



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S
**LOCAL HOUSING
STRATEGY 2023-2028**
ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24



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1. Introduction

Since 2021, the Housing Strategy and Development team have been working on the new five year Local Housing Strategy (LHS) covering 2023-2028, which was launched in 2023. This is the fifth LHS that has been developed for the Scottish Borders which sets out a detailed action plan and provides the monitoring and evaluation framework for reporting annual progress on the delivery of our five strategic outcomes and the new LHS Vision, which is:

“Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community”

The five strategic outcomes are:

Strategic Outcome 1:	More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive
Strategic Outcome 2:	People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing
Strategic Outcome 3:	Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy
Strategic Outcome 4:	Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage
Strategic Outcome 5:	Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible

We’re pleased to present our first annual report on the new LHS 2023-2028, which highlights key achievements and progress from April 2023 to March 2024.

This year marks 20 years since the council transferred its housing stock to Registered Social Landlords, and today’s context presents a range of challenges for everyone involved in housing delivery. The legacy of COVID-19, and the war in Ukraine and inflationary pressures have all impacted on housing delivery in our region. Local people are also struggling to maintain a good quality of life amid the current cost of living crisis. In 2023 inflation reached its highest levels for forty years, mortgage rates exceeded 6% for the first time in fourteen years, and the most recent available statistics suggest there is an estimated 29% of households living in fuel poverty. With this context in mind, it is important that we celebrate our achievements which is what this report seeks to do.

2. More Homes in Sustainable Communities

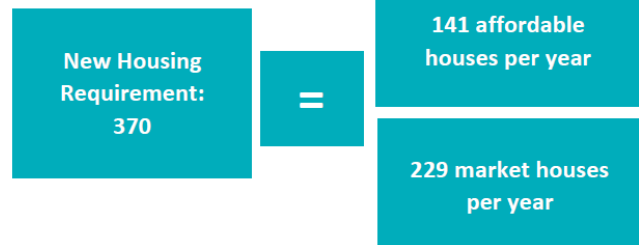
Addressing Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Increase the supply of alternative tenure housing to meet a broad range of needs.
- Increase construction capacity and skills to support delivery of more homes.
- Implement revised planning policy and practice to ensure it is directive in shaping existing and new places.
- Support the delivery of housing regeneration in communities (including town centres and rural settlements).
- Support the development and implementation of Local Place Plans to help address local housing challenges.
- Reduce the number of empty homes.
- Explore innovative approaches to housing delivery in conjunction with partners.

Providing Affordable Homes

As part of the LHS 2023-2028 development, the Housing Supply Target for the Scottish Borders was set for the next five years:



The Strategic Housing Investment Plan sets out the strategic investment priorities for affordable housing over the 5-year period to achieve the outcomes set out in the Local Housing Strategy and meeting the Housing Supply Target for affordable homes.

The SHIP 2024-2029 was approved in October 2023 and proposed potential delivery of 1,122 new affordable homes underpinned by an estimated investment of £267m.

221 affordable homes were delivered during 2023/2024
177 of these were new supply affordable homes

The affordable home completions in 2023-24 were as follows:

Provider	Project Completion		Tenure	General Needs	Particular Needs	Total Units
BHA	Springfield Drive	Duns	HA Rent	21	-	21
EHA	Poynder Apartments	Kelso	HA Rent	-	36	36
EHA	Poynder Gardens	Kelso	HA Rent	14	2	16
EHA	Broch View	Galashiels	HA Rent	12	-	12
EHA	Horsemarket	Earlston	HA Rent	27	-	27
EHA	Dominies Way	Chirnside	HA Rent	42	-	42
EHA	Open Market Purchase	Peebles	HA Rent	1	-	1
SBHA	Glensax Road	Peebles	HA Rent	6	-	6
SBHA	Tweed Court	Kelso	HA Rent	12	-	12
SBHA	Crawford Street	Kelso	HA Rent	5	-	5
SBHA	Open Market Purchase	Various	9 HA Rent 5 MMR	14	-	14
WH	Open Market Purchase	Various	HA Rent	4	-	4
Developer	Everly Meadow	Swinton	MMR	2	-	2
Developer	Everly Meadow	Swinton	Shared Equity	2	-	2
OMSE	Open Market Shared Equity	Various	Shared Equity	21	-	21
Total				183	38	221



Open Market Purchases



In light of current challenges within the construction sector, SBHA are exploring different models to increase the supply of much-needed homes. They have directly purchased 13 homes through Open Market Purchase in the past financial year. The homes are all over the Borders: Hawick, Gala, Kelso, Selkirk, Walkerburn and Peebles, ranging in size from 1 bed to 4 bed and are a mix of flats and houses. Some of these have been offered at mid-market rent, and in allocating these homes they have prioritised social care and health workers as an affordable option for working households with a local connection.

Berwickshire Housing Association, SBHA and Waverley have committed to buying 10 Open Market Purchases each year.

Supporting Housing Delivery

During 2023/24 we used the Second Homes Council Tax Affordable Housing Investment Budget to support:

- 🏠 The delivery of affordable housing by Waverley Housing Association at Upper Langlee.
- 🏠 Affordable home delivery in Burnfoot, Hawick.
- 🏠 Affordable home delivery through land acquisition in Selkirk.
- 🏠 South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) to work with the community to progress community led affordable housing opportunities across the Scottish Borders.
- 🏠 The continued provision of empty homes activity through a permanent empty homes officer.

We used Affordable Housing Policy Developer Contributions to:

- 🏠 Part-fund the conversion of bedsits to houses in Newtown St Boswells by SBHA.
- 🏠 Part-fund the Regional Home Demonstrator Project being progressed by Edinburgh City Deal Housing Partners and Scottish Futures Trust, specifically funding staffing and a PMO resource for this project which will be matched by the other local authority partners.

The Upper Langlee project in Galashiels being undertaken by Waverley Housing (mentioned above) focuses on regenerating former public sector housing at Beech Avenue by demolishing 159 homes and building 109 new build homes to meet housing need. During 2023-2024 Waverley Housing have refurbished 68 flats already and completed demolition, with the new build programme expected to start in early 2024.



Our RSL Partners



South East Scotland City Region Deal



The South East Scotland City Region Deal has continued to work towards delivering the Regional Housing Programme and deliver against five key priorities for the region:

Affordable Housing Delivery (current and future)

Retrofit (ESSH2)

Home Demonstrator Project

Strategic Sites

Future Town Centres and New Delivery Models

Regional Home Demonstrator Project

The Regional Home Demonstrator Project being delivered by the City Region Deal Housing Partners, alongside Scottish Future Trust, has been ongoing during 2023-2024 and supports partners to address current and future challenges including:



Design and performance standards for net zero homes



Enabling greater use of off-site construction



Facilitating more collaborative approaches to procurement and delivery to drive both cost and carbon efficiencies

Tweedbank Strategic Site



Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site in the Scottish Borders. The overall vision for the 2018 Masterplan and the 2021 SPG and Design Guide is centred on the needs of people. It seeks to deliver new homes, community facilities and business space as an integrated part of Tweedbank that together achieve the following eight outcomes, aligned with Council Plan Priorities: Net Zero, Biodiversity, Skills, Business Growth, Active Travel, Vibrant Communities, Health and Well-Being, and Sustainability.

