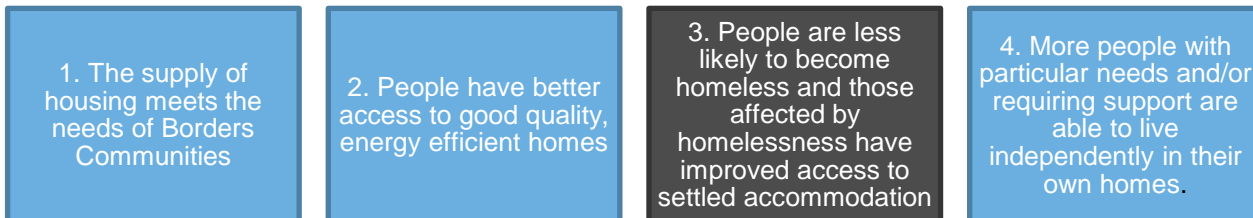


## 1. LHS Development & Main Issues

The Local Housing Strategy for Scottish Borders (2012-2017) is nearing implementation and therefore requires to be redrafted and submitted to Scottish Government Ministers in 2016. The current LHS focuses action, investment and partnership on the following four strategic aims:



To build the new strategy, Scottish Borders Council need to assess whether the previous LHS aims still represent the main housing issues that need to be tackled or whether a refocused set of local priorities will guide action, partnership and investment moving forward. This briefing focuses on homelessness in Scottish Borders, presenting evidence on the extent and nature of the problem and progress in tackling it since 2012.

## 2. Homelessness: What is the nature of the problem in Scottish Borders?

In 2014/15, 650 homeless applications were made in Scottish Borders

The majority of homeless applicants (almost two thirds) were single people and predominantly male.

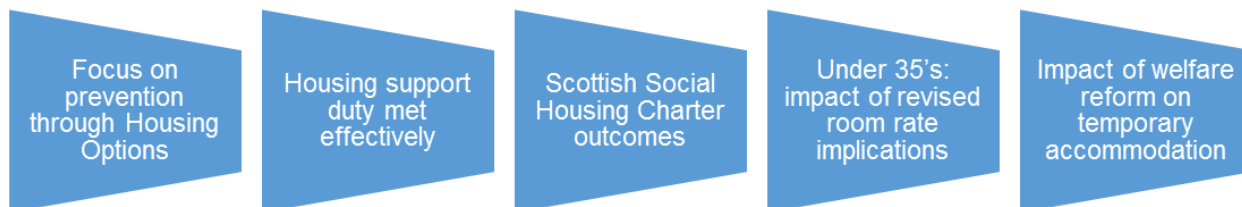
The most common reasons for homelessness were:

1. due to a dispute in the household (18% non-violent and 15% violent);
2. being asked to leave by their landlord (17%).

Key headlines on the homeless population are as follows:

- Almost two thirds of homeless applicants are single people (42% male and 20% female);
- A fifth of homeless applicants are single parents (14% female and 6% male);
- 30% of homeless applicants included households with children (193 households);
- A third of homeless applicants were young adults aged 16-24 (210 households);
- The geography of applications has remained consistent over the last three years, with two thirds from households in Central HMA

In terms of reducing the incidence of homelessness, the LHS is required to address the following policy issues:

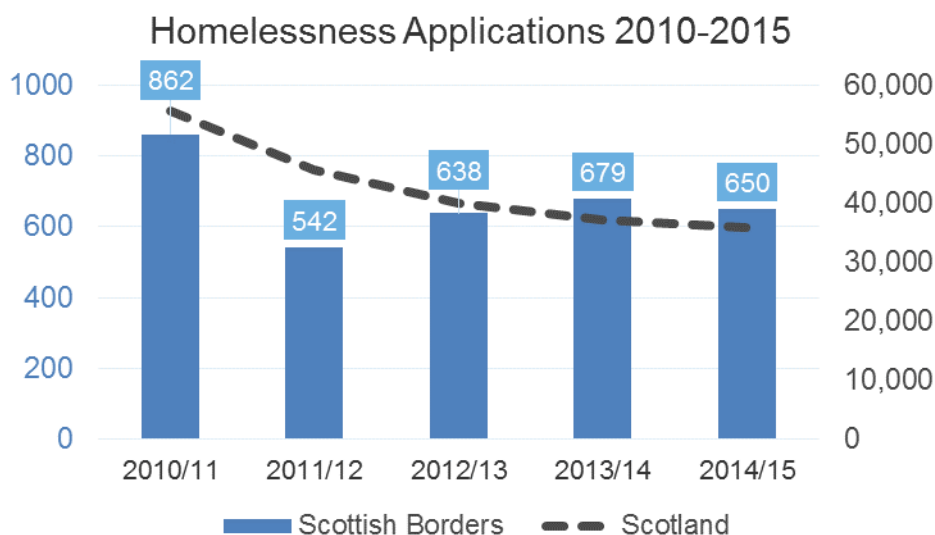


### 3. Homelessness: What is the extent of the problem in Scottish Borders?

In 2014/15, 650 homeless applications were made to Scottish Borders Council. This is a 25% reduction between 2010 and 2015, and a 3% reduction in the last year. This mirrors the national picture where homelessness has also reduced.

