housing sector) during **July/August 2022**.

The surveys are an opportunity for you to tell SBC which local housing issues matter the most to you.

Workshops

This will be followed by **workshops**, during which you can discuss local housing issues in more detail. These are scheduled for the following dates:

Residents	Stakeholders
#1 - Tuesday 2nd August, 11am-1pm	#1 - Monday 5th September, 2pm-4pm
#2 - Wednesday 3rd August, 5.30pm-7.30pm	#2 - Wednesday 7th September, 9.30am-11.30am
#3 - Monday 8th August, 3pm-5pm	#3 - Tuesday 13th September, 2pm-4pm
#4 - Wednesday 10th August, 9am-11am	#4 - Thursday 15th September, 2pm-4pm