It is anticipated that the Tweedbank strategic site will deliver:

Infrastructure: Road access into the site with active travel links reusing existing infrastructure where possible and creating new links to the existing settlement of Tweedbank and beyond. As development progresses, design of the remaining access road will need to be developed. This will include a bridge connection over the railway to provide a strong link with the heart of the established Tweedbank village.

Energy: A heat and energy network with renewable generation that supports phased development.

Homes: Approximately 300-400 homes of varied size and tenure, including 133 affordable homes.

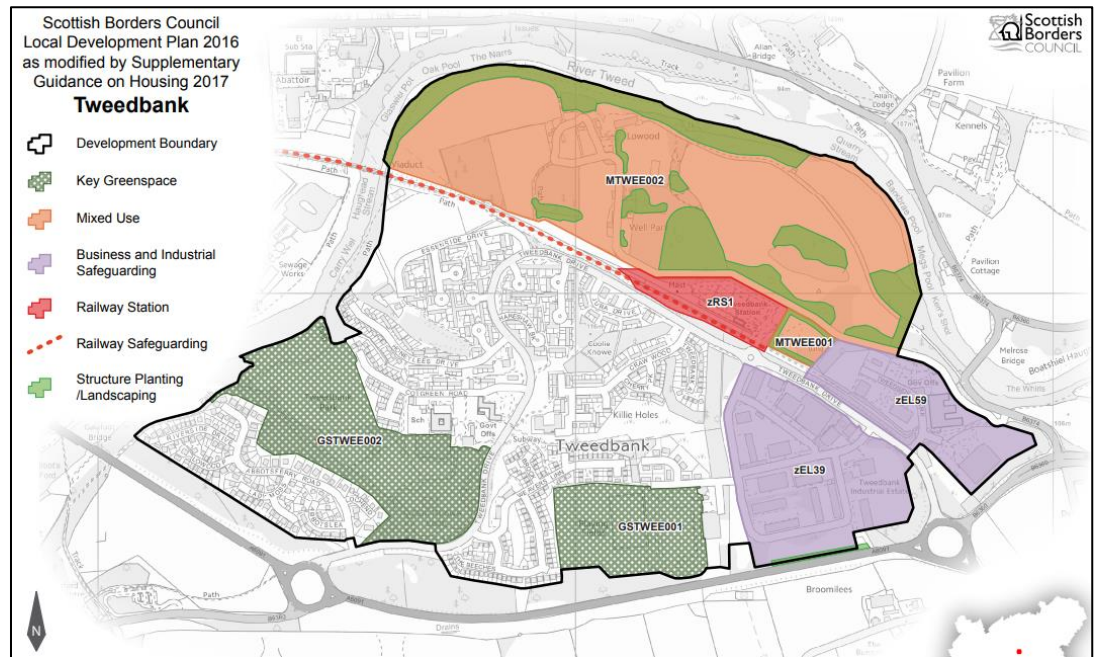
Care Facilities: A new 60 bed older people and dementia care village with situated and associated complementary facilities.

Community Facilities: A neighbourhood centre with possible uses including a community centre and local shop, play park provision and other complementary community facilities and business enterprises that support and enhance the domestic and business community.

Business: Business and innovation space to support data driven innovation, facilities for key regional industries, local business growth and to support inward investment opportunities. In addition to the current planned footprint of the Borders Innovation Park, there is space to develop another business zone on the strategic site. The costs below are based on the maximum footprint that can be developed so there is flexibility to reduce this depending on private sector interest and investment.

A Tweedbank Project Board has been convened to oversee delivery of housing and living/elderly care facilities at the Lowood site.

During 2023-2024 we have been working with Scottish Futures Trust to consider what a potential model for Council Build homes for market rent and sale would look like, with Tweedbank being a potential pilot area.



South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) has made housing a priority focus for the next two years. A Strategic Housing Action Group was established in Spring 2023 and is progressing a Regional Housing Action Plan, which outlines actions and opportunities to deliver more homes across the region. The group will be bringing forward a set of actions for recommendation to the REP and launching a South of Scotland Housing Action Plan in the summer of 2024.



Local Place Plans

As part of the Borderlands Place Programme, four towns have been identified in the Scottish Borders as priority towns, with the ultimate objective of developing Borderlands Town Investment Plans. These towns are Hawick, Galashiels, Jedburgh and Eyemouth. Work has been ongoing in all these areas to develop a Local Place Plan with the Hawick Town Team being the first of the four towns to publish a draft of the Hawick Local Place Plan.

A number of settlements across the Scottish Borders have started work on their own Local Place Plans.

South of Scotland Community Housing

South of Scotland Community Housing are working with Community groups across the Borders to support them to potentially deliver their own housing developments. This has included working with Stow Community Trust and Newcastleton Community District Trust on developing housing needs assessments, which will help inform any community projects going forward. They also intend to carry out a housing needs survey in mid Berwickshire in 2024.



Low Carbon Vacant and Derelict Land Fund

SBC and SBHA jointly submitted a funding application to the Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme in November 2023, which sought funding to deliver homes and improve greenspaces in Burnfoot, Hawick.

Empty Homes

Our Empty Homes Officer has been working to bring empty homes back into use, the figures below highlight progress in this area within the last 12 months:



The Empty Homes Grant Scheme launched in 2022 and is currently supporting 20 empty homes to be brought back into use. 13 of these homes will be made available for rent at an affordable level. We are currently reviewing this scheme which has now closed with the view of launching an updated scheme in 2024, subject to committee approval.

Our officer attended the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership Conference 2024 where two empty homes in the Scottish Borders were finalists. One of which won Best Environmentally Friendly Retrofit – Barnes House, near Hawick:





Second Homes

A new policy to introduce 200% Council Tax charges on second homes was approved at [Council](#) in January 2024, which is intended to boost the supply of available homes and benefit communities. This has been in place from 1st April 2024.

Short Term Lets

Short term lets now require a license (as of October 2023) which will ensure short term lets are safe and monitored. This also provides the opportunity to balance economic and tourism benefits with the concerns of local residents.



1100-1200

Short Term Let
applications
received by SBC
Licensing (total)



780

Short Term Let
applications
processed

Scottish Housing Day

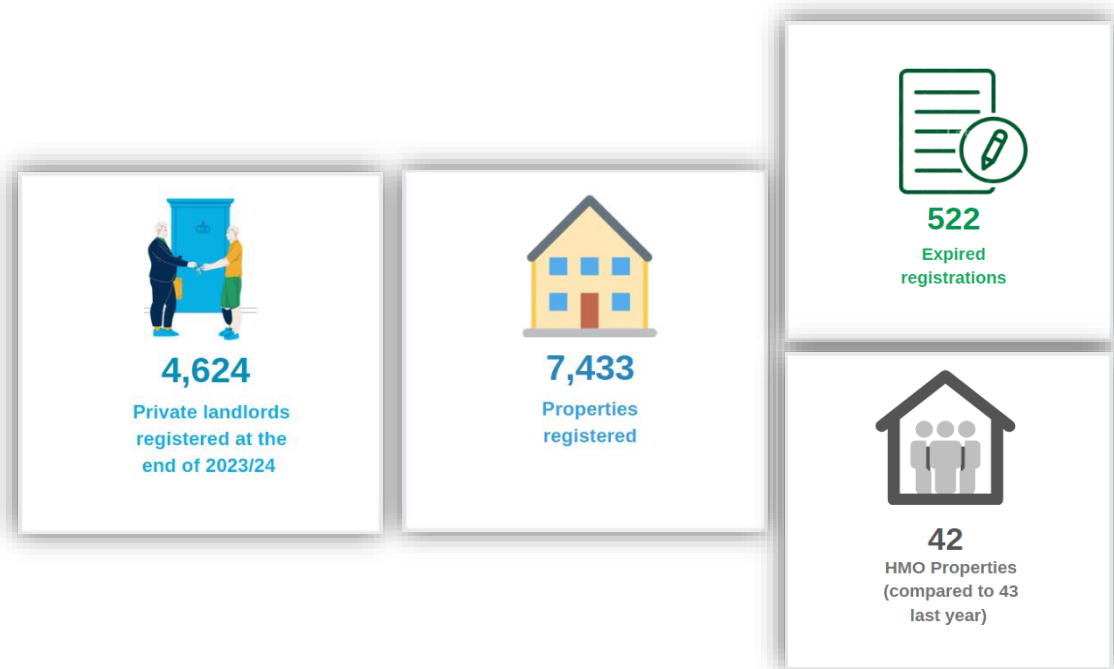
We celebrated Scottish Housing Day on 13th September, which focused on careers within housing and highlighted the significant impact of everyone working in the sector. During the course of the day we highlighted job opportunities in housing, shone a light on two members of staff working in our Housing Strategy Team, and provided detail on energy efficiency projects being delivered in houses in the Scottish Borders.



13 SEPTEMBER 2023

Landlord Registration

Landlord Registration allows local authorities to control and regulate who can operate legitimately as a private landlord. As of the end of 2023/24, we had:



Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 1:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24
No. of new homes (Market, Affordable/Rent) (HST)	Not available	370	Not available
No. of new build affordable homes	120	141	177
Total number of affordable homes delivered	141	150	221
No of Mid-Market Rent properties (RSL)	91	TBC	5
No. of long-term empty homes	1,730	<1550	1,822
No. of Empty Homes brought back into use	37	30 p.a.	30
No. of Empty Homes brought back into use by direct officer interaction	19	20 p.a.	28
No. of Empty Homes/ Property Grant applications	18	10 p.a.	8
Financial commitment through Empty Homes Grant	£ 274,426.99	N/A	£124,921.42
No. of active properties registered through landlord registration	7,325	Context	7,446
No. of people on the self-build register	N/A	N/A	N/A
No. of live Local Place Plans	0	TBC	0
No. of Community Action Plans	2	4	0

3. Specialist Housing, Particular Needs and Independent Living

Addressing Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Work in partnership to deliver more accessible homes across tenures.
- Increase the supply of wheelchair housing.
- Provide information, advice and assistance on housing options and adaptations to meet particular needs across tenures.
- Review the Scheme of Assistance ensuring the new Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations is reflected.
- Strengthen joint working with partners in HSCP, NHS, RSLs and others to deliver appropriate housing solutions for individuals with complex needs.
- Strengthen joint working to support key worker and employer led housing opportunities.
- Identify land and funding opportunities to more effectively meet the needs of the Gypsy and Gypsy Traveller community.

Extra Care Housing

Eildon Housing Association completed the Extra Care Housing development at the former Kelso High School. Renamed Poynder Apartments, the 36-unit development opened in Summer 2023 and includes 34 one-bedroom flats and 2 two-bedroom flats. The development was visited by the Minister for Housing, Paul McLennan MSP, on 12th September 2023.



Eildon won the award for 'Best supported housing development – rural/suburban' for Poynder Apartments, the former Kelso High School at the prestigious Inside Housing National Awards Ceremony in London in October 2023.

Scottish Borders Council commissioned Indigo House Group to produce a needs assessment reviewing the need for Extra Care Housing and Care Home Provision in the Scottish Borders.

The study included two parts:

Review the requirement for ECH in the Scottish Borders in Hawick, Eyemouth and Peebles, taking into consideration whether other Borders towns would benefit more from the provision of ECH.

Examine replacing the current 31-bed SBC care home facility in Hawick (Deanfield) with a new 60-bed facility.

Early conclusions indicate the following:

- Hawick - There should be a shifting in balance of care and ECH could serve to meet this rebalancing. The research questions whether there needs to be 60 new care home – rather reprovision Deanfield 31 beds and shift the balance more towards extra care housing/retirement village with flexible care provision on site to meet current and future needs. Longer term need suggests 55 ECH beds, based on the current prevalence rates of ECH.
- Tweeddale – There is a requirement for higher level residential care rather than ECH.
- Eyemouth – There is a requirement for ECH but also potentially higher-level residential care if this can't be provided safely through ECH.

ECH longer term requirements to 2030 based on current prevalence rates and without further shifting of care are shown below. If there is a requirement for further shifting the ECH from care homes, then these requirements would increase depending on the shift required, but with a need to carefully balance levels of need within ECH/HwC developments:

Locality	Need required:	Currently:
Berwickshire	67	30
Cheviot	70	71
Eildon	105	107
Teviot	55	0
Tweeddale	64	67

Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target



20 Homes
Annual Wheelchair
Accessible
Housing Target

**15 delivered by
RSL's**

**5 delivered by
Private Sector**



38

Wheelchair Accessible Homes
delivered by RSLs during 2023/24

Scheme of Assistance

The Scheme of Assistance offers advice and support to people who need to carry out repair and improvement work to their homes. It aims to help more people keep their homes in good condition and suitable for their needs.

Adaptations

The Major Adaptations process was subject to an internal scrutiny exercise in December 2023, after which the process was found to be clear and robust. In order to assist owners to access funding and carry out adaptations SBC commissioned a [Care & Repair Service](#) through Eildon Housing Association.

The aim of this service is:

“To provide a Care and Repair Service to assist older or disabled residents of the Scottish Borders, living in the private sector, by offering independent advice and assistance to help repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and safety in their own home & community, in accordance with Scottish National Care and Repair Standards’.

We have approved and completed a number of adaptations applications during 2023/24:



The handyerson service provided through Care and Repair had:



859

**Handyperson
subscriptions**



3,698

**Handyperson
Jobs**

Type of Adaptation	Number Completed
Alteration of tracking hoist	1
Closomat	4
Convert garage to provide a shower, ramp and track hoist	1
Create Wet Floor Shower Room	9
Curved Stair Lift	13
Extending Bathroom into Cupboard	1
Level Access Shower	22
Modular Ramp	3
Path work with Ramp	1
External Ramp to New door with lowered threshold	1
Replacement door	1
Specialist bath	1
Straight Stair Lift	6
Supply and fit bathroom	1
Total	65

*Some applications have more than one type of adaptation, so the applications total and adaptations total is different.

Minor Adaptations

Notably there has been an increase of 9.7% overall in the number of minor adaptations and repairs completed in both the private and social sector during 2023/24 compared to 2022/23.

Public Health Workshops

Housing officers attended two NHS Borders Public Health workshops on the 2nd October and 13th March which shone a light on the current health inequalities in the Scottish Borders and the need for joint action to tackle inequalities throughout a person's life – including ensuring they have access to a home that meets their needs.



Gypsy Traveller Site Provision

Work began in 2023 with a 'call for sites' to identify sites which, in accordance with national guidance, would ensure the Gypsy/Traveller community have 'safe and culturally appropriate places to live and travel' and to help reduce incidences of unauthorised encampments. The [call for sites](#) invited land owners, developers, agents or any other interested parties to submit information on sites in the Scottish Borders area that they think might be suitable for consideration. A thorough assessment and review of the submissions received is still underway.

Coming Home Programme



The Scottish Government has provided one-off capital funding of £350k for the Borders to support the aim of bringing people back to their "homelands" by March 2025 as part of the Coming Home Programme. Scotland's ambition is that as many people as possible are cared for in a domestic setting, however it is unlikely that suitable homes already exist or will become available within a reasonable or predictable time period to meet the identified needs. The Coming Home Programme Board has been established to oversee activity and monitor progress against delivering the aspirations of the Coming Home Report.

Key Workers

Key workers continue to be a key focus in housing across the country and in particular, rural areas. Work on developing policies and initiatives to ensure that housing isn't a barrier for key workers began in 2023 and resulted in following:

- Eildon Housing Association providing 10 properties at McQueen Gardens for key workers – 5 for NHS Borders and 5 for SBC Adult Social Care
- SBHA – have prioritised all 5 mid-market rental properties in Kelso for key workers

The pilot project with Eildon is ongoing which addresses difficulties recruiting into Adult Social Care by providing temporary accommodation to people recruited into full time roles. This commenced in May 2023 and the continuation of this approach was approved by SBC, extending the arrangement to May 2024.

Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 2:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24
No. of Wheelchair Accessible Homes built	6	20 p.a. 15 RSL	38 RSL
No. of particular needs homes built	10	40 p.a.	38
No. of adaptations funded to existing homes	674	530 p.a.	705
% of private sector homes built to HfVN Standards	N/A	30%	N/A
No. of private major adaptations	68	80 p.a.	63
No. of social rented major adaptations	170	120 p.a.	167
No. of private minor adaptations + repairs	353	300 p.a.	384
No. of social minor adaptations + repairs	88	110 p.a.	100
Private Sector Major Adaptations Budget	£450k	N/A	£525,000
No. receiving community alarm or other TEC options	N/A	1,500 p.a.	N/A
Number of additional permanent sites provided for Gypsy Travellers	0	1	0

4. Climate Change, Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Addressing Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy.

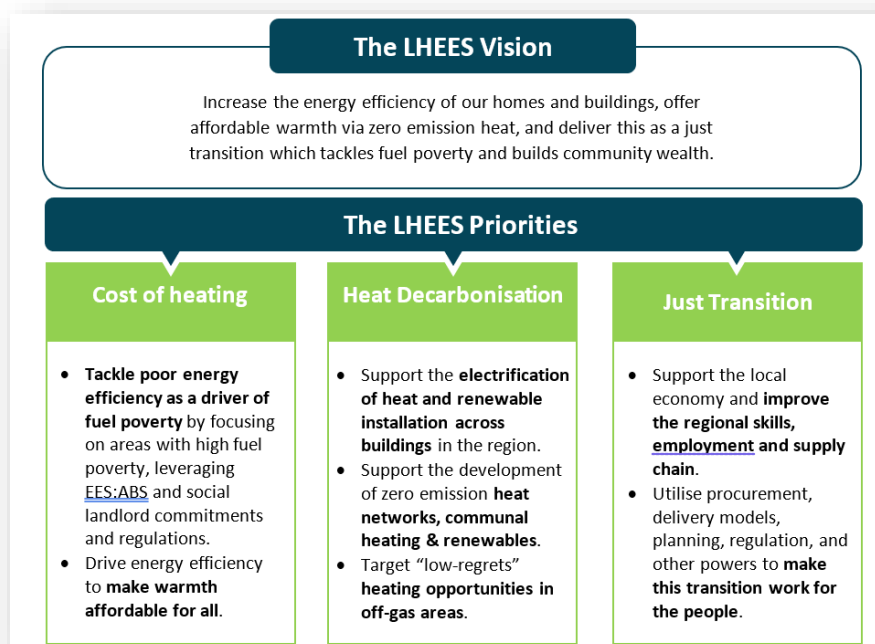
Key Actions for Delivery

- Work with partners to improve energy efficiency across all tenures
- Develop the first Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy for the Scottish Borders
- Implement a public engagement strategy for heat in buildings
- Work with partners to develop the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency & zero emissions heating systems
- Explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home
- Adapt and retrofit existing homes to improve their energy efficiency
- Consider next steps from CLES report including development of joint initiatives with regional partners

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy

We finalised our consultative draft of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Delivery Plan in December 2023, which was published for consultation between January 29th and 8th March. It is anticipated that a final version of the strategy will be published in Summer 2024. This strategy outlines an area-wide approach to increasing energy efficiency and decarbonising heat in all buildings, and will play a crucial role in helping us to meet our 2045 net zero target and 2040 fuel poverty target.

The LHEES outlines the following vision and priorities:



Croft Street Waste Water feasibility

We are undertaking pre-feasibility work in Croft Street, Galashiels to assess the viability of a heat network to deliver waste heat from the sewerage system to existing buildings with heat demand. At the end of 2023/24 we now have 12 months of data monitoring which will allow insight into the feasibility of the site and peak/low flow rates and temperatures.

LHEES Pilot Project by Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP)

We secured funding to develop a LHEES retrofit pilot property, which SUP are delivering for us. This seeks to support the “self funding” market and offer a service that supports households throughout the retrofit process. Early activity is ongoing to identify potential areas, properties and archetypes.

Construction Sector Forum

Our Construction Sector Forum is growing, this supports regional supply chain activity and information sharing. This forum has also prompted the development of a Trusted Trader website.



Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS)

EES:ABS continues to be delivered across the Borders, reflecting our committed focus to the introduction of renewable technologies for the region, as well as retrofit insulation that suits common wall construction. We were awarded £1.824m from Scottish Government for 2023/24 for energy efficiency measures.

We work with Changeworks, the leading environmental charity working with Local Authorities across Scotland, who act as our managing agent to support delivery.

Two students from Galashiels Academy and Peebles High School benefitted from a work experience placement during March 2024 with Changeworks.

Forecasted completions for 2023/24 are as follows:

- Solar PV & Battery: 50 completions
- Air Source Heat Pumps: 10 completions
- Internal Wall Insulation: 25 completions

We have positively impacted people’s lives during 2023-2024, for example through installing air source heat pumps. One of our [case studies](#) provides detail on how this technology “transformed” a householder’s life providing “hot water, a consistent temperature throughout the house, and significantly cheaper electric bills”.



Home Energy Scotland Referrals and Interactions:

Type of Interaction	2023-24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Advice Email	41	113	89	220
Email	0	18	2	27
Energycarer Interaction (non-visit)	8	1	10	12
Event	83	58	31	608
Home Visit - Home Renewable	13	15	22	6
Inbound call	471	413	361	438
Competition	0	167	23	113
Online Quiz	2	0	0	0
Outbound call	544	400	375	601
Other	0	1	8	150
Total	1,162	1,186	921	2,175

EESHS 2 Standard / Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS)

During 2023-24 a new Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS) was proposed to replace the existing EESHS 2. The consultation on this, launched in November 2023, outlines the proposed standard as including:

- A fabric efficiency rating.
- A requirement to replace polluting heating systems with a clean heating system by 2045.

Additional requirements may include the requirement to:

- Ensure good air quality.
- Prevent a property which can't meet a minimum fabric efficiency standard by a certain date being relet after that date.

Warm and Well Borders

Warm and Well Borders (W&W) has secured funding for another 12 months and will adopt a revised delivery model. W&W will be able to continue to offer energy advocacy and income maximisation support for the region, working closely with similar support across the social housing sector.

SBC continued to support CAB's delivery of Warm & Well over the 23/24 delivery year, both with core funding and also with a discretionary fund for emergency cases.

With SBC & CAB's delivery of Warm & Well starting in 2019, agents working on the W&W scheme have developed fantastic knowledge and experience that they are able to use to support clients.

Throughout the 2023-2024 SBC & CAB Warm & Well delivery year, over 507 clients have been supported with over £1.2 million of financial gain and benefits realised.

SBHA secured a grant from SBC's Cost of Living Fund to extend their affordable warmth advice across the four RSLs of the Borders Housing Network (BHN). This enabled SBHA's existing affordable warmth advisor to continue in post for a further year and allowed for the recruitment of a second advisor. Both advisors now offer advice to Tenants of the other members of the Network.

- BHN have received £1.543m of funding to help relieve fuel debt, provide advice and provide energy efficiency items.

- Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) received £32k to address large fuel debt, with BHN receiving £100k for fuel voucher provision.
- BHA supported 85 customers with large fuel debt, amounting to £31,960 (£374 per household)
- BHN allocated 2,122 fuel bank vouchers, with BHA allocating 605 vouchers.
- BHN paid out £213,727 to reduce or clear fuel debt, supporting 342 tenants.

Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) Report Follow Up Workshops

In 2023 SOSE launched the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) report “A Roadmap to Decarbonisation”, which set out the economic opportunities associated with a progressive procurement approach to energy efficiency retrofit in the South of Scotland.



One of the opportunities to take forward was a wider study and sharing of insight around national property archetypes and the best retrofit solution for each. We will continue to attend workshops and feed into and support this ongoing activity as it supports and benefits the aspirations of both the LHS and LHEES.

Building Assessment Report (BARs)

The role of a Building Assessment Report (BAR) is to help assess the suitability of a non-domestic property for connecting to a heat network, as defined in Part 5 of the Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021.

As an owner of non-domestic stock, we will be required to complete BARS on our own properties. This is something that is being addressed by our Estates team and the BARS log will be reviewed with the wider LHEES and Heat Network activity.

Fully Funded Green Skills Training

Green skills training has been launched by Borders College, intended to enhance the skills of the workforce to align with evolving property standards. These free courses are running from early-mid 2024.

Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 3:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24
Total number of households supported by EES-ABS	138	150	TBC
Total number of measures installed through EES-ABS	225	220	TBC
EES-ABS investment/allocation in Scottish Borders	£1,806,000	£1,827,840 p.a.	£1,824,000
Total no. of homes in the social rented sector retrofitted with specific measures introduced to improve energy efficiency	TBC	TBC	TBC
% of owner-occupied stock compliant with EPC C or higher	30%	>30%	30%
% of privately rented stock compliant with EPC C or higher	22%	100%	22%
% of RSL stock EPC C or above	77%	TBC	77%
% of RSL stock that is EESSH 1 compliant	92%	100%	92%
% of RSL stock that is EESSH 2 compliant	TBC	TBC	TBC
No. of households in Fuel Poverty	29% (SHCS 2017-19)	<29%	29% (SHCS)
Number of feasibility studies relating to heat networks	1	3	1
Reduction in carbon emissions (see estates)	TBC	TBC	TBC
Number of ECO Flex referrals	0	TBC	0

5. Condition and Built Heritage

Addressing Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Provide holistic advice and assistance to owners/tenants to undertake house condition/ energy improvement/home safety works and co-ordinate or explore funding options.
- Provide supporting information and assistance to owners and landlords to meet existing and future house condition standards in private housing.
- Review and develop the Scheme of Assistance to provide a more coordinated and collaborative approach to house condition standards.
- Work to better coordinate the partnership approach to Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) Housing, which is complementary to the Scheme of Assistance.
- Continue to implement Missing Shares and consider expansion of Missing Shares provision.
- Ensure activity in relation to repairs, maintenance, energy efficiency improvements and conversion are sensitive to the built heritage.

Landlord Engagement

We continue to undertake a variety of engagement activities with landlords in the Scottish Borders over the year 2023/24, including:

1,413 courtesy final reminder letters sent prior to landord expiration

379 follow up actions in relation to late registration during the year, including letters, phone calls and visits

3,632 instances of support and advice surrounding issues like referrals and tenancies



In partnership with Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS), we held several training events throughout 2023/24, including a landlord forum –the first forum since 2019 – which was well attended and covered topics such as the new repairing standard, common repairs, dealing with deposits and a PRS update.

**Managing Tenant Complaints
Event - November 2023**

**Creating the Private
Residential
Tenancy Event -
August 2023**



**Understanding
Landlord Repairing
and Maintenance
Obligations Event -
March 2024**

**Landlord Forum -
February 2024**

We published two newsletters in July of 2023 and January of 2024, which received positive feedback:

“Just to say I appreciate the newsletter – unlike most newsletters of this type, your one is interesting and informative, and it helps me as a landlord. Please pass on my thanks to the “newsletter team” – thank you. Keep them coming!”

Missing Shares Scheme

The missing shares scheme primarily acts in conjunction with the Scheme of Assistance in the Hawick Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) area. Due to COVID delays this scheme was extended until March of 2025.

Under One Roof Events

As part of our commitment to support landlords and tenants in the Scottish Borders, we partnered with Under One Roof to host an event on Maintenance and Retrofit for Tenement Owners.

This was held in Hawick on the 5th of October 2023.



Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)



Hawick CARS is a partnership project focused on a range of heritage and conservation-based regeneration activities within the town centre over a six year period (2019-2025). The project has an overall budget of just of £1.5million, funded by Historic Environment Scotland (£1.32m), Scottish Borders Council (£200k), and South of Scotland Enterprise (£60k).

Priority Building Projects

80 High Street

CARS Grant Offer: £183,500

A CARS-supported programme of emergency repairs to 80 High Street was completed on site in April 2023.



Roof works at 80 High Street

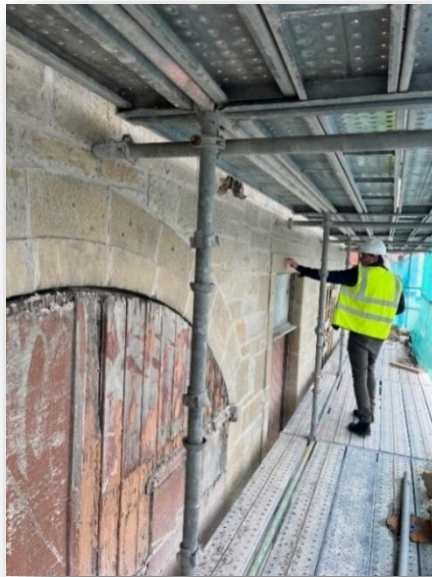


Completed lead work to the turret and window repairs at 80 High Street

Glenmac Mill

Works to the former Glenmac Mill have been on site during 2023-24. The CARS grant offer is towards repairs to the historic section of the building, currently on the Buildings At Risk Register.

Works on site at Glenmac Mill, July 2023



General Repair Grants

Grants of up to £15,000 are available for property owners within the Hawick CARS boundary area to undertake repairs to their traditional buildings to accepted conservation standards.

1 general repair project was on site this year, at 19 High Street. A total CARS grant of £30,000 is supporting conservation work to this Category C listed building, including chimney stabilisation, masonry repair, re-slating, lead work, and redecoration of the High Street facing façade.



**Before
and
After**

*19 High
Street,
Hawick*



24 new enquiries for general repair grants were received in 2023-24, of which 6 were outside the boundary area.

1 general repair grant application was received this year, which resulted in a grant offer of £882 towards eligible costs of £1,176 to support window repairs and redecoration at 53 High Street.

Public Realm Scheme

In April 2023, consultants were asked to develop designs for public realm improvements to repair and enhance the arrival point at the James Thompson bridge along Mill Port adjacent to the former Glenmac Mill.

It was identified that further funding would be required to deliver a high-quality treatment of the site using natural materials appropriate to the conservation area.

Consequently, Hawick CARS made a successful application to the Place Based Improvement Fund, securing a grant award of £141,850 to add to investment from Hawick CARS and the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme. The works will be delivered in 2024-25.

Community Heritage Education & Traditional Skills Training

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust continue to deliver the Education and Traditional Skills element of the Hawick CARS as external consultants in partnership with SBC. Activities this year have included:

- Build Your Future & Repurposing Challenge at Hawick High School (May & October 2023)
- Doors Open Days Traditional Skills Demonstrations (September 2023)
- Macastory 'Oor Toon' at Wilton and Burnfoot Primary Schools (September 2023 – May 2024)
- Under One Roof Partnership Event at Hawick Town Hall (October 2023)

In January 2024 stonemason Luke Batchelor was appointed Artist in Residence for the final year of the project. Luke will run workshops with local community groups to create a legacy artwork to be unveiled at the end of the Hawick CARS project in March 2025.



Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 4:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24
Number of owners supported through Missing Shares scheme	10	10	25
No. of private sector properties provided with advice and practical assistance	48	30 p.a.	130
No. of s29 Dangerous Building Notices served	16	<16	0
No. of s30 Dangerous Building Notices served	1	<1	0
No. of Under One Roof events hosted with Borders residents	1	2	1
No. of contractors signed up to Trusted Trader Scheme	4	10	12
No of individual CARS building grants awarded	25	N/A	1
Town centre buildings supported through CARS	5	N/A	1
No. of Empty Homes/buildings in Town Centres brought back in to use	N/A	15 p.a.	N/A
Percentage of RSL dwellings that meet the SHQS	N/A	100%	N/A
No. of RPN's issued	7	<5	2
No. of cases heard by the tribunal	6	N/A	0
No. of repairing standard related visits	28	<30	42
No. of follow up actions to expired landlords (phone calls, letters, online checks)	381	<280	379

6. Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

Addressing Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Continue to Implement Rapid Rehousing
- Improve access to housing for homeless or potentially homeless households across all tenures
- People who experience homelessness reach a settled housing outcome as quickly as possible
- Ensure homeless households can access the right support at the right time
- All partners actively contribute to preventing homelessness

The demand and pressures on the Homelessness Service have been increasing since the pandemic, with the number of households who approached the service for advice and assistance increasing from 767 to 821 over the past 4 years, representing a 7% increase. Nationally this figure is also displaying an upward trend, having increased by 12% across Scotland. While it presents a challenge to manage this demand, we continue to monitor positive outcomes from the year:

- The level of repeat homelessness applications in the Scottish Borders remains low, with 4% of applicants assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness having applied within the previous year.
- 91% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless, where there was a known outcome, secured settled accommodation. This compares higher than the 2022/2023 national average of 83%.
- 41% of RSL lets went to homeless households.

Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)

The Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) links into the Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Plan and allows us to consider how permanent and settled housing options are secured for every potentially homeless and homeless household.

Youth Homelessness Pathways

Officers from the homeless service have joined a weekly social work huddle in the Hawick locality to discuss and agree a joint approach to homeless prevention for vulnerable young people. Links have also been established with Hawick High School who are hosting a regular meeting which officers attend to engage in discussion with young people about housing.



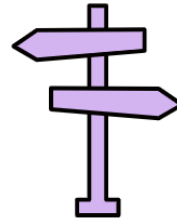
Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) Standards

We introduced a pilot project during 2023/24 to progress the pathway for anyone entering and exiting the prison system in line with the National SHORE standards. During 2023/24 we had:



26

Applicants with a last known address as prison



33

Inmates supported with housing advice and assistance

This pilot is to be continued with funding from the R RTP grant allocation from Scottish Government with the aim of mainstreaming this pathway in 2024/25.

Crisis and Homeless Intervention Funding

Our Crisis and Homeless Intervention Funds are two discretionary funds aimed at preventing homelessness for households in rent arrears, as well as promoting tenancy sustainment. Through the Crisis Intervention Fund we:

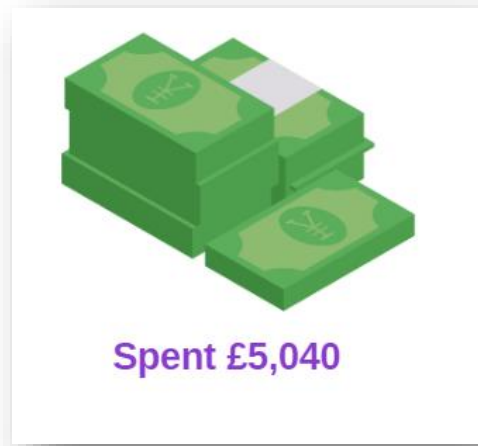
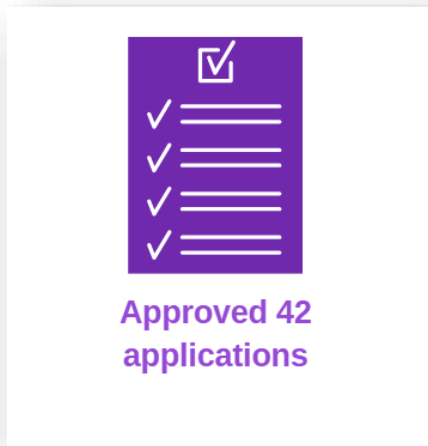


Approved 24 applications



Spent £26.5k

Through the Homeless Intervention Fund we:



Applications included assistance with essential household goods, mobile phones, MIFI (mobile Wi-Fi) devices and items to assist children to settle into their new home.

Housing First Service

Our Housing First pilot with Cyrenians launched in October 2021 to provide general settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs.

The initial pilot was for a period of two years, this was extended for a further year to end of September 2024. As of March 2024, the project has:



Housing Support

The Housing Support Service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in October 2023 where they were awarded Grade 5's – Very Good for quality of service across all key performance indicators.

256 new referrals have been received into service. The Housing Support team have continued to provide vital service provision to supported people throughout 2023/24. 82% of cases have been closed due to interventions being successfully completed. There were 416 cases open within Housing Support Services during 2023/24.

'The entire team are very knowledgeable, very helpful and always ready to assist and help.'

'Every time they call me in for a job, they have the information that I need to do the job. In a clear concise and friendly manner.'

We sought the views of our partners in 2023 in order to improve practices, identify service development opportunities and contribute to improvement planning. The survey incorporated different areas of service delivery, accessibility, communication, partnership working, quality of service and responsiveness. 85% agree or strongly agreed that the Housing Support team provide high quality support.

'An excellent well managed service, the housing support staff do an excellent job in the meeting the needs of the people who use the service. The team leader is a good role model to follow.'

'The service as a whole is an exceptional service and managed very effectively. The team work well together and are extremely well supported by management. The service is widely acknowledged as being a really good service to those who need it. Everyone goes above and beyond wherever possible to ensure people feel as supported and comfortable as they can while working with us.'

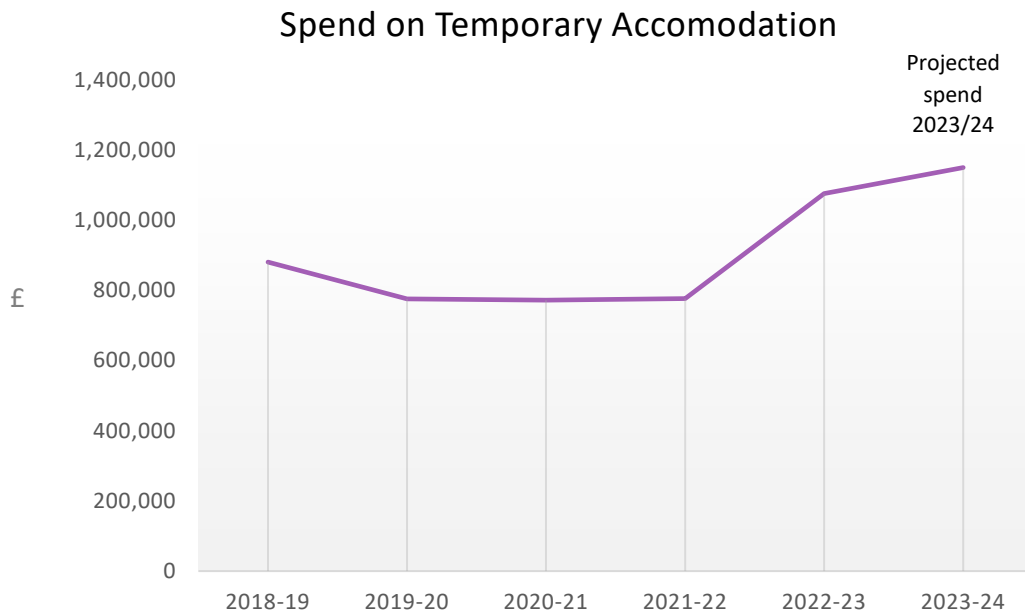
'I have been involved in various professional meetings/discussion with staff where practical solutions are promoted and encouraged. Where action has been identified this has been completed.'

The Housing Support Team sought feedback from supported people during 2023. 100% of feedback received confirmed they were satisfied with the service they received. 100% of the feedback received by supported people advised they had achieved the personal goal set out in their support plan.

During 2023-24 Housing Support staff were consulted on service delivery, management and leadership, training and development.

Temporary Accommodation

Over the past 18 months, the homeless service has been experiencing persistent demand from applicants who are requiring access to temporary accommodation. This is resulting in pressures across the service including the requirement to increase the portfolio of temporary accommodation to an all-time high of 155 properties and increase spending.



While we continue to manage the increased volume and cost of temporary accommodation, we are working to ensure we provide suitable temporary accommodation options to homeless applicants and as a result, in 2023-4 there were no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

It is the long-term ambition to decommission Maxmill Park as a temporary accommodation development. Discussions are ongoing with RSL's to explore their ability to provide additional temporary accommodation which would allow Maxmill Park to be closed.

Resettlement Schemes

Key updates from the following resettlement schemes are presented below.

Syrian UK Resettlement Scheme:

4 out of 9 Syrian households remain on the scheme	Those on the scheme are nearing the end of its 60 month duration
---------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------

Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy:

3 Afghan families were hosted in the Borders	These families have since left the area
----------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------

Ukraine Family Visa Scheme, Homes for Ukraine and Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme:

80 households requiring long term accommodation as of March 24

2 hotels used and a number of hosts providing transitional accommodation and support

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children:

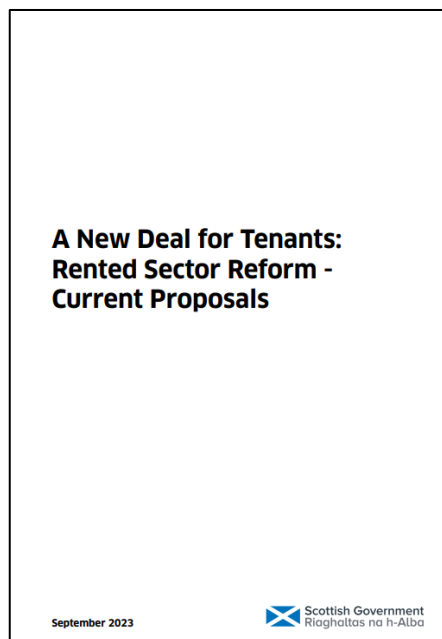
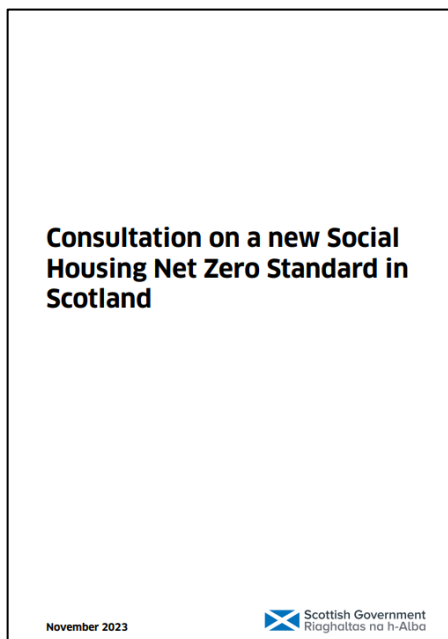
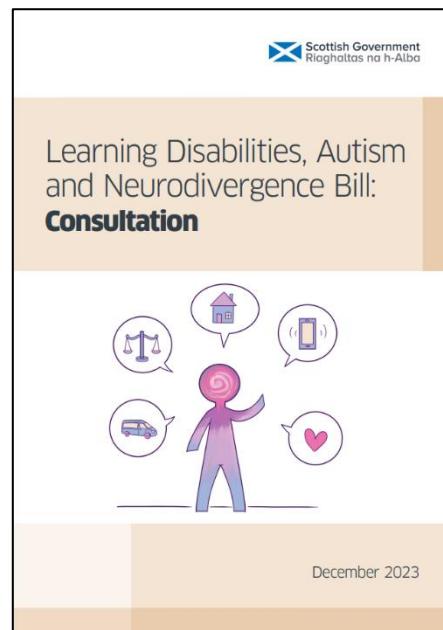
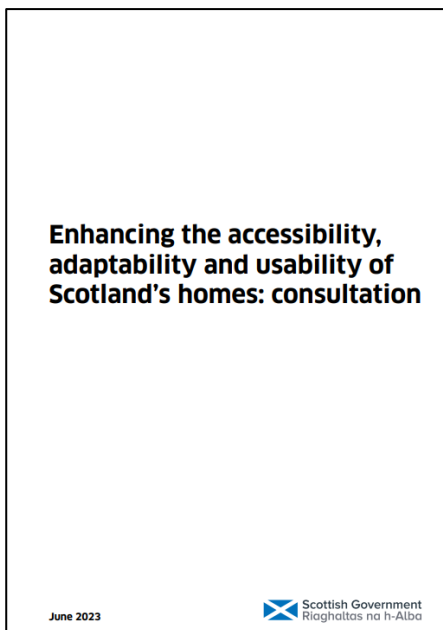
22 children and young people being provided with accommodation as of March 24

Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 5:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24
No. of households who approached the homelessness service for advice and/or assistance	827	Context	821
Proportion of households who approached the homelessness service assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness	95%	Context	690 (84%)
% Repeat statutory homeless presentations (1 year)	4%	5%	4%
Total no. of individual homeless households referred to RSLs under section 5	642	Context	446
Proportion of RSL lets to homeless households (locally based RSL's)	39%	50% (23/24)	41%
No. of statutory homeless cases open at close of period, who had an unintentionally Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness (TWH) decision at close of period	327	Context	338
No of Bed and Breakfast placements starting in period	7	0	13
No. of Households in temporary accommodation at close of period	116	Reduction 23/24	129
% of households requiring temporary or emergency accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	100%
Average total time spent in temporary accommodation (days)	169	<10% p.a.	166
No. of breaches to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order	1	0	0
No of people who received Housing Support in the period (both homeless service and commissioned service)	470	Context	590
Proportion of all housing support cases closed due to successfully completed intervention. (Homeless and commissioned service data)	79%	80%	82%
No. of tenancies commenced where the tenant is supported by Housing First	3	15 (23/24)	5

7. Consultations

A number of consultations have been responded to during 2023-2024, listed below:



8. The Year Ahead 2024/25

A number of factors will shape the year ahead for the Housing Strategy and Development Team.

Housing Bill

The Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 26 March 2024 and makes changes to the law in relation to housing. These changes cover protections for tenants, homelessness prevention, and other housing matters.

The Scottish Government introduced the Bill to deliver its rented sector strategy, A New Deal for Tenants, and some policy ideas for housing as set out in Housing to 2040, while also seeking to deliver on its ambition to end homelessness. The Bill also includes measures to support social housing tenants experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse. This includes changes to update the definition of domestic abuse in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 to bring it in line with the most up to date understanding.

The Bill has six main parts:

- Part 1 relates to the rent paid by tenants under private residential tenancies.
- Part 2 places duties on the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland and the courts.
- Part 3 relates to keeping pets and making changes to let property.
- Part 4 makes changes to other matters affecting tenants.
- Part 5 relates to homelessness prevention.
- Part 6 deals with other housing matters.

While we welcome the new Bill, any legislation will take years to come into effect and will not help address the current pressures and emergency in housing in Scotland at the moment.

Recent Cuts to Housing Budget

In the budget earlier this year the Scottish Government cut the affordable housing budget by £200m, around 26% from 2023-24. This has huge implications for the delivery affordable housing in the Scottish Borders and across Scotland.

The cuts to the Affordable Housing Supply programme housing and a Resource Planning Assumption of £12.113m for 2024/25 (24% below previous year) for the Scottish Borders means that projects will need to be carefully considered and prioritised and the full potential is unlikely to be realised.

SHIP 2025-2030

The SHIP 2024-29 was approved in October 2023 by SBC Executive Committee and submitted to Scottish Government at the end of October 2023.

Uncertainties in the housing sector, higher costs and cuts in the affordable housing supply programme will have a huge impact on the delivery of the SHIP this year but we will continue to work closely with RSLs to deliver affordable housing across the Scottish Borders.

Preparatory work has started to draft the next SHIP 2025/30. Current indications are that all being well, up to 184 affordable homes could potentially be delivered during the 2024/25 period.

Homelessness

Over the past 18 months the homeless service has been experiencing unrelenting demand from applicants who are requiring assistance with housing issues including access to temporary accommodation. This is resulting in pressures across the service including the requirement to increase the stock of temporary accommodation to an all-time high of 155 units, an increase of 31% since 2019/20.

The team continue to work close with RSLs and partners to monitor and identify housing solutions for those most in need.

Strategic Housing Forum

To help address some of current housing crisis we have proposed to establish a member and officer working group or “Strategic Housing Forum”, including external partners, to discuss strategic housing issues and agree key priorities and actions on a biannual basis to help ensure our local response to the current housing pressures is as robust and collaborative as possible.

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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