However, over the five year period this has been more considerable in Scotland (fell by 36% since 2010) than in the Borders.

Furthermore, there was actually a 6% **increase** in homeless presentations in Scottish Borders between 2012/13 and 2013/14. In comparison, homeless applications fell across 24 out of 32 local authorities, and by 7% nationally, in this period. The graph on the right shows the fluctuation in Scottish Borders compared to the continued reduction nationally.

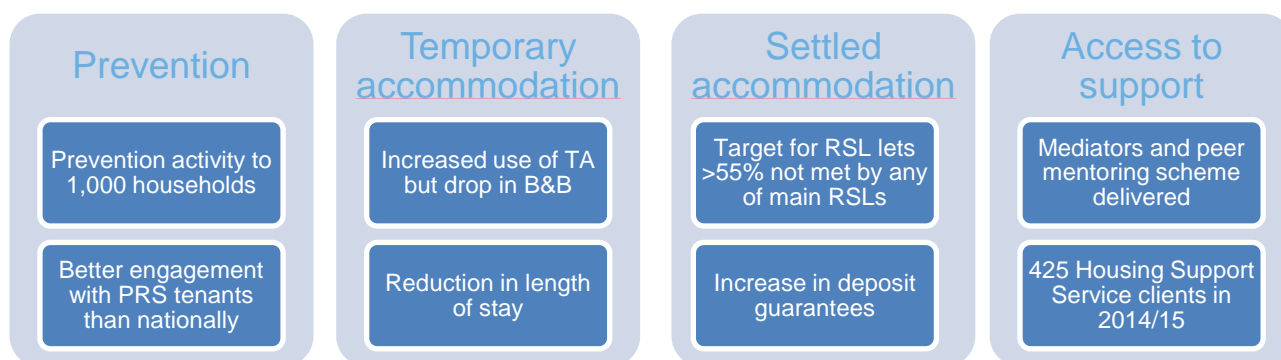


In terms of the profile of homeless households, there has been an increase in the number of homeless presentations from households with children (by 22% in the last year), and from those aged 65 and over (47% increase).

However, the number of homeless presentations from young adults has continued to decrease (by 6% in the last year and by 8% over the last 2 years).

### 4. Homelessness in Scottish Borders: LHS response and impact

The implementation of the 2012-2017 Local Housing Strategy has focused on the aim of reducing the incidence of homelessness in Scottish Borders by delivering the following objectives:



The current Local Housing Strategy emphasises the importance of the Council taking a preventative approach to tackling homelessness, with a commitment to delivering effective services in order to meet the strategic objective to reduce the likelihood of homelessness across Scottish Borders.

From April 2014, Scottish local authorities were required to collect and submit to the Scottish Government the housing options and homelessness prevention activity delivered

in their area. Scottish Borders Council delivered preventative approaches to 1,000 individuals in 2014/15.

The key headlines on this population are as follows:

- 76% are single people, there is a relatively even split in terms of gender and a third are under 24 years old (more young adults approached the service than Scotland as a whole);
- More private rented sector tenants are engaging with the service (24%) than is the case nationally (18%), but less from those in supported accommodation
- or leaving prison;
- Main reasons for engagement correspond to the main reasons for homelessness i.e. dispute within household (26%) and asked to leave
- by landlord (14%);
- Compared to the national picture, more people accessed the service at risk from losing their accommodation, and less for general housing options advice.

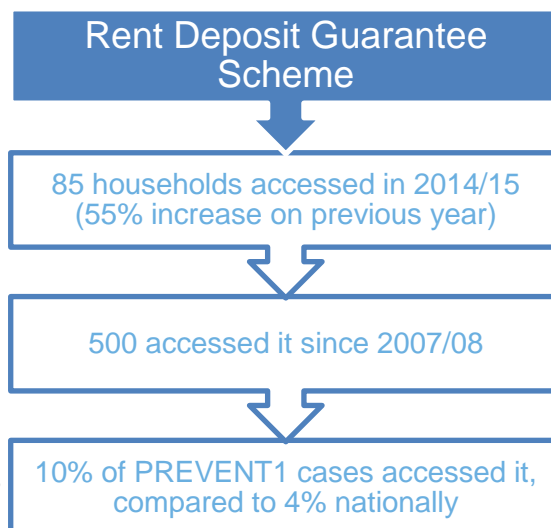
In terms of outcomes, as is the case nationally, the most common prevention activity was general housing information and advice or on homelessness legislation. However, more households were helped to secure alternative accommodation (13%) than nationally (5%). 37% went on to make a homeless application (42% nationally).

In line with the objective set out within the LHS, there has been an increase in the use of temporary accommodation (40% were placed in temporary accommodation in 2013/14 compared to 25% in 2010/11). Despite this, the Council has been successful in reducing the number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation. Furthermore, length of stay in temporary accommodation has also continued to decrease; falling from 123 days in 2010/11 to 97 days in 2013/14.

The proportion of lets made to homeless households varied across the four main social landlords in Scottish Borders. According to the 2014/15 ARC return, between 16% (Waverley HA) and 36% (Berwickshire HA) of RSL lets last year were to homeless households through a Section 5 referral. The target proportion of RSL lets to homeless households, as outlined in the LHS,

was set at >55%. As can be seen in the above diagram, none of the four main social landlords achieved this target.

The number of homeless households engaging with the Council's Deposit Guarantee Scheme increased considerably since 2013/14. PREVENT1 data shows that a greater proportion of households in Scottish Borders access such a scheme than is the case nationally. There are also 67 private rented sector properties across Scottish Borders being used to accommodate homeless households through the private sector leasing scheme; however these are primarily concentrated in Central HMA (over 80% are located here). It should be noted, however, that the sector is larger in

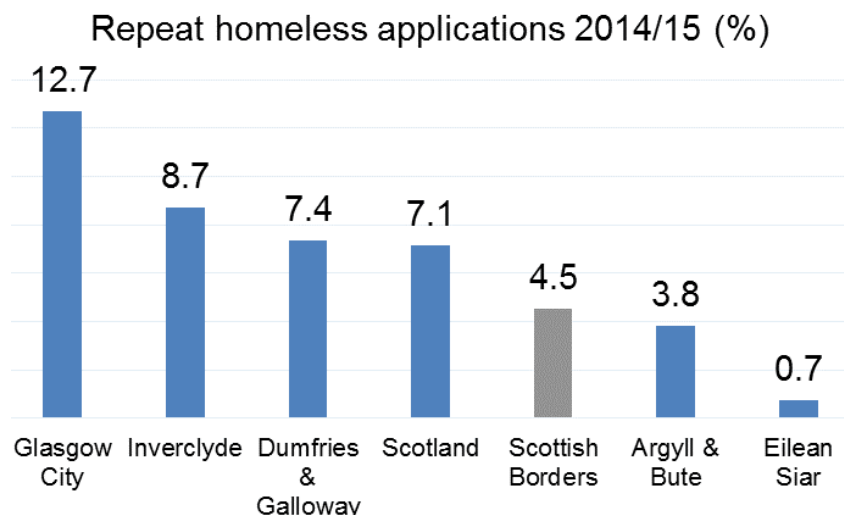


Scottish Borders (13.7% of households live in PRS) than is the case nationally (12.4%).

Overall, however, the proportion of homeless households accessing the private rented sector has fallen (7% of applicants in 2012/13 and 2% in 2014/15).

In terms of access to support, Scottish Borders' Homelessness Services Housing Support is offered to all users of the homeless service. In 2014/15, 237 of the 425 people who engaged with the housing support service had an allocated housing support officer within homelessness service. Of the cases closed, the majority were as a result of successful resettlement of the client. The Council is currently finalising its housing support model, which aims to "work together to make the best use of all available resources in the region to provide high quality housing support services that deliver positive outcomes and enable people to succeed at living independently". This is particularly important given the statutory duty which Scottish local authorities now have to assess the support needs of homeless people who they believe may require support.

The Council's commitment to delivering effective services, securing settled accommodation and maximising access to support is evident in its rate of repeat homelessness. Repeat presentations in the Scottish Borders (4.5%) is lower than other Scottish local authorities (7.1%). It also compares favourably with other stock transfer local authorities, with only Argyll & Bute (1.5%) and Eilean Siar's (0.7%) rates lower.



## 5. What strategic questions should be considered at the LHS Conference?

The purpose of the LHS conference is to agree the main housing issues that require intervention in Scottish Borders, examine the main issues in detail and generate ideas for action and investment. Key issues for consideration in the Homelessness Focus Group are:

