



Agenda Item 5

Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022

Falkirk Council

Title: Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022

Meeting: Executive

Date: 15 August 2017

Submitted by: Director of Corporate and Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-2022 (Appendix 1) for approval, prior to its submission to the Scottish Government.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- **approves the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-2022 for submission to the Scottish Government.**

3. Background

3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to prepare local housing strategies (LHS) for their area, supported by an assessment of housing need and demand.

3.2 The LHS sets the strategic direction for tackling housing need and demand; informs future investment in housing and related services across the Council area; and is the sole strategic document on homelessness, housing support and fuel poverty. The LHS is also linked to the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report (MIR).

3.3 In August 2016, the Executive considered progress made in delivering the outcomes of the Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016. In summary, 55 of the 59 tasks required to achieve the outcomes of the 2011-2016 LHS were completed. Primarily the outstanding tasks related to the introduction of a Common Housing Register to enable applicants for housing to submit one application for all social landlords in the area.

4. Local Housing Strategy Priorities

4.1 The LHS 2017-2022 sets out six key priorities which will underpin all housing activity locally over the coming years. These are:

1. Increasing housing supply;
2. Creating Sustainable Communities;
3. Improving Access to Housing;
4. Providing Housing and Support to Vulnerable Groups;
5. Tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency and climate change;
6. Improving Housing Conditions.

4.2 The six priorities detailed in LHS reflect the statements local people felt were of particular importance to them and the communities where they reside. Details of the consultation undertaken are shown in section 7 of this report. The priorities are underpinned by 15 outcomes and supported by 50 actions. These outcomes and actions are set out in the LHS (Appendix 1).

4.3 The LHS has been prepared in line with Scottish Government guidance and the draft LHS has also been reviewed by the Scottish Government. Feedback is that it is a “very strong Local Housing Strategy”. Particular strengths identified were:

- Layout – the draft LHS provides a “strong, outcome focused document setting out a clear vision for housing in Falkirk”;
- Local Context (Progress) – The LHS sets out progress over the life time of the previous LHS (2011-16). This was seen as “good practice”;
- Consultation – “wide –ranging and targeted consultation was carried out using a range of platforms. The inclusion of key messages and a summary of consultation responses under ‘you said we did’ is a particular strength and it is clear consultation helped shape and influence the priorities and actions in the LHS”;
- Empty Homes – “a clear direction for work on empty homes and detail provided was welcomed”;
- Prevention of homelessness – “the LHS highlights the success of adopting a housing options approach and achievements made over the period of the last LHS”.

4.4 There were only two areas where additional information was required to conform fully with the Scottish Government’s requirements. The LHS (Appendix 1) has been updated to reflect the request for additional information on the following areas:

- Further detail on targets to deliver affordable housing, set out within section “Priority 1 – Increasing Housing Supply”;
- Provide more up to date information on energy efficiency, set out within section “Priority 5 – Tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency and climate change.”

5. Housing Need and Demand Assessment

- 5.1 The development of the LHS has been informed by the key findings from the Housing Need and Demand Assessment. The Scottish Government has reviewed the Falkirk HNDA and approved it as “robust and credible”.
- 5.2 The HNDA estimates that 591 homes will be required in Falkirk annually, up to 2021. Table 1 provides an estimate of additional houses required by tenure:

Table 1

TENURE	HNDA 2016/17 to 2020/21	HNDA Annual Estimate
Owner Occupation	910	182
Private Rent	544	109
Below Market Rent	407	81
Social Rent	1,094	219
TOTAL	2,955	591

- 5.3 Based on the HNDA, it is estimated that there is a need for 1,501 (Below Market Rent and Social Rent) affordable properties over the next 5 years, of which 407 are below market rent and 1,094 are for social rent.
- 5.4 From a Council perspective, affordable properties can be provided through a combination of new build projects or by making better use of existing stock, e.g.: through Buybacks. Funding (Council and Scottish Government Grant) and availability of suitable land for new build development are the primary factors which will influence the Council’s ability to meet the assessed need for affordable housing in the area.

6. Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)

- 6.1 The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) guides all funding for affordable housing to meet the estimated demand for affordable properties, approximately 1,501 over the next 5 years.
- 6.2 In October 2016, the Executive agreed the Strategic Housing Investment Plan for 2016-2021. It was planned to deliver 766 units of affordable housing over the period 2016/17 to 2020/21. At that time, the plan was significantly above the available grant allocation. As such, it was noted that the SHIP would be reviewed and work would be undertaken to maximise the supply of affordable housing locally.

6.3 The Scottish Government has recently advised of updated Resource Planning Assumptions (RPA's) for the period 2018-19 to 2020-21 and a total of £33.366m (c£11.1m per annum) of affordable housing grant has been allocated to the Falkirk Council area for the next three years. This compares to c£4.2m per annum, as per the Council's current Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). This funding will now be considered within the context of the previously approved SHIP and an updated SHIP 2017-2022 will be submitted to Executive on 17 October 2017, prior to its submission to the Scottish Government.

7. Consultation

7.1 The LHS guidance requires engagement with local communities, interest groups and individuals. A pro-active approach was adopted taking the consultation out into the local communities using a range of methods.

7.2 Two briefings were made to Elected Members to provide information on the development of the LHS.

7.3 Surveys were used to consult with stakeholders on-line and face to face at a range of community events including:

- Nine Family Fun Days;
- A local festival (Eid in the Park);
- Three pop up events in Falkirk Council local housing offices and another in Paragon Housing Association's office;
- Four focus groups with younger people and disabilities groups;
- Two Falkirk College events to engage with young people;
- The annual Older Persons' Event.

7.4 The surveys were also available online and distributed to Registered Social Landlords and various community groups in the area. Two presentations were made to the Falkirk Council Resident and Tenants Forum. Link Group advised their tenants and residents of the LHS consultation in their newsletter. A total of 1,031 surveys were completed.

7.5 Three Stakeholder events on Access to Housing, Energy Efficiency/Fuel Poverty/ Climate Change and the Private Rented Sector were also carried out. In addition, feedback from previous consultations carried out for the Older People's Housing Plan and also stakeholder events carried out by Development Services' colleagues for the MIR were considered in the development of the LHS.

7.6 Results from the consultation included the following comments that the Council should:

- Provide specialist advice for older people and those with disabilities;
- Take action against private landlords who do not maintain their properties;
- Return empty homes back into use;
- Provide a range of housing advice for people across tenures;
- Improve housing conditions using a range of methods, including advice and assistance;
- Prevent people from becoming homeless;
- Build more homes which meet people's changing needs/ provide advice on housing adaptations;
- Provide more affordable housing across the area;
- Provide advice on how to save energy in the home/ train staff to identify people struggling to meet energy costs and reduce bills;
- Provide information to help people get grants and loans to improve energy efficiency.

8. Implications

Financial

8.1 Funding to deliver affordable housing will primarily come from the Council's Housing Investment Programme and Scottish Government Affordable Housing Grant. Details are set out in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

Resources

8.2 The LHS will be managed from existing resources, with no additional resources anticipated.

Legal

8.3 There are no legal implications anticipated.

Risk

8.4 Unforeseen development and potential funding constraints may restrict the number of affordable housing units delivered. This could have an impact on meeting housing need.

Equalities

8.5 A full Equalities & Poverty Impact Assessment was carried out and no significant equality issues were identified.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 8.6 A Strategic Environmental Assessment screening report was submitted to Scottish Government Strategic Environmental Assessment Gateway. Feedback indicates that the LHS is not likely to have significant environmental effects.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 sets out the key priorities and strategic direction which will underpin all housing activity locally over the next 5 years. The Strategy is also underpinned by an extensive and challenging set of actions.
- 9.2 The LHS has been prepared in line with guidance and has been informed by extensive consultation.
- 9.3 Following consideration by the Executive, the approved LHS will be submitted to Scottish Government.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Local Housing Strategy 2017 to 2022

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

None



Falkirk Council

Corporate & Housing Services



Draft Local Housing Strategy 2017 to 2022



Foreword

Welcome to the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for the Falkirk Council area, covering the period 2017 to 2022. The LHS has been developed following widespread consultation with key stakeholders including local residents, elected members, Registered Social Landlords (RSL), service providers and statutory bodies. The LHS is the leading strategic framework for housing and related services across all tenures. It is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to provide a LHS accompanied by an assessment of housing need (Housing Need and Demand Assessment - HNDA). The LHS must also be accompanied by the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) and the Housing Contribution Statement (HCS). The SHIP sets out plans for new affordable housing in the short to medium term. The HCS sets out housing's role in health and social care integration.

We carried out consultation between March and September 2016, however, we also linked with on-going engagement carried out for the HCS, Draft Older Peoples' Plan, HNDA and Local Development Plan (LDP). We also carried out second stage consultation on the draft Local Housing Strategy between 17th March and 12th May 2017.

The Scottish Government timescale for the LHS is linked to the LDP. The Main Issues Report for the Local Development Plan was agreed by Falkirk Council in December 2016 and influenced this LHS. As per Scottish Government guidance a review of this LHS was carried out by the Scottish Government and Midlothian Council. This review has been taken account of within this document.

Our proposals for the next five years reflect the Scottish Government's vision for high quality sustainable homes that people can afford and meet their needs. The LHS takes account of the Single Outcome and Local Delivery Plan (SOLD), the Falkirk Integrated Strategic Plan and a range of partnership plans reflecting the importance of good quality housing across all aspects of life. Most importantly the LHS reflects the views of residents on the key housing issues for them as outlined in LHS consultation appendix 5.

The new LHS comes at a challenging time with continued resource reductions in public services across all sectors, the integration of health and social care services as well as continued uncertainty around welfare reform and the potential impact on peoples' lives along with British Exit from the European Union (BREXIT).

The success of Falkirk's LHS is based on the willingness of local people and organisations to work in partnership to address local housing issues.

Thank you for your support of the Falkirk LHS.

May 2017

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Introduction



1.) Introduction

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on local authorities to prepare a Local Housing Strategy supported by an assessment of housing need and demand. The Scottish Government sets out guidance to be followed when preparing the Local Housing Strategy.

The Falkirk LHS is taken forward by the Strategic Housing Group (SHG) and supports the Scottish Government's vision that "a housing system provides an affordable home for all". In order to progress the national vision, the Falkirk LHS 2017-2022 provides housing outcomes to address housing need and demand locally.

Six priorities have been identified in the Falkirk LHS which are set out below:

Priority 1 - Increasing housing supply

Priority 2 - Creating sustainable communities

Priority 3 - Access to housing

Priority 4 - Providing housing and support to vulnerable groups

Priority 5 - Tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency and climate change

Priority 6 - Improving housing conditions

The above priorities reflect the following:

- national outcomes and strategic local plans (Section Strategic Links);
- statutory requirements (Section Legislation);
- housing requirements (Local Context and Evidence, Appendix 1);
- consultation (Section Consultation, Appendix 5).

These priorities form the basis of outcomes and actions (Section Action Plan).

The LHS 2017-2022 places greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention. This is informed by how quality housing and related services help to avoid costly crisis interventions across a range of health, social and economic agendas.

An important function of the LHS is to set out Housing Supply Targets (HST) which are consistent with the LDP (Priority 1: Increasing Housing Supply).

Under each priority consideration is given to outcomes, actions and indicators and targets.

The section on Risks and Impacts set out the resources and the options appraisal to set actions.

LHS 2011 to 2016

The key achievements from LHS 2011-2016 were reported in the annual update to Executive in August 2016 and are set out below.

Best use is made of existing and new affordable housing to address local needs

- 659 social rented properties were built
- 81 Mid-Market Rented properties were built
- 188 specialist housing properties were built
- 240 empty homes were brought back into use
- 300 former Council houses purchased by Falkirk Council

Advice and information is provided on a range of affordable housing options in order to prevent homelessness

- Family mediation service was established
- Mainstream housing options advice introduced
- Prison outreach worker in post
- Bed and breakfast is no longer used as temporary homeless accommodation
- Hospital discharge protocols developed in relation to homelessness

People with disabilities are able to adapt their homes or have information they need to make appropriate housing choices

- Older Peoples' Housing Plan was developed
- Housing Contribution Statement was developed to inform health and social care integration (HSCI)
- Project to streamline disabled adaptations on-going with ihub¹, housing services, RSLs, Social Work and National Health Service (NHS) Forth Valley

Housing support services are provided to help people live independently

- Review of supported accommodation carried out

The condition and sustainability of housing is improved and measures put in place to address fuel poverty

- Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) met in 91% of properties with the remaining 9% due to either abeyances or exemptions.
- The extension of the gas network completed allowing properties to have efficient gas heating systems installed

All rented housing is managed effectively and efficiently

- Applicants looking for social rented housing can register interest online with the 3 largest RSLs locally

¹ Improvement hub, new improvement resource for health and social care through Healthcare Improvement Scotland

- Online tools developed with East Hub
- On-going activities to mitigate against Welfare Reform including Tenancy Sustainment Officers

In total 93% of actions were achieved. The text below summarises the actions not met and the reasons for this.

Action	Reason action is not met
Social rented landlords increase mainstream lets to 50% to statutory homeless applicants with right to permanent accommodation to 50% by 2013 in line with the Scottish Government requirements	This action has been impacted on by policy changes. The introduction of Housing Options interviews has seen a decrease in the numbers presenting as homeless, which in turn, has seen a reduction in the percentage of lets to homeless applicants
Actions relating to a CHR	There is a facility on Falkirk Council's website which allows applicants to advise if they are interested in housing with the main general needs RSLs in the area. The applicant's details are passed on to the relevant RSL who contact the applicant directly

The outstanding actions have been revised in the LHS 2017-2022.

Equality Statement

Both locally and nationally there is a commitment to developing an inclusive Scotland considering the needs of equality groups. The Equality Act 2010 protects specific groups of people in relation to: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. In April 2011, it became a legal requirement for public authorities to eradicate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and enable good relations between protected groups and the general population.

Increasing new affordable housing, ensuring the correct support is available to people who require it, providing up to date housing options information, tackling fuel poverty, driving up standards in the private sector and improving our estates will have a positive impact on all communities. The LHS is designed to benefit all protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) was completed alongside the LHS which assists to ensure the LHS is robust with no potential for discrimination and with opportunities to promote equality undertaken. All priorities, outcomes and actions have been designed to contribute towards improving our communities for all residents. The EQIA is available at Appendix 3.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

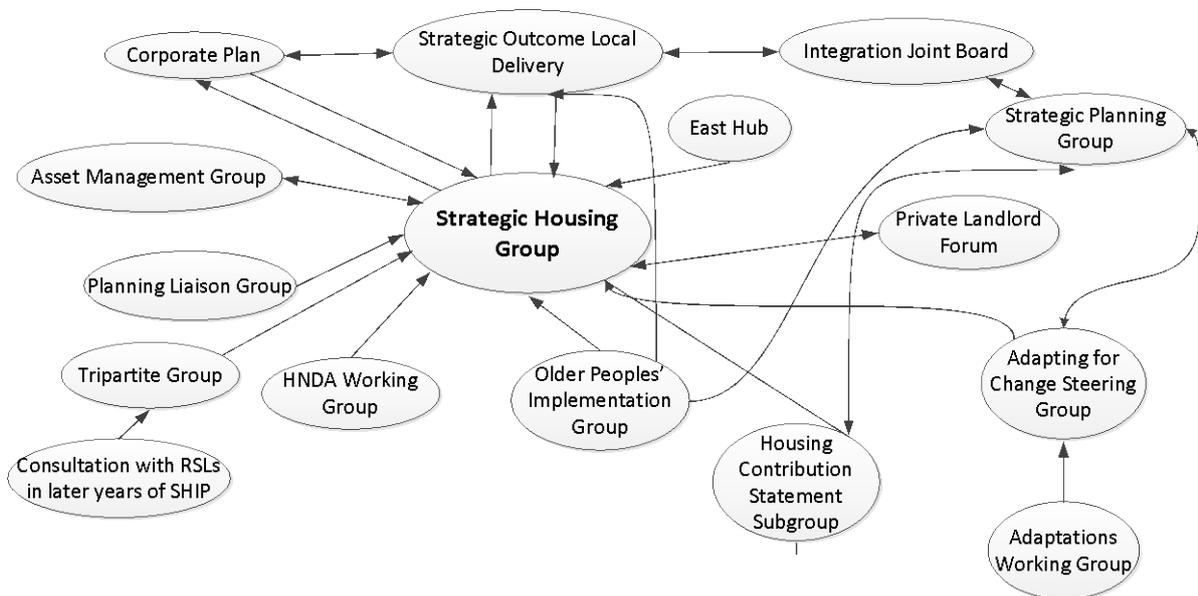
A SEA screening report was submitted to the Scottish Government SEA Gateway under Section 9 (3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 on 17 September 2015. On 13 October 2015 Falkirk Council were informed that the screening report had been considered using the criteria set out in Schedule 2 for determining the likely significance of effects on the

environment. After consideration, agreement was given that the LHS is not likely to have significant environmental effects. The pre-screening result is available at <http://Strategic Environmental Assessment - pre screening>

Partnership Working

Locally, the strategic housing function is progressed through the Strategic Housing Group (SHG) which is the housing market partnership. The SHG includes representatives from Falkirk Council Corporate and Housing Services, Development (Planning), Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership, RSLs with stock locally, Homes for Scotland, voluntary sector, Scottish Government and NHS. Strategic links are set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: SHG partnership links



Strategic Overview



2.) Strategic Overview

This section sets out how this LHS links to national outcomes and key strategic documents.

National Outcomes

National outcomes set out Scottish Government priorities for future years.

National Outcomes have been taken into account when developing this LHS. These are set out below and linked to LHS priorities:

- We will live longer, healthier lives (priorities 5/6)
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society (priorities 1/2)
- We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access amenities and services we need (priority 2)
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others (priority 2)
- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations (priority 3)
- Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it (priority 4)

The **four key outcomes** the Scottish Government's wish to achieve for housing and communities in Scotland are:

- A well-functioning housing system (priority 1, 3, 4)
- High quality sustainable homes (priorities 5 and 6)
- Homes that meet people's needs (priorities 1,2,3, 4)
- Sustainable communities (priority 2)

Strategic Outcome and Local Delivery Plan

The Strategic Outcome and Local Delivery Plan is the focus of delivering on priorities and outcomes for Falkirk Council and partners in future years.

Locally the approach to supporting development and maintenance of sustainable communities is set out in the SOLD. This identified four strategic priorities which are set out below with the link to relevant LHS priority:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing (priority 4 actions to carry out awareness training for housing staff on dementia and mental health)
- Maximising job creation and employability (priority 1)
- Minimising the impact of substance misuse on communities, families and individual (priority 3)
- Addressing the impact of poverty on children (priority 1, 2 and 5)

The local outcomes are as follows:

- Our area will be a fairer and more equal place to live (LHS priority 1 actions to increase supply of affordable housing and priority 2 develop regeneration strategies and increase satisfaction levels in local communities)
- We will grow our local economy to secure successful businesses, investment and employment (priority 1)
- Children will become adults who are successful and confident (priority 3 action to develop Young Peoples' Housing Plan)
- Our population will be healthier (LHS priorities 5 and 6 actions to improve energy efficiency and improve housing conditions)
- People will live full, independent and positive lives within supportive communities (LHS priority 4 actions to increase supply of specialist housing, carry out awareness raising in relation to mental health and dementia with housing staff and provide specialist housing advice and review older peoples' housing)
- Our area will be a safer place to live (priority 2)

Poverty Strategy - Towards a Fairer Falkirk

“Towards a Fairer Falkirk” (2011-2021) sets out plans to reduce poverty and the impact of poverty on individuals and communities within the Falkirk Council area. This identifies that the causes and impacts of poverty are complex and often inter-related. However, a distinction is made between actions which focus on the casual factors and those that focus on mitigating the impacts of poverty. Although both types of actions form the Poverty Strategy, emphasis is given to the importance of focusing on actions that can tackle the root causes of poverty. These include the following and link to below LHS priorities:

- Maximise the number of people in better paid secure employment (priority 1)
- Reduce levels of debt across the population and maximise the income of households who rely on benefits (priority 3 and 5)
- Increase the financial choices available to people (priority 2)

Mitigating the impacts of poverty in a number of key areas is important as it:

- Impacts in relation to housing (as set out above re LHS priorities 1,2,3 and actions)
- Impacts in relation to health and wellbeing (as set out above re LHS priorities 4,5,6 and actions)
- Impacts on children (as set out above re LHS priority 3 action, priority 5 and 6 actions to improve energy efficiency and housing conditions)
- Impacts on communities and participation (as set out above re LHS priority 2 and actions also priority 4 around improving specialist housing advice in particular proposal for peer advice for older people)

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

Getting it Right for Every Child is the Scottish Government's approach to improve children's services. The wellbeing for all children and young people is at the heart of GIRFEC. Services must work together with children, young people and their families to provide quick and effective support when it is needed. Key ways in which housing can improve the needs of children and young people are set out below:

- Priority 1 – actions to increase the supply of affordable housing
- Priority 2 - actions to regenerate communities and increase satisfaction levels in local communities
- Priority 3 - action to develop a Younger Person’s Housing Plan
- Priority 4 – action to increase supply of specialist properties
- Priority 5 – actions to improve energy efficiency
- Priority 6 – actions to improve housing conditions

Falkirk Integrated Strategic Plan 2016-2019

The Integrated Strategic Plan sets out proposals for health and social care integration. The Housing Contribution Statement sets out housing’s role in health and social care integration and is an appendix to both the LHS and the Integrated Strategic Plan. The HCS was approved by the Integration Joint Board in December 2015. All actions from the HCS are included under priority 4 of this LHS.

Legislation

The following legislation is relevant to the LHS.

LHS Priority	Key legislation/ Policy	Key LHS impacts/ requirements
LHS/ general	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001	Assess housing need, demand/consult with stakeholders/ housing and related services/carry out an LHS
Equalities	Equalities Act 2010	Tackle discrimination and promote equality for protected groups: age, disabilities, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership
Priority 1	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001	Assessment of housing need and demand, set housing supply targets and SHIP
	Rent Scotland Act 1984	Introduction of regulated tenancy regime, regulation on deposits, clarification of illegal premiums and Notice to Quit regulations
	Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004	Includes a requirement for all private landlords to register with the Council where they let property
	Housing (Scotland) Act 2006	Ensures HMO meet physical standards set by the licensing Council
	Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Act 2011	Amended the private landlord registration scheme provisions in 2004 Act to improve enforcement of the scheme. Introduced a tenant information pack at the start of a tenancy
	Housing (Scotland) Act 2014	Introduced a letting agent regulation system and the transfer of private rented housing civil issues from the sheriff court to a new Tribunal
	Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016	Creates a new private residential tenancy that will replace the existing assured and short assured tenancy
Priority 2	Community Empowerment (Scotland) 2015 Act	Sets out requirements to deliver opportunities for communities to be more involved in shaping and delivering local outcomes
	The Local Government Finance (Unoccupied Properties etc.) (Scotland) Act 2012	Allows Councils to both remove the discount on certain types of unoccupied homes and to increase the level of Council tax payable on these properties
Priority 3	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001	Assess extent and nature of homelessness/strategy to prevent and alleviate homelessness/provide temporary accommodation/provide CHR/maintain housing list/create Scottish Secure Tenancies
	Housing (Scotland) Act 2014	Abolition of the RTB/Reasonable preference for housing allocations/power to issue Short Scottish Secure Tenancies in cases involving anti-social behaviour/restrictions on assignations, subletting, joint tenancies and successions/recovery of possession of property designated for adapted or special needs
	Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003	Priority need categories removed /amendments to the intentionality and local connection distinctions
Priority 4	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001	Consider need for specialist housing and support in the HNDA
	Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014	Requirement to produce a HCS /delegate private sector/Council adaptations and garden aid to integrated health and social care partnership

	Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016	Established a new national body to oversee community justice and introduced requirements about achieving outcomes that were set locally and nationally.
Priority 5	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001	Provide strategy for fuel poverty/achieve target to reduce fuel poverty by 2016 as far as practical
	Scottish Government (2004) Scottish Quality Standard (SHQS)	Meet SHQS by 2015
	Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009	Contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions/2020 target of 42%
	Scottish Government (2014) Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)	Minimum SAP ratings by 2020 for different property types
Priority 6	Housing (Scotland) Act 2006	Provide strategies for Housing Renewal Areas (HRA), Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) housing/ publish a Scheme of Assistance (SOA) Sets out the Repairing Standards which are duties of landlord to repair and maintain rented properties.
	Housing (Scotland) Act 2010	The Social Housing Charter sets out standards and outcomes that social landlords should aim to achieve when carrying out housing activities which are monitored, assessed and reported on by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)
	Housing (Scotland) Act 2014	Allows Councils to approach the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber)

Policy

The LHS is also influenced by the following:

- More Homes Scotland - The Scottish Government's overarching approach to increase the supply of homes across tenures
- The Christie Commission - Review of public services recommended a more effective long term strategic planning, a shift to prevention, improved understanding of local needs and better engagement with communities
- The Smith Commission - Detailed agreement relating to further devolution of powers to the Scottish Government
- Draft Housing Delivery Plan for Scotland - Developing interventions to meet the Scottish Government's vision for housing through new build and improvement to existing homes and communities
- Housing Options Thematic Study – Falkirk Council was one of 6 Councils chosen by the SHR to assess the success of the new Housing Options approach, impact on statutory homelessness and outcomes for people seeking help from Councils
- A Place to Stay, A Place to Call Home - A strategy for the Private Rented Sector in Scotland
- Age, Home and Community - A Strategy for Housing Scotland's Older People 2012-2021
- Reshaping Care for Older People - A Programme for change 2011-2021
- The Keys for Life - Improving the quality of life for people with learning disabilities
- Achieving a Sustainable Future - The Regeneration Strategy 2011. Sets out the Government's vision of a Scotland where the most disadvantaged communities are

supported and where all places are sustainable and promote well-being. It also sets out plans for delivering this vision in partnership with stakeholders

- Town Centre Action Plan 2013 - Cross-government response to the recommendations of the national review of town centres and includes actions designed to support their revitalisation and to assist local action towards achieving this
- Scottish Planning Policy – Sets out national planning policies reflecting Scottish Ministers’ priorities for the operation of the planning system and for the development and use of land
- Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) - The framework which joins up the agencies who manage offenders. The introduction of MAPPA across Scotland in April 2007 gave a consistent approach to the management of offenders across all local authority and police force areas, providing a framework for assessing and managing the risk posed by some of those offenders.
- The National Strategy for Community Justice - provides a shared vision to help partners and communities work together effectively to improve community justice outcomes, while retaining the flexibility to adapt to local needs and circumstances.

LHS Consultation

We are aware of the statutory requirement and importance of consultation and engagement when developing this LHS. With this understanding we were determined to introduce a new approach to consultation with the focus:

‘To create a Local Housing Strategy the community can be proud of’.

Community engagement was the focus to adopt a more pro-active interactive approach taking the consultation out to the communities. This led to interaction with residents instead of waiting for residents to come to us. This new approach was designed to consult with as wide a range of people as possible. It also embedded consultation in on-going work and took a more informal and relaxed approach.

A scoping exercise to identify key stakeholders for the Falkirk LHS was carried out. The exercise considered the HNDA and our on-going engagement. The findings helped to inform our approach towards the consultation and were carried out along with the Equality Impact Assessment (Section Risks and Impacts). This enabled us to explain why certain groups were prioritised whereas others raised no significant housing issues beyond those of the general population.

The Council recognise that housing need is experienced by a number of people from a range of groups and it is acknowledged that addressing need relating to age and disability is vital in progressing LHS 2017-2022.

This relates to the increasing older population, difficulties younger people have accessing the housing market and lack of awareness of people with disabilities in accessing information and advice on their housing options. The section on need and demand also identifies issues around fuel poverty which impacts on a range of equalities strands and the wider community.

The key stakeholders and housing concerns for the LHS are set out in the following table.

Stakeholder Groups	Summary of issues from HNDA and on-going engagement
Equality Stands	
Age	<p>More older people remain at home rather than hospital or a care home</p> <p>Increasing numbers of older people living in private housing</p> <p>Increasing numbers of people with dementia with most living in the community</p> <p>No specialist housing for people with dementia locally</p> <p>Potential need for Extra Care housing</p> <p>Low demand for some specialist housing for older people</p> <p>Housing benefit changes mean that people under 35 are only entitled to the single room rate to cover rented accommodation costs</p> <p>A deposit of around 17% is required to purchase a property</p> <p>Young people are generally on lower incomes than the population as a whole</p>
Disability	<p>Ensuring suitable housing in the areas disabled people want to live</p> <p>Allocations policies prioritise new build for existing tenants</p> <p>Current specialist properties may not meet specific needs of a wheelchair user</p> <p>No CHR and applicants have to apply to multiple RSLs</p> <p>No specialist housing advice locally for people with physical disabilities</p> <p>Need to streamline the process for disabled adaptations as timescale varies by tenure</p> <p>Increasing numbers of people with learning disabilities known to the Council</p> <p>Most people with learning disabilities live and want to remain in mainstream housing</p> <p>People with learning disabilities can be socially isolated</p> <p>There is no specific housing advice for people with learning disabilities</p> <p>Majority of people with mental health issues live in mainstream accommodation</p> <p>There is a link between poor house conditions and mental health</p> <p>There is a lack of advice on where to access housing advice for people with mental health issues</p>
Gender	<p>Young single males are over represented in homeless applications</p> <p>Females are more likely to have lower incomes compared to males due to child care responsibilities</p>
Gender reassignment	No significant strategic issues identified
Sexual orientation	No significant strategic issues identified
Race	It is recognised that minority ethnic households are younger and there is a need for information in a range of languages
Religion & belief	No significant strategic issues identified
Other stakeholders	
Gypsy travellers	No significant issues identified through consultation for the HNDA
Travelling show people	
Single people	
	Over- representation of single people presenting as homeless

The consultation used a variety of different media methods and engaged with a wide range of residents, community groups, stakeholders and partners. The table below provides an overview of all various media used.

INFORM 'generating publicity to a target/ blanket audience getting the message out' to communities.	CONSULT service users, tenants, residents or local communities responding to consultation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 90 posters displayed across various locations ● Dedicated consultation website page ● Plasma screens advertising the consultation in local offices ● Adverts and information in specialist publications including Disability Newsletter, Development Services Economic Newsletter and Community & Volunteer Service (CVS) ● Facebook ● Twitter ● LinkedIn ● Largest employers in the area ● RSL publicised consultation on website ● 2 Presentations to Elected Members ● 2 Presentations to the Tenant & Resident Forum ● Publicity sent to members of the Consultation Register, Tenant & Residents Organisations, Scrutiny Panel and Community Councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Surveying under 35 year olds face to face and online (402 respondents) ● Surveying 35 year olds and over face to face and online (629 respondents) ● Surveying Private Sector tenants face to face and online (43 respondents) ● Surveying Private Landlords face to face and online (131 respondents) ● Surveying SOA face to face and online (188 respondents) ● Citizen Panel survey (493 respondents) ● Attended 9 Family Fun Day ● Attended Eid in the Park, a Muslim Festival ● Carried out pop up events in Local Council Offices and RSL office. ● Attended a Sustainability Event at Falkirk College ● Attended an Open Day at Falkirk College ● Surveys distributed to; Young Mum's Group; Salvation Army Soup Kitchen; a Networking Group, Afternoon Club; FunB4T Club; Al-Massar Group; Rainbow Group ● Contacted two mosques in the area ● Drew on surveys/focus groups carried out with older people ● Attended an annual Older Person Event ● Prior to setting HST we consulted with Homes for Scotland
ENGAGEMENT Service user, tenants, residents and local community groups actively involved.	CO-PRODUCTION RSLs, tenants, residents and services working together to design and deliver services.
<p>Focus Groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inchyra Supported Accommodation ● Travelling Person Site ● Under 35 year olds ● Disability Working Group <p>Stakeholder Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to Housing ● Energy Efficiency ● Private Sector Landlord Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● RSL & Falkirk Tenant Co-production Focus Group.

Key messages from the consultation can be summarised in the table below:

Statement	Priority	Outcome	Link
Return empty home back into use	2. Creating Sustainable Communities	Best use is made of stock across tenure	Actions in Priority 2
Improve the appearance of the local area	2. Creating Sustainable Communities	Make best use of existing stock	Actions in Priority 2.
Provide housing advice for people (specialist & under 35)	3. Improving Access to Housing	Housing advice is provided to those at risk of homelessness	Actions in Priority 3.
	4. Housing & Support for	Specialist housing advice is provided in partnership	Actions in Priority 4.
Prevent people from becoming homeless	3. Improving Access to Housing	Housing advice is provided to those at risk of homelessness	Actions in Priority 3.
	4. Housing and Support for Vulnerable Groups	Further analysis on the housing needs of vulnerable groups is carried out	Action in Priority 4
Provide specialist advice for older people and those with disabilities	4. Housing & Support for vulnerable groups	Specialist housing advice is in partnership	Actions in Priority 4.
Build more homes which meet people's changing needs. Provide advice on housing adaptations	4. Housing & Support for vulnerable groups	We will increase the supply of accessible properties	Actions in Priority 4
Improve House Condition	6. Improve Housing Conditions	To improve social rented and private sector housing conditions.	Actions in Priority 6.
Take action against private landlords who do not maintain their properties	2. Creating sustainable communities	Make better use of existing stock across all tenures. Make best use of community resources to create sustainable communities	Actions in Priority 2/5
	6. Improve housing conditions	To improve private sector housing conditions	Actions in Priority 6.
Provide advice on how to save energy in the home	5. Sustainable Housing: Fuel Poverty and Climate Change	Tackle fuel poverty improve energy efficiency and make progress to meeting climate change targets	Actions in Priority 5
Train staff to identify people struggling to meet energy cost and reduce bills	5. Sustainable Housing: Fuel Poverty and Climate Change	Tackle fuel poverty improve energy efficiency and make progress to meeting climate change targets	Actions in Priority 5

Summary of Consultation Outcomes

The approach to consultation involved the use of ‘we asked’, ‘you said’, ‘we did’.

We asked...What is the most pressing issue in the Falkirk Council area?

You said...360 respondents’ answered the question and 73% stated:

‘Build more affordable housing’

Priority 1 – Increase Housing Supply

Priority 4 – We will increase the Supply of Accessible Housing

Outcomes:

- The supply of housing is increased.
- The supply of accessible properties is increased

Actions:

- Ensure housing land supply is available to build 2,456 properties by 2021
- Provide new affordable housing
- Make best use of existing stock to provide additional affordable housing
- We will agree with partners specifications standard for new build housing
- Work in partnership to deliver housing through the Affordable Housing Policy
- Explore a range of models to increase affordable housing models used locally
- We will work in partnership to agree standard specifications for specialist housing built through the SHIP
- We will work in partnership to implement findings of the Adapting for Change pilot
- We will work with the HCSG to provide specialist housing advice to people with specialist needs

Draft LHS Consultation

Consultation on the draft LHS ran for 8 weeks from 17th March until 12th May 2017. All stakeholders and members who participated in the focus groups were contacted to provide comment while other members of the public had the opportunity to comment via the Falkirk Council website and the links provided on the consultation page. All comments received were considered and changes incorporated into the document as appropriate.

Consultation informs the key stages of developing an LHS:

- On-going engagement and awareness raising
- The HNDA
- Stakeholder analysis, setting priorities and outcomes
- Identifying risks and impacts
- Formal consultation

The SHG oversees the LHS and consultation is fed back to this group

The approach of “You Said ... We did”, highlights how consultation shaped the LHS along with overviews of the outcomes from the surveys, focus groups and stakeholder events. A more detailed analysis on the consultation carried out is contained in Appendix 5 of the LHS.

Local Context and Evidence

Falkirk is situated in the centre of Scotland, equidistant between Glasgow and Edinburgh at the middle of the motorway network. It covers an area of 112 square miles and it has a growing population which in 2014 stood at 157,640, making it the 11th largest Council in Scotland.

Falkirk's population lives in a network of towns and villages, Falkirk being the principal administrative and service centre, but each community has its own strong identity. Manufacturing remains strong locally, focused on the Grangemouth petrochemical complex which has seen major new investment. Also in the logistics sector, as evidenced by ASDA's new distribution centre. Tourism continues to be a growth sector, given further impetus by the opening of the Helix/Kelpies, and the visitor economy remains an area of great potential.

The Housing Need and Demand Assessment

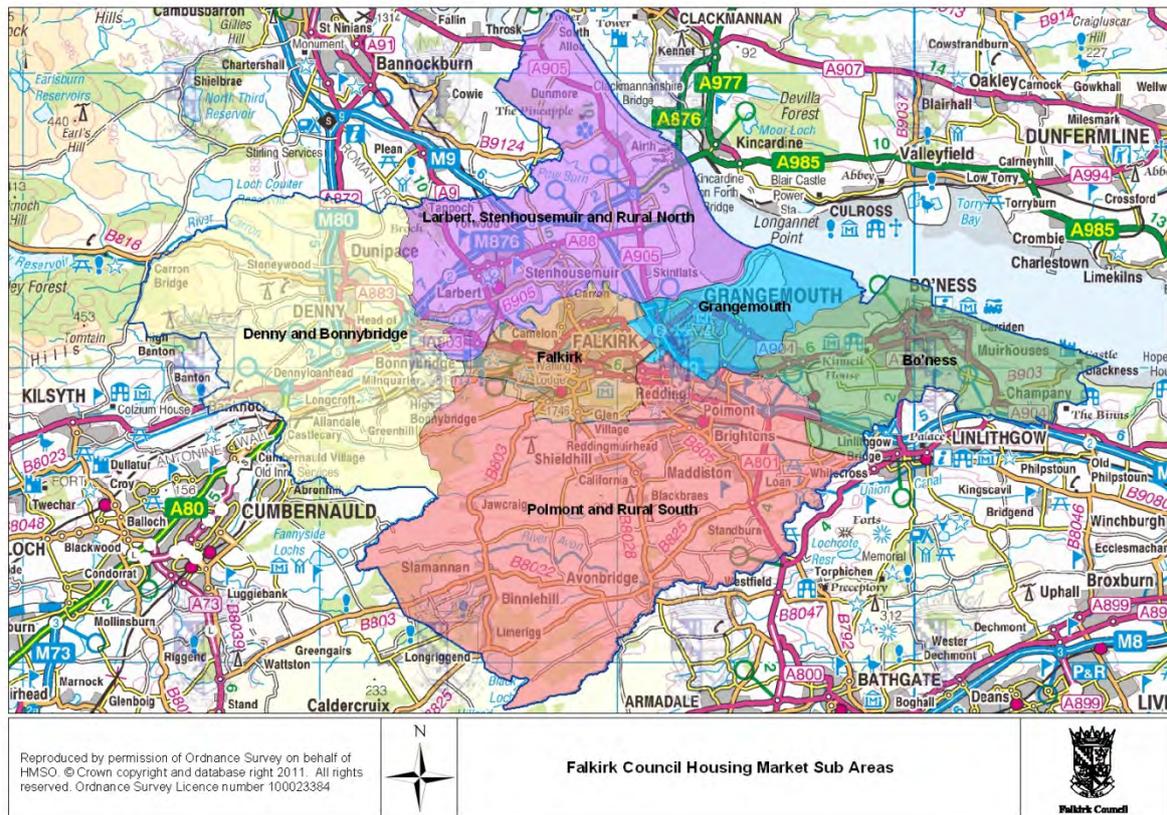
Producing a HNDA is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, which places a responsibility on Councils to prepare an LHS supported by an assessment of housing need and demand and the provision of related services. The Falkirk HNDA was agreed as robust and credible by the Scottish Government Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) in August 2016.

Councils are encouraged to produce an HNDA using guidance prepared by the CHMA. The HNDA captures information on the operation of the housing system to assist in the development of policies on new supply, management of existing stock and the provision of housing-related services. The purpose of the HNDA is to provide a robust, shared and agreed evidence base for the LHS and the LDP.

The first stage of the HNDA is to identify the functional housing market area. This is done by considering where people purchase houses (origin-based destination analysis). In total 72.7% of house sales in the Council area came from people already living in the area which makes the area self-contained. The strongest links are to West Lothian and Edinburgh, followed by North Lanarkshire and Stirling. There are 6 housing sub market areas, as shown in Figure 2:

- Falkirk
- Denny and Bonnybridge
- Polmont and Rural South
- Larbert, Stenhousemuir and Rural North
- Grangemouth
- Bo'ness

Figure 2: Housing Sub Market Areas



Housing Need

The next stage of the HNDA is to identify the number of households that are currently in housing need, which is referred to as backlog, and who cannot afford to meet their needs in the market. This includes homeless households, concealed and overcrowded households and households requiring specialist housing. It has been assumed that all these households will require social housing. This identified 767 households in existing need.

The next part of the HNDA looks at the future need for households that have yet to form and is mainly driven by future household formation (projections). This has to be met through the provision of additional housing units. Most additional housing units will be delivered through new build, but delivery will also be considered through changes in housing stock such as bringing empty properties back into use and buying back former Council properties. The amount and type of additional units informs the Housing Supply Target (HST).

An indication of the housing requirement for Falkirk is shown in Table 1. The HNDA estimates that 591 homes will be required in Falkirk annually through the period of the HNDA from 2016/2017-2020/2021.

Current Need

Table 1: Estimate of additional houses required by tenure

	HNDA	
	2016/2017-2020/2021	Annual
Owner Occupation	910	182
Private Rent	544	109
Below Market Rent	407	81
Social Rent	1,094	219
Total	2,956	591

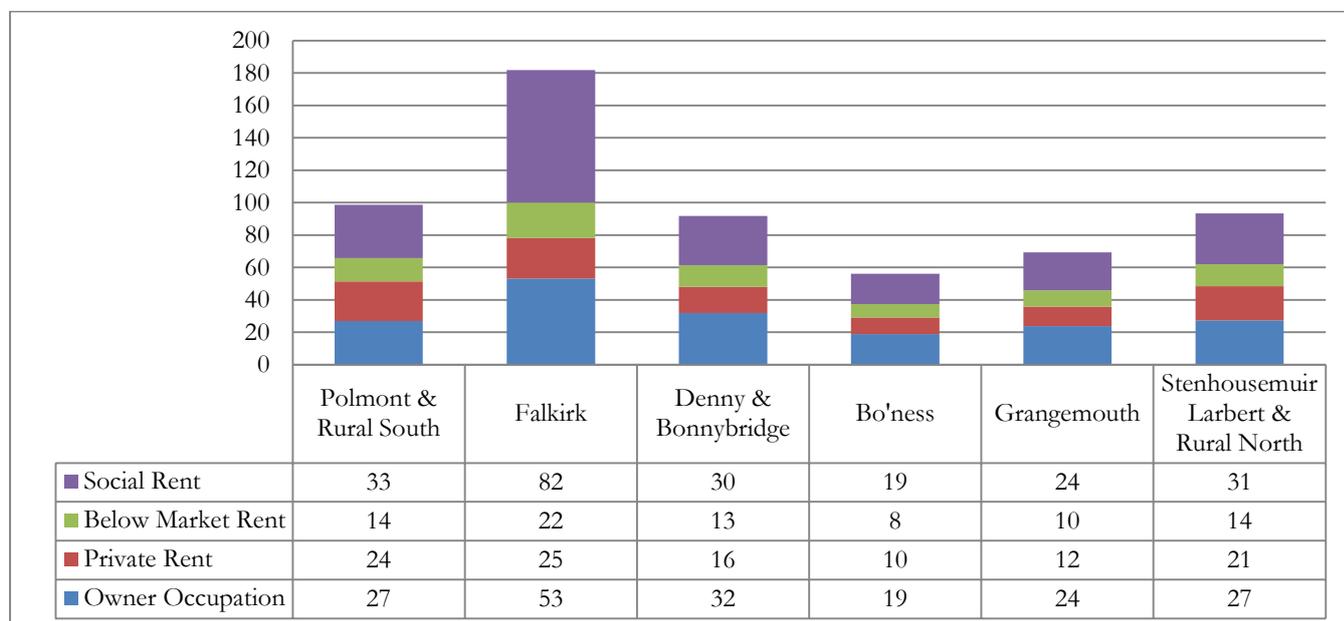
Source: Falkirk Council HNDA

The HST looks at new build only and the outputs of the HNDA will not automatically translate into the HST. The latter will take the HNDA as its starting point, but will consider policy and practical considerations to reach a view on the level of housing to be delivered over a defined period. The outputs from the HNDA have informed the MIR which is the first formal stage in producing a LDP.

Location

Figure 3 sets out the annual housing need by sub area and tenure and highlights that the Falkirk area has the highest requirement for housing across all tenures whereas Bo'ness has the lowest requirement.

Figure 3: Annual housing Estimates by Housing Sub Market Area



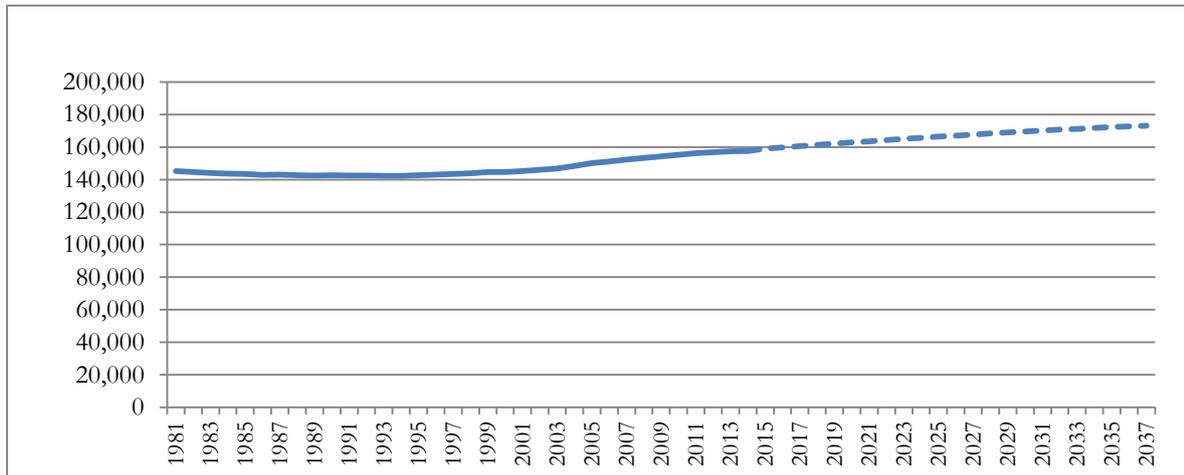
Source: Falkirk Council HNDA, Please note totals are subject to rounding

Key Issues from the HNDA

Population

The local population in mid-2014 was 157,640, an increase of 6.3% over the last decade with the biggest increase in the 60+ age group. The population is expected to increase by 10% (16,330 people) from 2012 to 2037.

Figure 4: Actual and Projected Population in Falkirk 1981-2037

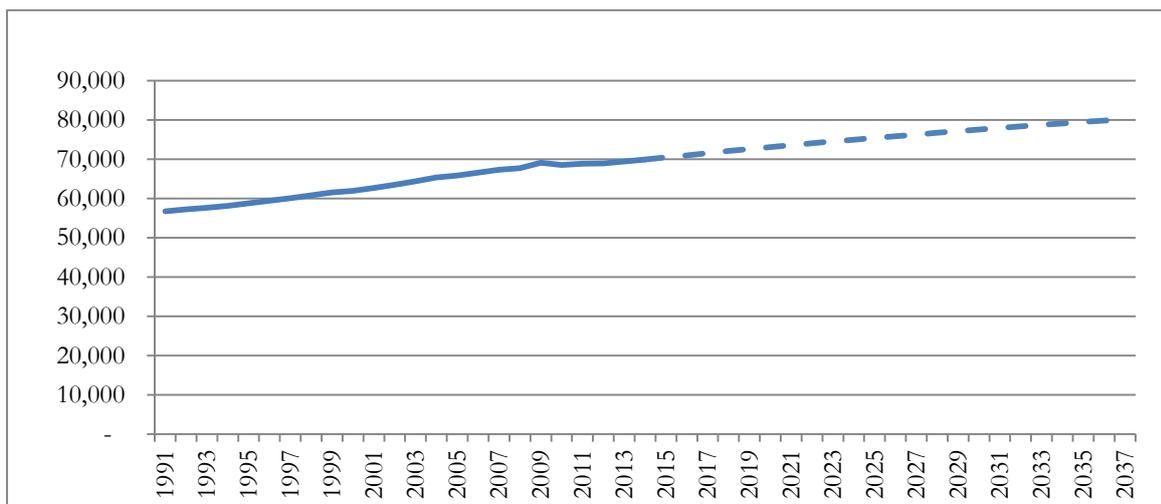


Source: National Records of Scotland

Households

In 2014, there were 69,693 households locally, a 6.6% increase over the last decade. Locally households are projected to increase by a further 2,506 (3.5%) over the period 2017-2022 or 16% over the period 2017-2037. The largest household type in 2012 locally was single people; which are projected to increase by 32% by 2037. The average household size is also projected to fall to 2.12 in 2037 which links to the increase in the older population.

Figure 5: Estimated and Actual Household Projections 1991-2037



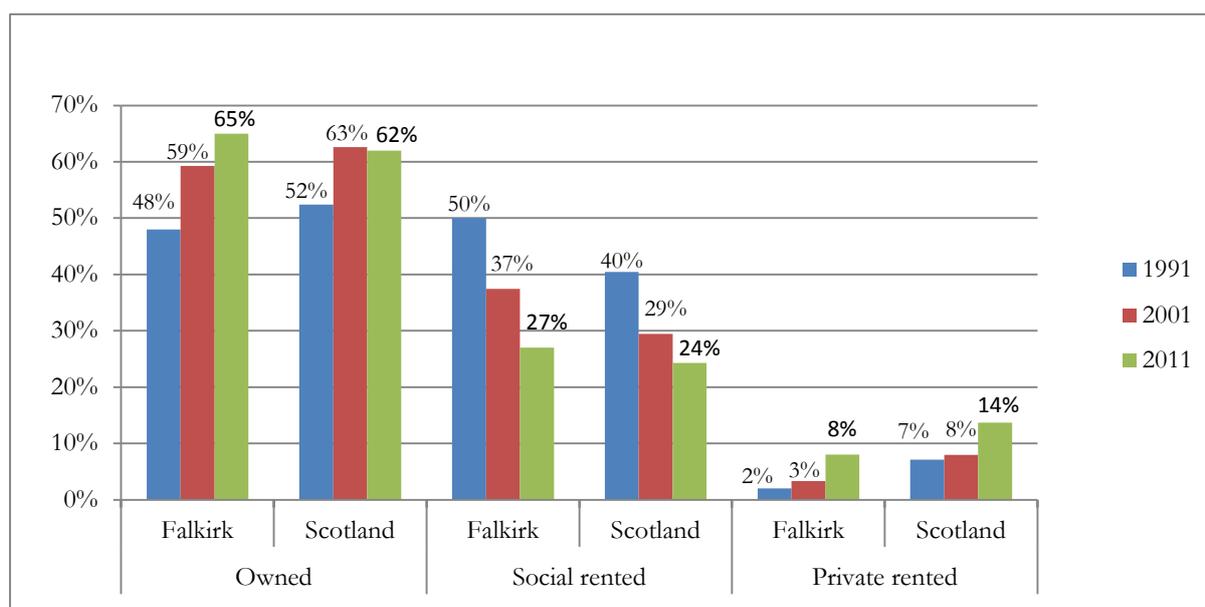
Source: National Records of Scotland

Changes in Tenure

As shown in Figure 6 there have been changes in tenure locally and nationally between 1991 and 2011. The social rented sector in Falkirk has reduced by 23 percentage points, mainly due to the impact of the “RTB” relating to a loss of around 17,000 social housing dwellings.

The Owner-Occupied Sector (OOS) locally has increased by 17 percentage points (16,584 dwellings). The Private Rented Sector (PRS) locally has increased by 6 percentage points in the last 20 years with most of the growth seen in the last ten years with an increase of 4,425 private rented dwellings in the area.

Figure 6: Changes in Tenure in Falkirk and Scotland 1991-2011



Source: 1991, 2001 & 2011 Census

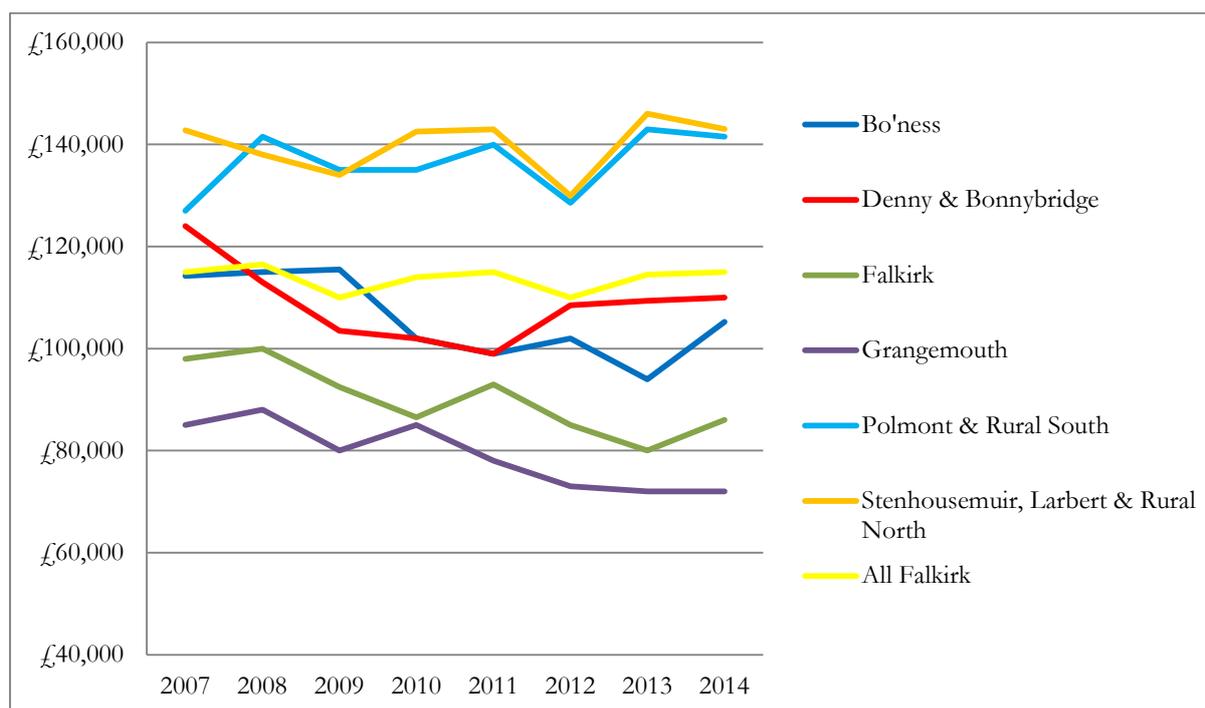
Affordability

The cost of housing remains an issue for people locally. The HNDA identified that the median house price in Falkirk in 2014 was £115,000. This compares to the median gross income of full time workers of £26,333. For a first time buyer to afford to buy a property at the median price it would mean a 17% (£19,550) deposit and then borrowing up to 3.5 times income. Therefore if the person saved £200 a month, it would take them just over 8 years to save the deposit.

Figure 7 shows that when looking at the median sale price for all properties sold in the area, there are only two areas where median sale prices in 2014 are above those of 2007 and they are Polmont Rural South (£14,500 higher) and Stenhousemuir Larbert and Rural North (£250 higher).

In terms of the volume of sales, although there has been an increase in the number of properties built in the last 3 years, the number of completions for 2014-2015 is still 42% below those of 2004-2005.

Figure 7: Median Sale Prices for all Sales by Housing Sub Market Areas 2007-2014



Source: Registers of Scotland with further processing by Scottish Government

Income

As can be seen in Table 2, the mean, median and lowest quartile incomes locally have increased over the period 2008-2015 but remain below those nationally. The median income locally is £27,001 with the lowest quartile income £19,302.

Table 2: Mean, Median and Lower Quartile Income of Residents in Falkirk and Scotland 2008-2015

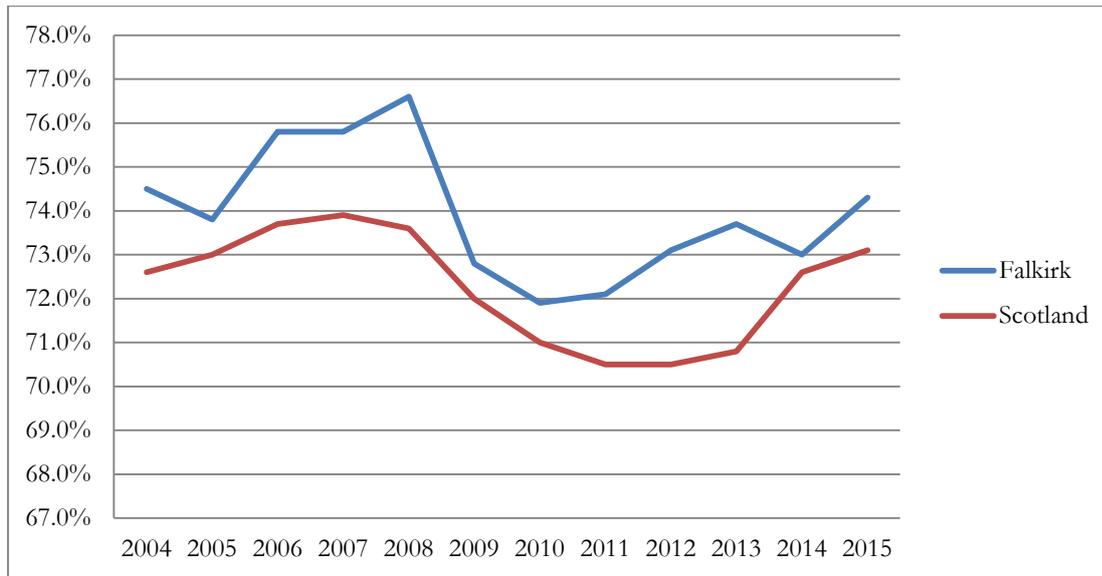
	Mean		Median		Lower Quartile	
	Falkirk	Scotland	Falkirk	Scotland	Falkirk	Scotland
2008	£25,987	£28,528	£23,580	£24,132	£16,993	£17,414
2009	£27,288	£29,431	£24,280	£24,946	£17,916	£17,950
2010	£27,261	£29,562	£24,092	£25,082	£17,732	£18,140
2011	£27,836	£29,941	£24,163	£25,358	£17,642	£18,148
2012	£30,155	£30,797	£24,691	£25,907	£17,938	£18,592
2013	£31,370	£31,598	£26,161	£26,456	£18,908	£19,061
2014	£29,122	£31,447	£26,333	£26,955	£19,571	£19,407
2015	£29,297	£32,472	£27,001	£27,732	£19,302	£19,979

Source: NOMIS Source ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis

Employment

The following figure highlights Falkirk has a consistently higher economic activity rate than Scotland in the last ten years. In 2015, there were 76,100 people in employment. This is an employment rate locally of 74.3% which compares to the rate for Scotland of 73.1%. Locally most people are employed in Health (21.1%), Wholesale/ Retail (16.4%) and Manufacturing (12.1%) which is above the national average.

Figure 8: Employment Rate of Falkirk Compared to Scotland 2004-2015



Source: Annual Population Survey (Jan to Dec)

Priority 1 - Increasing Housing Supply



3.) Priority 1 - Increasing Housing Supply

Outcome

- The supply of housing is increased
- More affordable housing is provided through joint working between the public and private sector
- We have a sustainable private rented sector

Actions

- Ensure housing supply is available to build 2,456 properties by 2021
- Provide new build affordable housing
- Make best use of existing stock to provide additional affordable housing
- We will agree with partners, specifications standard for new build housing
- Work in partnership to deliver housing through the Affordable Housing Policy
- Explore a range of models to increase affordable housing models used locally
- Improve private rented sector housing options
- Take action against private landlords who fail to comply with their legal responsibilities

Partnership

Progress on this outcome will be steered by the following groups:

- The SHG as the Housing Market Partnership
- HNDA Working Group – joint working between Corporate, Housing and Development Services on proposals for HST to be discussed at the SHG
- Private Landlord Forum discusses relevant strategic and operational issues
- The Housing and Planning Liaison group discusses sites which fall under the Affordable Housing Policy (AHP), the HST and new developments

Context

National Overview

- More Homes Scotland – Scottish Government initiative to increase the supply of housing
- A Place to Stay, A Place to Call Home, a Strategy for the PRS in Scotland
- The Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 Part 8
- The PRS Housing (Scotland) Act 2011
- The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016

Local Overview

As per the HNDA a further 2,956 properties are needed over the period of the LHS (2017-22), which is an average of 591 properties per year. Increasing housing supply only forms part of

meeting need and demand. There is also a requirement to ensure housing of the right type and size is available to meet current and future need.

Housing Supply Target

The estimate of housing need is used as the starting point for setting the HST. It sets out the estimated level of additional housing that can actually be deliverable, on the ground, over the period of the LHS. Development and Housing Services have worked together to jointly agree the HST.

In setting the supply targets a range of additional key factors identified by the Scottish Government guidance on setting HSTs has been considered to assess the impact on the pace and scale of housing delivery:

- Economic factors impacting on demand and supply in particular parts of the area
- Capacity within the construction sector
- The potential inter-dependency between delivery of market and affordable housing at the local level
- Availability of resources
- Likely pace and scale of delivery based on completion rates
- Recent development levels
- Planned demolitions
- Planned new and replacement housing brought back into effective use

Economic factors which may impact on demand and supply in particular parts of the area.

The HNDA identified an economic scenario for the Falkirk area which recognises that while the economy is recovering it is still fragile and subject to further pressures. Homes for Scotland have advised that the time period Councils have to plan is long and will go through a number of economic cycles. It is therefore important to reflect these potential changes in the allocation of the housing land supply. If the economy picks up, developers want to be able to meet demand.

Capacity within the construction sector and completion rates

The housing land audit captures the future plans of the housing industry although it does give an optimistic view of potential completions in the area. Although completions have been increasing in the last three years, they are nearly half of the number 10 years ago. The fall in the number of completions is not related to capacity but rather due to the lack of confidence of the financial institutions and others to lend money for mortgages and to builders and other businesses involved in housing. It is also due to the lack of job security during the recession which meant borrowers did not have a stable credit footing. This situation has been improving in recent years but they have not reached pre-recession levels.

The 5 year effective land supply in the 2015-2016 Housing Land Audit identifies 2,929 units as shown in Table 3 Housing Sub-market area. Of these, 2,622 units are indicated to be in the private sector and 307 units in the affordable sector.

Table 3: 5 Year Effective Housing Supply by Housing Sub market Area

Housing Sub market Area	Effective Supply Years 1-5	Established Supply 5-10 years	10+ Years	Total
Bo'ness	308	281	0	589
Denny and Bonnybridge	570	1,264	1,010	2,844
Falkirk	657	668	500	1,825
Grangemouth	6	11	0	17
Larbert, Stenhousemuir and Rural North	686	370	0	1,056
Polmont and Rural South	702	460	1,385	2,547
Total	2,929	3,054	2,895	8,878

Source: 2015-2016 Housing Land Audit

Availability of Resources

In March 2016, the Scottish Government issued revised Resource Planning Assumptions (RPA) for Affordable Housing Grant for the period 2016/2017-2019/2020 totalling £19,642 million. The SHIP submitted to the Scottish Government in November 2016 included projects totalling £33,997 million which is 73% over RPA (Section Resources). Discussions are on-going with the Scottish Government over the funding shortfall.

There is a need for 1,501 affordable properties over the next 5 years, of which 407 are below market rent and 1,094 are for social rent. This will inform the SHIP in relation to targets for the Scottish Government affordable housing grant in that the majority of funding will be for socially rented housing. We have and will continue to explore with RSLs funding for a range of affordable options through the SHIP.

In relation to the private sector, we have and will continue to explore a range of options set out in the Affordable Housing Policy taking account of funding through More Home Scotland which we will also be reported in the SHIP. However developers have flagged up concerns the Local Housing Allowance is not high enough to enable them to provide mid-market rent locally.

Potential Inter-dependency between Delivery of Market and Affordable Housing at Local Level

The Council has an AHP which requires housing sites of over 20 units to provide a proportion as affordable housing. Table 4 shows the percentage requirements by housing sub market area. The higher percentage requirement reflects the high demand areas.

Table 4: Percentage Requirements for AHP by Settlement Areas

Percentage requirements	25%	15%
Housing settlement areas	Larbert/Stenhousemuir/ Rural North Polmont/ Rural South	Bo'ness Denny/Banknock Falkirk Grangemouth

Source: Falkirk Local Development Plan

The requirement can be met by direct provision onsite, alternative provision offsite or via payment of a commuted sum. Generally onsite provision is the preferred option.

Developers will be expected to work in partnership with the Council or RSLs in the delivery of this policy. Many large scale housing developments that are currently on site were granted planning permission prior to the introduction of the AHP. Therefore, they have not yielded an affordable element. Provision through the policy as applied to recent and new sites, together with the on-going new build programmes of the Council and RSLs on smaller sites should make a significant contribution to improving access to affordable housing in the area.

Consideration will be given in LDP2 to developer contributions in town centres to incentivise the development of new homes.

Table 5 highlights the AHP programmed to come forward in the 2015-2024+ period. It shows that potentially 763 affordable units could come forward as part of the AHP. These units will have been taken into consideration in the Housing Land Audit. These sites will be subject to a Section 75 agreement and in order to build these units it is necessary to have revenue funding available via the Scottish Government for RSLs.

Table 5: Number of Housing Sites subject to the AHP

Sub area	Total site units to 2024	Affordable site contribution to 2024	Affordable early programming in Housing Land Audit*
Bo'ness	314	46	46
Denny & Bonnybridge	1,941	292	222
Falkirk	590	88	51
Stenhousemuir, Larbert & Rural North	115	28	28
Polmont & Rural South	1,839	309	76
Total	4,799	763	423

Source: Falkirk Council Development Services

*sites programmed in Housing land Audit starting during LHS 2017 to 2021 time period

Planned Demolitions

There are currently no plans by the Council or any RSLs in the area to demolish any stock within the lifetime of the LHS (2017-2022).

Planned new and replacement housing brought back into effective use

As highlighted in the HNDA, the Council made a commitment of £6M per year over the next 3 years (2016-2019) to buy back 90 former Council properties per annum. Between 2013 and the end of January 2017, the Council have bought back 300 properties. The buyback scheme currently focuses on one and two bedroom properties and 3 bedroom plus houses. The SHIP 2016 to 2021 highlights the potential to purchase an additional 270 properties. The Main Issues Report to the Local Development Plan does not count buy backs as additional stock because this is stock in the private sector which moves to the social rented sector.

Falkirk's Empty Homes Plan 2014-2019 sets out clear objectives and an action plan to reduce the number of private sector empty homes. This will increase the number of properties available and tackle the blight on communities associated with these properties.

In Falkirk there are just over a thousand empty properties at any one time. Over the period 2013-2016, 210 properties were brought back into use, with a target of 100 set for future years. The MIR highlights that the target for bringing empty homes back into use is excluded from the new build housing supply target. This is because bringing empty homes back into use is existing and not additional stock.

Infrastructure Constraints

Flooding is recognised as constraining some areas, with coastal flooding highlighted in Grangemouth and parts of the Rural North coastal areas. Sites in Denny Bonnybridge and Banknock may be subject to a required contribution to the Denny Eastern Orbital Road. Major infrastructure improvements on the strategic road network are targeted through a Tax Increment Finance Scheme which is based on the uplift in land value on larger industrial sites. The school estate has some identified capacity issues, particularly in areas such as Larbert and Stenhousemuir and Polmont with High Schools and some primary schools in both areas with capacity issues. We will work in conjunction with colleagues in Education to take this into account.

Overview

The key factors identified by the Scottish Government above and other factors were taken into consideration and a conclusion was reached that a realistic affordable housing supply target for Falkirk Council would be 123 new build units annually. This is an ambitious target based on the over provision of projects set out in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan being 73% over Resource Planning Assumptions. Table 6 and 7 sets out how this target was reached.

Table 6: Housing Supply Target

Housing Supply Target Stages			
Stage	Private Sector	Affordable	All Tenure
1. Annual Housing Estimate	291	300	591
2. Adjusted Annual Housing Estimate	191	300	491
3. Annual Housing Supply Target	368	123	491

Table 7: Explanation of the different stages of the Housing Supply Target

<p>1. Annual Housing Estimate Derived from the CHMA Housing Need and Demand Assessment Tool</p>
<p>2. Adjusted Annual Housing Estimate Annual and Private Sector total has been adjusted to take account of the target of 100 empty private properties to be brought back into use annually.</p>
<p>3. Annual Housing Supply Target To reflect the estimated level of annual funding, the social component is adjusted from 300 to 123 new build. (Social rented properties provided through buy backs are not included in this figure.) The difference of 177 units will be met in the private sector</p>

Tables 6 and 7 relate to additional new build units but as has been highlighted previously, the Council also has a target of buying back 90 ex council properties annually. This will hopefully

mean an additional 213 affordable units each year. Targets in relation to specialist housing are set out under priority 4.

Strategy for Affordable Housing

The strategic vision for housing across tenures is informed by the HNDA (Appendix 1) and LHS consultation (Appendix 5). In summary this is to provide:

- A wide range of information and advice to enable people to explore all available options
- To provide more affordable housing
- To enforce standards in the private sector
- To improve property conditions across tenure
- To make best use of existing stock
- To work in local communities with partners (including RSLs) to improve satisfaction levels with housing and the local area

The above link to the National Outcomes set out in the Strategic Links section to increase housing supply. The LHS action plan includes actions to explore a range of options to deliver affordable housing.

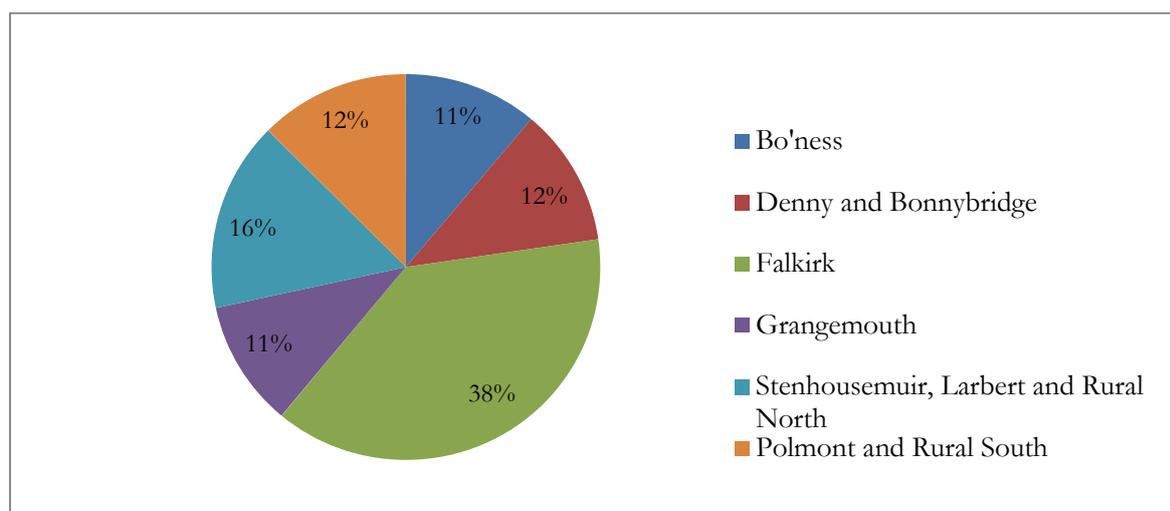
Private Sector

Private sector housing includes both owner occupied and private rented accommodation. It accounts for 73% or 50,136 homes in the Falkirk Council area of which 44,481 are owned and 5,655² privately rented. There has been a 6% increase in owner occupation and a 5% increase in private renting in Falkirk the last 10 years. The Private Rented Sector (PRS) plays an increasingly vital role in the Falkirk housing market. The popularity of the sector is likely to continue as many people continue to face difficulty in obtaining a 17% deposit to purchase a property. Allocation of housing through the social rented sector is needs based which means some people look to the PRS to secure the type and location of housing that they want/need.

Figure 9 indicates the location of private rented stock by sub market area. This illustrates that the majority of private rented stock is located in Falkirk (38%) followed by Larbert, Stenhousemuir and Rural North (16%).

² 2001 and 2011 Census

Figure 9: Private Rented Stock by Housing Market Sub Area



Source: 2011 Census, Table QS405SC

Landlord Registration and Accreditation

It is a legislative requirement that all private landlords must register with the local authority and be approved as a "fit and proper person" to let property. When approved, an application for registration is valid for three years. If a landlord is still letting property after that period, they must renew their registration.

There are 4,369 landlords with 6,593 registered properties on the landlord registration database, representing a 26% and 28% increase since November 2011. The majority of landlords (95%) let between 1 and 3 properties.

We organise two landlord forums per year. The agenda is set by the landlords and has covered a variety of topics such as tenancy management, property condition, energy efficiency, antisocial behaviour and any up and coming changes to legislation.

We encourage landlords to become accredited to promote high standards in the Private Rented Sector. Representatives from Landlord Accreditation and Scottish Associations of Landlords are invited to all forums to discuss legislation changes and best practice. Landlords have the opportunity to discuss accreditation on a one to one basis during the forum. There are currently 44 accredited landlords and letting agents locally.

Consultation with Landlords and Tenants

A survey was sent to all landlords and letting agents in the area with a known email address to explore with them ways in which the sector could be supported and developed over the next 5 years. There were 131 responses received. A survey was also sent to private rented sector tenants to seek their views on the sector, 40 responses were received.

The survey results found that tenants live in the Private Sector for a number of reasons such as the accommodation being in the location they want to live (24%), not being able to secure the type and location of social rented property they want (21%) being unable to afford a mortgage (17%) or not having the deposit for a mortgage (17%).

In terms of demand, the most popular areas are Falkirk area (35%) followed by Larbert/Stenhousemuir/Rural North (19%). This correlates with where private rented properties are located.

The majority of landlords (64%) advised that they had entered the sector for investment purposes. The survey highlighted that a significant percentage of landlords (24%) have been renting out properties for 10 years or more.

In relation to private rented tenants, a significant percentage (28%) indicated that they saw themselves being in the sector for 5 years or more. This suggests that there should be a stable number of properties locally to meet future demand.

The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 received Royal Assent on 22 April 2016. It creates the new private residential tenancy which will replace current assured and short assured tenancies. The purpose of the new tenancy is to improve security for tenants, balanced with appropriate safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors.

The key features of the new tenancy include a modern open-ended tenancy; 18 comprehensive and robust repossession grounds; rents can only be reviewed once in a 12-month period (with 3 months advance notice); tenants will be able to refer perceived unreasonable rent increases to a rent officer for determination on whether the increase takes their rent beyond the market rate for other comparable properties; a more streamlined system with no confusing pre-tenancy notices and a simplified eviction notice; on receipt of an application from a local authority, Ministers can designate an area as a rent pressure zone to cap the levels of rent increases for sitting tenants³.

Critics argue investment will suffer as a result of stricter controls and there could be a reduction in the availability of private rental properties as landlords look to sell their properties due to these changes and other changes affecting the sector, such as the recent increase in Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (LBT^T) payable on buy-to-let properties.

Cost of Private Renting in Falkirk

Table 8 shows the cost of renting in the Falkirk area is similar to LHA rates for 1 and 2 bedroom properties but higher for larger properties. This suggests that rents in Falkirk are affordable for smaller properties.

Table 8: Forth Valley LHA rates 2016 to 2017 in comparison to monthly average rents 2015 to 2016

Number of rooms	Monthly LHA Rate	Average Monthly Rent
Shared accommodation rate	£270.31	-
1 bedroom	£363.61	£368
2 bedrooms	£448.76	£461
3 bedrooms	£548.47	£585
4 bedrooms	£787.80	£849

Sources: Private Rented Database, Scottish Government

Deposit Guarantee Scheme

Falkirk Council has operated a Deposit Guarantee Scheme since late 2012 with 72 tenancies as at March 2016. This can provide a time limited guarantee to a private landlord allowing the tenant to pay the deposit in smaller instalments over a year.

³ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/8046>

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

Table 9 details the number of HMOs registered over the last five years. 2010 recorded the highest number of HMOs at 41 and since then there has been a steady decline with only 34 registered in 2014. The number registered in Falkirk has decreased by 17% while in Scotland the number of HMOs registered has increased by 21%.

There are 34 HMOs currently in operation, 25 are located within the public sector with 9 operating within the private rented sector⁴. The main two locations of such properties are Falkirk and Denny/Bonnybridge.

Further discussions with the Licensing Department suggest the decrease in the number of HMOs in the Falkirk area relates to Falkirk Council no longer using private landlords as temporary accommodation for homeless households as well as a reduction in HMOs tied to employment.

Table 9: Number of HMOs registered in the Falkirk Council area.

No. of HMOs	Year					Change between 2010-2014	% Change between 2010- 2014
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		
Falkirk	41	32	40	35	34	-7	-17%
Scotland	11,881	13,605	13,356	13,911	14,331	2,450	21%

Source: Housing Statistics of Scotland – HMO

Private Rented Sector Enforcement

Locally there is on-going partnership work with landlords and letting agents to ensure registration and compliance with management and property standards. Government regulatory changes including energy efficiency projects are regularly shared at landlord forums. Where the landlord refuses engage or communication has broken down a range of enforcement powers can be used such as rent penalty notices or reporting to the Procurator Fiscal will be used in the future to enforce standards.

The Private Sector Team are working in partnership with Police Scotland, Stirling Council and Clackmannanshire Council to develop an Information Sharing Protocol (ISP). The purpose is to tackle serious and organised crime within Forth Valley in the Private Rented Sector. To identify landlords who have not declared the necessary information under the Fit & Proper Test and to take enforcement action when required.

Strategy for the Private Rented Sector

Analysis of consultation with private rented tenants, landlords and agents has highlighted the following areas of work:

- Improve management standards in the sector, using enforcement powers where necessary
- Improve information and advice
- Increase officer knowledge through training and development

⁴ Count of Private Sector HMO's by submarket areas as at 11/12/15, Licensing Section, Governance.

Consultation

As part of LHS consultation, a number of questions on improving the neighbourhood were incorporated into the two consultation surveys. In addition, a focus group for people under the age of 35 was organised to discuss the realistic housing options available for this particular age group and to discuss their housing aspirations. Full analysis can be found in appendix 5.

Summary

Ensuring the ambitious housing supply target is met will be a priority for the Council in the coming years. This will mean working closely with the Scottish Government and RSLs to ensure there are enough resources to fund potential projects to deliver affordable housing.

Working closely with landlords in the area will also be a priority to ensure that there is enough high quality well managed stock in the private rented sector in the future.

Creating an ISP will help eradicate serious and organised crime in the private rented sector and promote best practice across Forth Valle local authorities.

Priority 2 - Creating Sustainable Communities



4.) Priority 2 - Creating Sustainable Communities

Outcomes

- Best use is made of existing stock across tenures
- Best use is made of community resources to create sustainable communities

Actions

- Develop area based regeneration strategies in partnership with RSLs and the local community
- Explore the potential to use the Rural Housing Fund to develop new affordable housing, refurbish empty homes and contribute to feasibility studies
- Increase the number of empty homes brought back into use
- Ensure actions from the Empty Homes Plan are implemented
- Explore town centre sites to provide affordable housing
- Increase satisfaction levels for people within local communities
- Establish the potential for joint working on estate management and employability initiatives between Council/RSLs

Partnership

Progress on the above outcomes will be steered by the following groups:

- The SHG
- The Private Landlord Forum
- The Council Tenant and Resident Forum

Context

National Overview

The legislation and Scottish Government policy relevant to creating sustainable communities includes the following:

- The Town Centre Action Plan 2013
- Achieving a Sustainable Future: The Regeneration Strategy 2011
- The Local Government Finance (Unoccupied Properties etc.) (Scotland) Act 2017
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

Local Overview

- Falkirk Council (2015) An Economic Strategy for Falkirk 2015-2025
- Falkirk Council (2014) Empty Homes Plan 2014-2019
- Falkirk Council (2016) Main Issues Report
- Falkirk Council (2012-2021) Towards a Fairer Falkirk (Tackling Poverty and Inequalities)
- Falkirk Council (2016-2020) Strategic Outcomes and Local Delivery Plan

Sustainable Places

It is recognised that sustainable communities increase peoples' physical and mental well-being with housing having a role to play. Sustainable communities have a range of services, house types and households with importance given to the local community. Towards a Fairer Falkirk 2012-2021 (Poverty Strategy) and Strategic Outcomes and Local Delivery Plan (SOLD) 2016-2020 inform the Council's approach to supporting the development and maintenance of sustainable communities. The delivery of good quality housing plays a key part in this. This links to the SOLD outcomes of a fairer and more equal place to live, a healthier population and a safer place to live.

It is highlighted in the Poverty Strategy that the root causes of poverty relate to income and wealth, however, poverty can be mitigated by tackling a range of issues such as: housing, health/wellbeing, services to assist children and wider community issues. In relation to housing, key issues from the Poverty Strategy are to:

- Improve energy efficiency and heating systems
- Provide affordable housing options including for those with particular needs
- Prevent and alleviate homelessness where possible
- Provide housing support to vulnerable people
- Tackle fuel poverty

Household types in poverty

The household types most likely to be in poverty are similar to those most likely to experience homelessness. The Poverty Strategy identified that certain groups within the population have a significant risk of poverty including single parents, single people, and homeless households. Locally household types most likely to present as homeless are single people (66%) and single parents (26%).

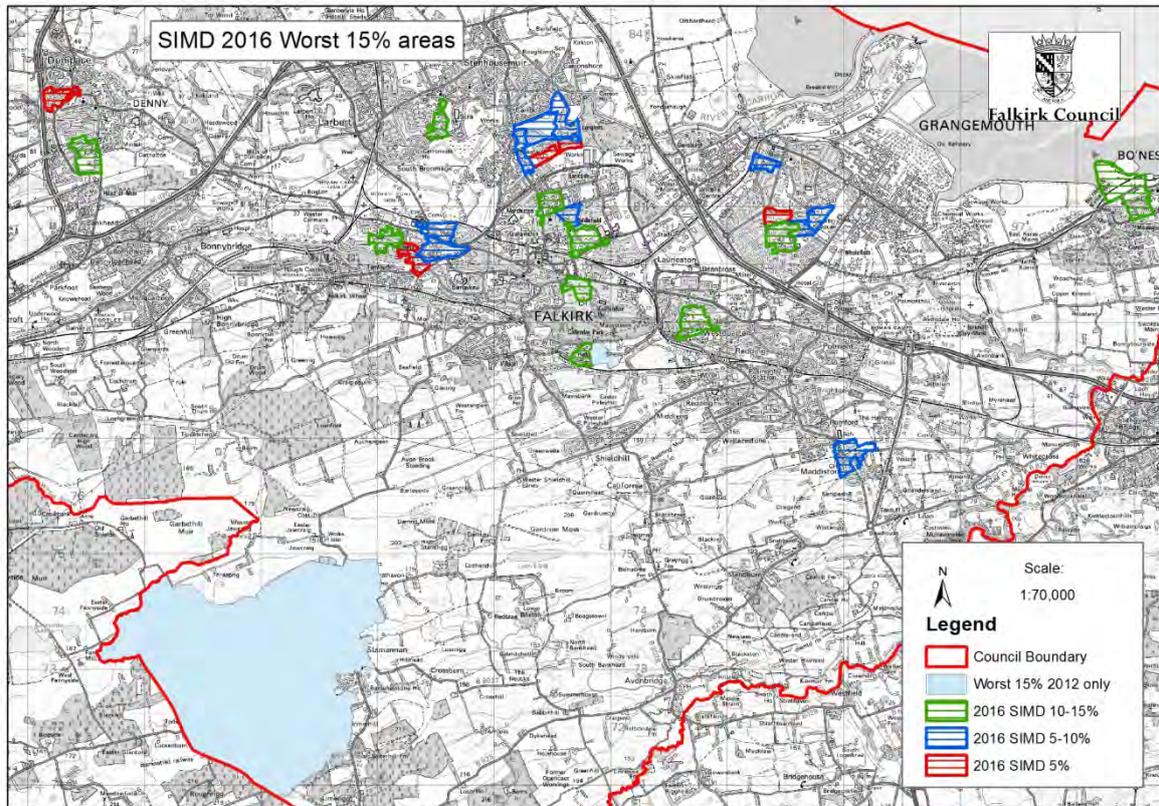
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The SIMD is the Scottish Government's official tool to identify areas of multiple deprivation in Scotland. This considers seven domains namely income, employment, health, education, skills and training, housing, geographic access and crime. There are 24 data zones in Falkirk classed as in the 15% most deprived data zones in Scotland as a whole. The data zones include:

- Bainsford and Langlees - Seaforth Rd, Lomond Dr, Carronside St, Haugh St/Cobblebrae
- Bo'ness – Deanfield
- Camelon - Carmuir Ave East, Camelon North, Union Rd, Carmuir Ave West
- Denny - Anderson Drive, Bridge Crescent
- Town Centre and Callendar Park - High Rise Flats
- Grahamston – Castings, Thornhill Rd/Stewart Rd
- Middlefield - Braemar Dr
- Grangemouth - Lumley St, Torwood Ave, Avonbank Ave, Kingseat/Craigeith, Bowhouse Rd
- Hallglen and Glen Village – Central
- Maddiston - Windsor Cr/Simpson Dr
- Stenhousemuir West - The Valley

- Westquarter - Langton Rd/Westquarter Ave

Figure 10: Data Zones in the SIMD Worst 15% Areas in Falkirk



Localities

The SIMD, HNDA and LHS consultation were considered to explore specific housing issues. The HNDA identified that there was lower demand for flats with 3 bedrooms and above which has been exacerbated by the “bedroom tax”. There are higher concentrations of such properties in Grangemouth and Falkirk. Some RSLs have indicated that they are also experiencing small pockets of lower demand relating to tenement flats particularly with 3 or more bedrooms in Grangemouth and Denny.

Table 10 highlights the difference between the Council’s stock by bedroom size and what applicants on the waiting list have requested. This highlights that more than twice the percentage of applicants have requested 1 bedroom properties in comparison to the stock available. In comparison less than a third of applicants have requested a 3 bedroom property in comparison to the stock available.

Table 10: Stock Available by Bedroom Size Compared to Applicant Requests

House Size	No.	% Stock	% Applicant Requests by House Size
Bedsit	69	0.40%	
1	2605	15.90%	37%
2	8659	52.90%	52%
3	4534	27.70%	8%
4+	502	3.10%	3%
Total	16369	100%	100%

Source: Falkirk Council Information Systems

LHS consultation highlighted similar concerns from local communities around specific house types, sizes and areas of lower demand.

A housing regeneration working group has been set up to look at how the major social rented landlords in the area can work together to improve housing and estate environment. This will continue over the course of the LHS. Further analysis will be undertaken to identify particular blocks or streets where investment can be concentrated and we will continue to work with Council and RSL tenants on their views on the existing housing supply and how we can make best use of it.

A budget of £3.7m per annum has been provided to undertake a programme of initiatives to improve the local community and improve housing demand through e.g. remodelling of low demand properties.

Regeneration and Town Centres

Falkirk

Falkirk Town Centre has suffered in recent years from the growth in online shopping, larger out of town retail parks with free parking and a crippling recession. This has led to an increase in the number of empty shops in the town centre with vacancy rates increasing from 10.9% to 16.5% between 2013-2015. The number of vacant properties has nearly doubled between 2009- 2014. The continuing structural changes in the way people shop indicate a need to diversify away from retailing and focus on other ways of creating activity.

An issue that Falkirk town centre has is that the Central Retail Park is located within the area classified as the Town Centre. The retail park benefits from free parking, unlike the town centre and has led to some shops re-locating to the retail park from the town centre. The LDP MIR has highlighted the need to improve the connections between the town centre and the retail park.

As highlighted in the MIR there is scope for residential development within Falkirk town centre with brownfield sites which provide opportunities for further growth with sites which could yield new homes to increase the number of people living in the Town Centre.

The £5.5m Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is also helping to repair and enhance the historic core of the conservation area within the town centre with funding used to:

- Repair and restore important historic buildings and structures

- Improve the public realm
- Restore shop fronts to their traditional design
- Bring vacant historic floor space back into use
- Engage the community and help local people learn more about their heritage
- Provide training and job opportunities linked to the conservation of traditional buildings and historic environments

As well as Falkirk town centre there are four district centres of Bo'ness, Denny, Grangemouth and Stenhousemuir that provide convenience shopping and services and are less dependent on national retailers.

Denny

Denny town centre has suffered from under investment and a town centre ill-suited to modern retailing. Following consultation with the local community and businesses the Council initiated a £7.6 million regeneration scheme. The first phase will deliver replacement shop units, a community library, a new town square and upgraded public realm. It also led to the demolition of the unattractive, poorly designed and low demand Council flats which blighted the town centre. Additional phases will see a new food store and related development with the aim of restoring vibrancy and civic purpose to the town centre.

A total of 9 council properties were provided in Denny town centre on the former Police Station site. In addition, Falkirk Council will provide a further 19 Council properties in Duke Street to provide a mixture of general need and accessible standards flats by August 2018.

Stenhousemuir

There has been a £15 million regeneration of Stenhousemuir town centre which included:

- An major food retailer providing a new supermarket
- A new library (with community space), new community centre and retail space
- Upgrades to park, landscaped civic spaces including a new town square
- A new health centre
- A new access road

Falkirk Council is providing 18 accessible one and two bedroom flats by re-developing the former Police Station and Registry Office site into Council housing with lift access.

Bo'ness

The original regeneration plans for the Bo'ness harbour and foreshore were postponed due to the economic downturn in 2008. Part of the regeneration plans included two blocks of flats owned by the Council, which were Historic Scotland Grade B listed. The preferred developer for the regeneration of the Bo'ness foreshore refurbished one of the blocks of flats and marketed them for sale. However due to the economic downturn only 8 of the properties were sold. Weslo Housing Management secured funding to buy the remaining 22 units, 16 of these for social rented housing and 6 for mid-market rent. Due to the lack of interest in the first block of flats the developer did not pursue their purchase option to develop the remaining block of flats. The heritage importance of this block of flats led Falkirk Council to refurbish the buildings.

In addition, Bo'ness town centre has benefited from a £5 million investment through the THI the aim of which is to repair and restore historic buildings, such as the restored Hippodrome cinema.

Scottish Government funding through the SHIP will enable two new build town centre developments during the years 2017-2018. The development at Corbiehall will consist of 7 properties and the development at Main Street will consist of 31 properties. Both developments will be progressed by Weslo Housing Management.

Rural Homes

The majority of the Falkirk population live in areas classified as Other Urban Areas which according to the Scottish Government classification are settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people and is shown in Table 11. Only 8.3% of the population live in Accessible Rural Areas where the drive time is less than 30 minutes to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more. This accessible rural population is located within the sub market areas of Polmont and Rural South and Larbert, Stenhousemuir and Rural North.

Table 11: Percentage of the population in each 6-fold Urban/Rural category

	Large Urban Areas	Other Urban Areas	Accessible Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Accessible Rural	Remote Rural
Falkirk	0%	89.6%	2%	0%	8.3%	0%
Scotland	34.5%	35.1%	9.3%	3.4%	11.7%	6.1%

Source: Scottish Government Urban/Rural Classification 2013-2014

The unique issues associated with provision of rural housing in Scotland have been recognised by the Scottish Government who has launched a £25million Rural Housing Fund. The fund is available for a 3 year period and commenced in April 2016. This aims to increase the supply of affordable housing of all tenures in rural Scotland and will contribute to the 50,000 affordable homes target set by the Scottish Government.

The general strategy of the LDP is to direct new housing development in rural areas to the existing villages. This strategy aims to sustain their vitality and take advantage of village services and infrastructure. However, it is recognised that there are circumstances where new houses in the countryside are necessary or appropriate.

The HNDA identified that there is lower demand in some rural areas, such as Slamannan and Limerigg. The MIR recognises that low demand has led to little activity or development interest on most allocated sites in Polmont and Rural South. Consequently, rationalisation is proposed with some sites being de-allocated, including the Slamannan Strategic Growth Area.

In relation to specialist housing for older people, it is recognised that there is limited accommodation in Polmont and Rural South and lower demand for such accommodation in Larbert, Stenhousemuir and Rural North. This is being progressed through the HCS.

Empty Homes

There are around 1,000 long term empty private properties in Falkirk at any one time. Empty home are defined as properties that have been empty for longer than 6 months. Reducing the

number of empty private properties is seen as a priority by the Council and making best use of existing stock helps meet need and demand.

The Council created a full time permanent Empty Homes Officer post in 2016. This followed the success of the Forth Valley Empty Homes Project which was a shared service project with Shelter, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils.

An Empty Homes Plan for 2014-2019 has been developed which emphasises the importance of working with owners to encourage them to bring their properties back into use. The Empty Homes Officer offers advice and assistance to help get the properties back into occupation using the following tools:

- Leaflets –tailored to provide information for owners and providing details on how their property can be brought back into use
- Matchmaker Scheme – this is a list of potential buyers and sellers. When a “match” is identified contact details of the potential buyer and seller are shared
- VAT discount –Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) incentive where an owner of a property empty for 2 years or more can apply for a letter to prove the property has been empty. If a property has been empty for two years, any renovation or alteration works carried out by a VAT registered trader may be eligible for a reduced VAT rate of 5%. If the property has been empty for ten years, the works may benefit from zero-rated VAT
- Empty Homes Loan Fund - Falkirk Council received £100,000 from the Scottish Government to provide interest free loans to owners of private properties to have renovation work carried out so that their empty property can be brought into use as affordable housing. Uptake has been low nationally and locally, however funding could be sought for any future policy initiatives
- Local Media – the work in relation to Empty Homes has been acknowledged in local and national papers as well as an interview on the BBC’s Reporting Scotland. Publicity increases the profile of the empty homes project locally
- Private landlord Forum - the Empty Homes Officer attends the bi-annual landlord forum meetings to actively engage with landlords to ensure empty properties are re-occupied
- Buy Backs – the Empty Homes Officer works in partnership with the Buy Backs team to identify properties that may be eligible for the scheme. There have been 10 empty properties brought back into use this way
- Work has been undertaken with the owners of 2 blocks of flats to ensure communal repairs are undertaken. In one block of flats two owners had to move out of their property because of their flat being flooded. The owners were eventually persuaded to register on the Matchmaker Scheme in an effort to sell their empty homes. As a result both properties were sold in March 2016. Work is on-going with the owners of the other block of flats to ensure the communal repairs needed are undertaken

Table 12 sets out the number of properties brought back into use and debt recovered. This has been calculated using the Shelter approved methodology using a notional calculation of three months’ Council tax plus any unpaid debt owed to the Council recovered as a result of the project.

Table 12: Number of Empty properties brought back into use

Year	No. brought back	Debt recovered
2013-2014	45	£20,600
2014-2015	105	£63,169
2015-2016	90	£50,200
Total	240	£133,969

Source: Falkirk Council Empty Homes Database

From 1 April 2013 new legislative changes were put in place to allow local authorities the discretionary power to remove the empty property discount or set a Council tax increase of 100% or more on certain properties which have been empty for one year or more. Approval was granted by Council Executive on the 27th September 2016 to increase Council tax by 100% on properties empty for more than 12 months, where appropriate. This will come into operation from the 1st April 2017, with the Empty Homes Officer being a key resource to help owners return properties to use as soon as possible.

Falkirk Council has used compulsory purchase powers on two occasions in the past to return empty homes to use. This power is only used when all other options have been exhausted and funding (e.g. from Second Homes Council tax and/or partner organisations) is available. The following circumstances will inform any decision made on the use of Compulsory Purchase Order:

- A property has been empty for a substantial period of time such that it is considered that the property is unlikely to be brought back into use unless such action is taken
- Weighting will be given to each case based on whether there is a history of nuisance or anti-social activity
- The impact on the neighbouring properties and the potential housing that could be provided from the empty property

Once the property is identified and the type of action is agreed this will be pursued.

Self-Build/ Custom Build

The LDP has no specific policy on self-build plots, however, it does have policies on windfall sites, gap sites and housing in the countryside which guides applicants on what is appropriate development. The draft Scottish Government Planning Delivery Advice: Housing and Infrastructure is supportive of self-build housing as a means of increasing the supply of housing. It indicates that Councils could develop serviced plots themselves to support such development. The Council has no plans at present to take forward any scheme to produce serviced plots. If it did, existing allocated sites in the Council's ownership could be considered as well as other potential sites and would be assessed against the LDP housing policies.

There are a number of allocated LDP housing sites, particularly in the rural villages, which have not been developed but could be considered for plotted developments but are still subject to planning contributions. To encourage the take up of such sites further consideration could be given to making these sites more attractive to developers such as removing the requirement for planning contributions on constrained sites to try and encourage their development specifically as self-build sites. This will be considered in the next LDP due to be produced at the end of 2017.

The majority of single plot house developments in the Council area which will be either self-build or custom builds are granted consent. A recent review of completions on sites of three or less units for July 2010-June 2015 (5 years) showed that there was an average of six completions a year based on completion certificates being issued. Self-build sites can be slow to build out and do not therefore make a significant contribution to the housing land supply at present.

Consultation

As part of LHS consultation, a number of questions on sustainable communities were incorporated into consultation surveys. In addition the under 35s focus group considered their local area and housing preferences. A co-production approach was carried out with Council and RSL tenants exploring issues around home and community then how issues identified could be progressed.

Summary

There are many factors that ensure communities are sustainable but through this LHS the Council will look at how the major social rented landlords locally can work together to improve housing and the estate environment in the area. We will also explore further through co-production with local communities how resident's views can be incorporated and steer the way forward.

We will continue to bring empty properties back into use and consider how housing can have a role in town centres. Finally we will consider specific issues in rural areas and available funding streams to address.

Priority 3 – Improving Access to Housing



5.) Priority 3 – Improving Access to Housing

Outcomes

- Housing advice is provided to those at risk of homelessness
- People can access temporary accommodation and supported accommodation as required
- Tenancy sustainment is improved

Actions

- We will develop a Younger People's Housing Plan
- We will explore the potential for providing a Common Housing Register with social landlords
- We will ensure information on housing options is accessible and informative
- We will improve customer satisfaction and service delivery with homelessness services
- We will ensure temporary accommodation provides best value fitting the current profile of homeless households
- We will ensure supported accommodation and support services meet the needs of service users and provides best value
- We will use a range of methods to improve tenancy sustainment

Partnership

Falkirk Councils' Access to Housing (ATH) work with a wide range of partners including:

- Social Work Adult Services
- Social Work Criminal Justice
- Community Justice
- Social Inclusion Project
- NHS Forth Valley
- Voluntary sector

Context

National Overview

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment of homelessness and to prepare, as part of the LHS, a strategy for the prevention and alleviation of homelessness
- Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 amended the priority need categories and gave Scottish Ministers the power to abolish the priority need test (2012 target) and make amendments to the intentionality and local connection distinction
- 2014 SHR Thematic Inquiry into housing options. Falkirk Council was one of the 6 local authorities who participated in the study

Local Overview

Annual Homeless Statement

Housing outcomes are reported in the Homeless Statement which is part of the annual LHS Update and is considered by Executive Committee. This allows us to monitor trends and identify future challenges relating to homelessness which enables us to adjust our services appropriately.

Evidence

Working with partners in the Housing Options East Hub⁵ has assisted Falkirk Council to develop improved prevention led approaches to homelessness such as the introduction of the online Housing Options tool. This allows anyone looking at their housing options to complete an online pro-forma on their circumstances to find out what housing options may be available to them. Accessing these services online assists the Council move into the digital era to enable access to services 24/7. The official launch of the housing options tool has been included as an action in the LHS.

In 2014 the SHR produced a thematic inquiry identifying issues for improvement in the delivery of housing options nationally. Part of the thematic inquiry examined the operational delivery in six areas with Falkirk Council being one of the local authorities participating. This was followed up by Scottish Government Housing Options Guide published in March 2016. This provides recommendations for Councils to consider when reviewing their housing options provision. It included streamlining, improved recording of outcomes and better case management. It considered a wide range of methods to increase associability of housing options⁶. These recommendations have been adopted in the outcomes and actions for homelessness. We are also committed to implementing the National Housing Option Training Programme for all relevant officers.

Welfare Reform continues to place further challenges on our homelessness and housing options service as current and further parts of the legislation are implemented. It is anticipated that the Under Occupation tax and the introduction of universal credit will impact on rent arrears across social housing including temporary accommodation provision. This is due to benefits being paid direct to the household on a monthly basis in arrears rather than the current fortnightly system. A Tenancy Sustainment team have been established to assist Falkirk Council tenants that have been identified as struggling with their rent or have been affected by the impact of Welfare Reform. The delivery of housing support will continue to address any needs of residents who are struggling to sustain their tenancies or starting a tenancy.

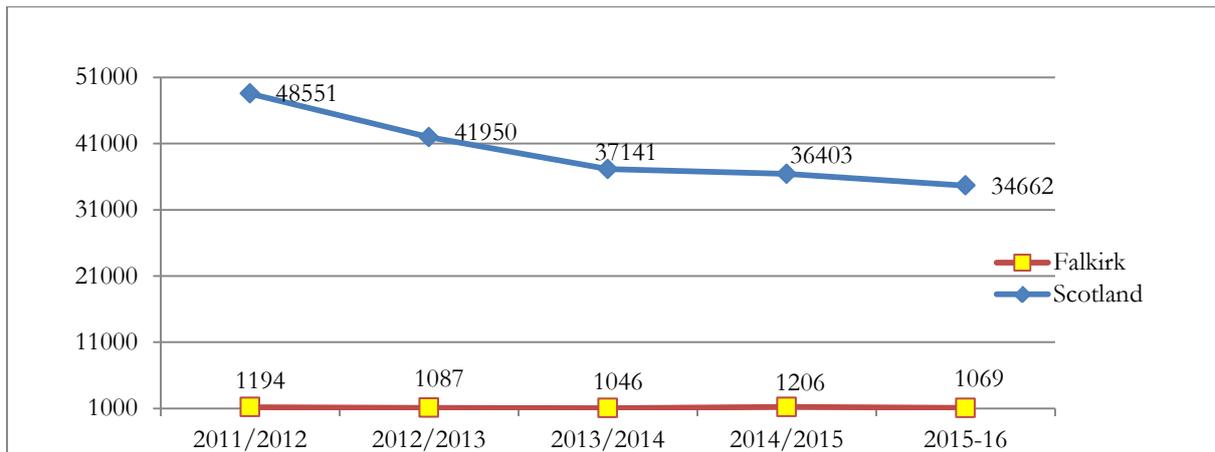
Homeless Applications 2011-2016

Figure 11 shows that homeless presentations continued to fall both nationally and locally with the introduction of housing options playing a significant role in the decline. While the decrease continued nationally Falkirk saw a slight increase in the number of homeless presentations in 2014-2015 of 160 presentations (+16%). However, in 2015-2016 the number of presentations dropped by 137 (-12%), aligning with the continued decline of applications nationally.

⁵ East Hub - The Scottish Government has provided around £950,000 of enabling funding to support the development and delivery of Housing Options. One element of this support has been the establishment of five Housing Options Hubs to provide practitioners with a forum to benchmark and share good practice, commission research, provide training, develop tools, and share knowledge and understanding.

⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/investment/grants/rural-housing-fund>

Figure 11: Homeless Presentations locally and nationally 2011-16.



Source: Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland 2011/12 to 2015/16

Over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 there was a fall in homeless presentations⁷. This increase could be associated to pressures on households affected by the economic and social changes attributed to Welfare Reform or simply an anomaly. The situation will continue to be monitored in future years but for now presentations have reduced.

Lost contact

Cases where contact was lost after a homelessness assessment was 0.5% in 2015-2016, nationally the figure was 5%. This is due to ATH making serious efforts to ensure contact is maintained which enables the number of 'lost contact' to remain minimal.

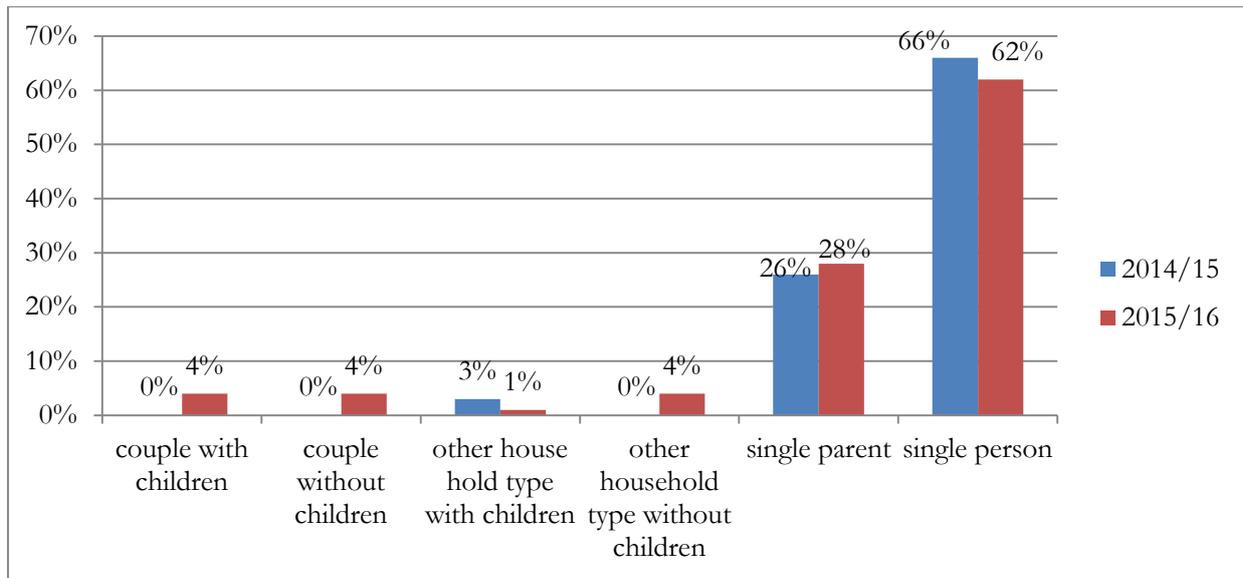
Household types

Figure 12 shows single applicants remain the biggest group presenting as homeless (66%) followed by single parents (26%). The number of single people has slightly increased from last year while single parents decreased. Both continue to remain the first and second largest household type presenting in the area. The two most common presenting household types in Falkirk correspond to the two most common presenting household types nationally with (67%) single applicants and (20%) single parents⁸.

⁷ <http://www.gove.scot/Publications/2015/06/7213/3>, p 3, accessed 12/10/15

⁸ Scottish Government Homelessness Annual Report, 2015/16.

Figure 12: Homeless applications by household type 2014/15 to 2015/16 (Falkirk area).



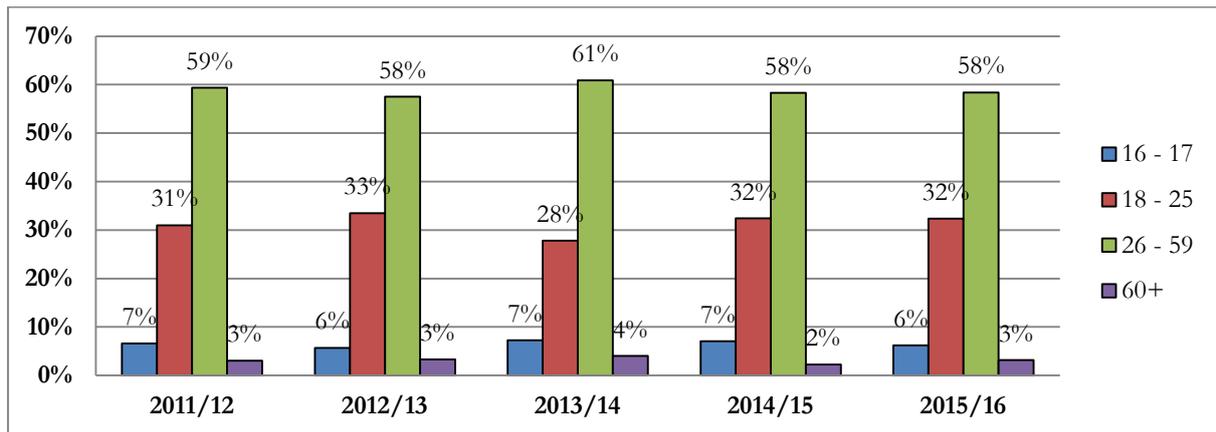
Source: Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland:

Age groups

Over the last 5 years the main age group for homeless presentation is the 26-59 age group followed by the 18 to 25 age groups.

Applicants aged 16-17 and 60 plus are by far the lowest represented with only 6.18% and 3.18% respectively in 2015-2016. The 26-59 age groups and the 60+ group saw an increase in the number of presentations compared to the previous year. The 16-17 age groups and 18-25 age groups saw a slight decrease⁹.

Figure 13: Age of main applicant presenting (Falkirk 2011 – 2016)



Source: Scottish Government Annual Report, 2015/16.

The majority of homeless applicants in 2015-2016 were single (61%) and male (51%) which is consistent with previous years¹⁰.

⁹ Scottish Government Homelessness Annual Report, 2015/16.

¹⁰ Scottish Government Homelessness Annual Report, 2015/16.

Reasons for the over representation of these specific age groups could be attributed to Welfare Reform and the single room rate for under 35 year olds. This age group would likely be deemed homeless non priority and with priority need now abolished these applicants are now eligible for homeless priority status, access to temporary accommodation and permanent housing. Exploring alternative homes and realistic housing options for this specific age group will be paramount in the course of the LHS 2017-2022.

Gender

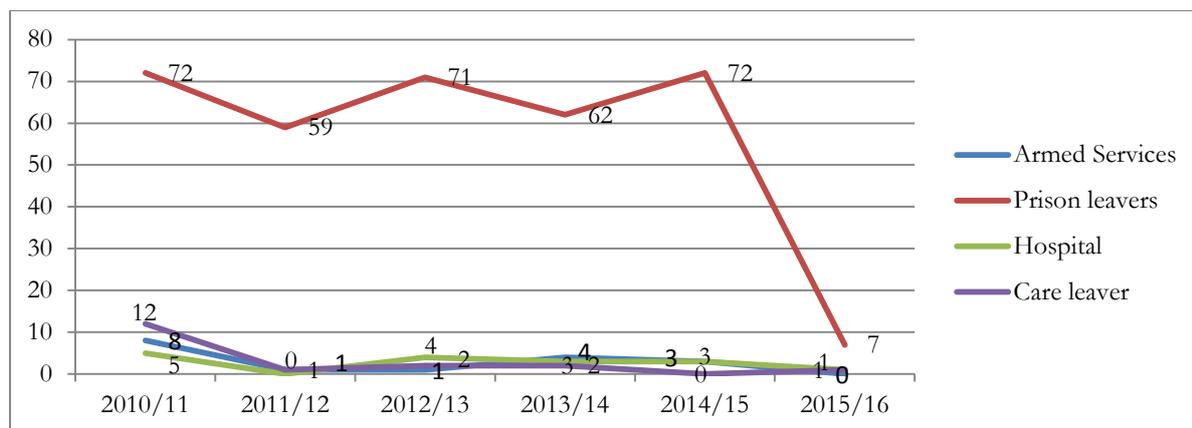
There has been no change in the percentage of males and females presenting as homeless compared to last year with 49% female and 51% male¹¹ presenting in 2015-2016.

Reasons for homelessness

In 2015-16, locally the main reasons given for homelessness at initial application stage was ‘asked to leave’ with 25% and ‘relationship breakdown with 17% of applicants in the Falkirk area. Nationally ‘asked to leave’ was the most common reason with 36% of applicants with ‘relationship breakdown 29% of applicants.

Figure 14 below details the number of applicants presenting due to ‘discharge from institute’ decreased from 3.36% in 2014-2015 to 2.5% in 2015-2016.

Figure 14: Breakdown of applicants presenting ‘discharge of institute’ 2010-16



Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics

The largest group presenting due to a discharge from an ‘institution’ was those leaving prison with 7 recorded in 2015-2016. This reduction is partly due to the introduction of an Outreach Assessment Officer service. Applicants usually discuss housing issues related to housing options/problems and financial advice. This is considered to be a more effective route than specialist accommodation which, as highlighted in the HNDA, is not considered necessary at this time. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most applicants presenting as homeless generally come from adult prisons rather than HMP Polmont Young Offenders situated in the Falkirk Council area¹².

The purpose of outreach is to reduce re-offending when the prisoner returns to the community. This is deemed to be more effective than specialist accommodation and provides a more

¹¹ Scottish Government Homelessness Annual Report 2015/16

¹² Scottish Government Homeless Statistics 2015/16

consistent approach towards planning the needs of the individual. It also addresses the issues of offending and the necessary support to sustain accommodation.

The low number of homeless applications from care leavers is due to awarding priority status to care leavers prior to leaving care rather than the homeless route. A review of hospital discharge protocol was completed and implemented in May 2014 which has meant a fall in homeless applications due to homeless discharge. Both proactive approaches have resulted in lower number presenting as homeless due to a more planned approach between various services.

Temporary Accommodation Strategy

A Temporary Accommodation Strategy has been devised to ensure the service is ready to take forward actions that consider the changing profile of homeless households presenting and to ensure temporary accommodation is affordable and managed effectively. The strategy will be reviewed throughout the timescale of the LHS to ensure the commitments continue to be fulfilled.

Current temporary accommodation housing stock

Councils have a legal requirement to provide all homeless households with temporary accommodation while their application is being assessed and until permanently allocated if they are deemed unintentionally homeless. Falkirk Council currently has a range of fully furnished self-contained temporary accommodation properties that are a mixture of property types and sizes dispersed over the Council area. As shown in Table 13, Falkirk Council provides the majority of properties for temporary accommodation, 183 in total; further details are set out in the table below.

Table 13: Temporary Accommodation by Owner

	Number of properties	% of properties
Private Sector	56	31%
Falkirk Council	127	69%
Total	183	100%

Source: Falkirk Councils Integrated Housing Management System.

In addition, temporary supported accommodation is available for applicants who require additional housing support, as shown in Table 14. At the point of homeless presentation, a housing support needs assessment is carried out to ascertain the most appropriate supported accommodation, if required. In particular, Falkirk Council's Castings Supported Accommodation has an assessment period of 56 days which can be extended if required. Clients can also move prior to the end of the assessment period. Once an applicant can demonstrate the necessary skills to live independently they will be moved to a temporary accommodation property and bid on properties until permanently allocated.

Supported accommodation is provided with 24 hour support with access to a key worker providing assistance to individuals throughout the duration of their assessment period.

Table 14: Temporary supported accommodation stock

Supported Accommodation	No. of units	Type of resource
Castings Hostel	24	Single males over 21
Garry Place	15	Young people 16-24
Y. People	14	Young people 16-24
Lorretto	12	Complex needs

Source Falkirk Council records

In addition, referrals can be made for floating support provided by other outside agencies such as Mental Health organisations or Drug and Alcohol agencies. There are also 16 units in Kingseat Avenue in Grangemouth which provides accommodation with support. This accommodation is used by mixed age groups, males and females and for families, couples and single applicants.

It is considered necessary to explore the change of focus of the Council's supported accommodation and the type of support provided through the development of an assessment centre model. This will be explored further as part of the LHS actions.

There has been a decrease of 50% in the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation locally from 375 in 2010 to 186 in 2016. This corresponds to a 5% increase nationally over the same time period¹³.

The figures on the use of temporary accommodation will continue to be monitored and reviewed. This is to ensure a steady supply of temporary accommodation continues to be available and remain suitable for the changing profile of applicants presenting.

Factors impacting on temporary accommodation and the re-assessment of the Council's temporary provision include Welfare Reform, in particular the under occupancy charge, the under 35 year old single room rate and the abolition of the priority need category in 2012. The housing options approach is considered to be associated with the drop in presentations and the requirement for accommodation. It is important to note that the Council is rehousing more applicants within a 6 month period (74% in 2015-2016)¹⁴ which is also reducing the time in temporary accommodation.

There are a number of elements to the Welfare Reform Act that will continue to place challenges on ATH as various parts of the legislation are implemented over the coming years. These include: the continuous roll out of universal credit which merges means tested benefits such as housing benefit, income support, job seekers allowance, working tax credit and child tax credits. Benefits are being paid direct to the household monthly in arrears rather than the current fortnightly system. It is anticipated there will be a significant impact on rent arrears across the social rented sector. The single room rate also has an effect on temporary accommodation provision leading to a review of temporary accommodation to ensure it remains affordable, effectively managed and best value for applicants.

Housing Support

The Housing Support Duty came into effect in 2013 as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 inserted by Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and compliments the preventative approach developed

¹³ Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland 2010 – 2016.

¹⁴ Falkirk Council Annual Homeless Statement 2015/16, p 21

through the Housing Option Hubs. It plays an important part in preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness where the Council believes someone may have a difficulty in sustaining their tenancy¹⁵.

Applicants who require housing support has increased locally (26%) and nationally (42%) showing the increasing vulnerabilities of applicants with more complex support needs or multiple support needs applying as homeless. The introduction of the housing support duty in 2013 gave an indication that the majority of applicants have more complex needs and require multiple support solutions. A continued consistent approach is required for support provision¹⁶.

Housing Support is available to anyone living in the Falkirk Council area and is available to help people stay in their own homes, prevent homelessness and advise people on their housing options.

Table 15 highlights that in 2015-2016 a total of 693 referrals were made to the Reach Out service from across a variety of internal and external services with the majority from homeless followed by Falkirk Council tenant referrals.

Table 15: Referral to Reach Out 2015-2016

Reason for Referral	Preparing for a tenancy	Setting up home	Tenancy sustainment	Totals
Homeless referrals	154	146	62	362
Other housing providers	0	8	16	24
Falkirk Council tenants	68	57	161	286
Other referrers	8	5	8	21
Total	230	216	247	693

Source: Falkirk Council Integrated Housing Management System.

In relation to outcome referrals, the majority completed all tasks however a significant number failed to engage.

Table 16: Outcomes of Reach Out Referrals 2015-2016

Outcome	All tasks completed	Some tasks completed - disengaged	Failed to engage	Totals
Homeless referrals	216	77	61	354
Other housing providers	18	8	2	28
Falkirk Council tenants	159	81	55	295
Other referrers	8	5	3	16
Total	401	171	121	693

Source: Falkirk Council Integrated Housing Management System.

The majority of applicants require support needs for basic housing management/independent living, followed by mental health and drug or alcohol dependency. Falkirk Council recognises a multi-agency response is necessary when identifying and providing the necessary support for

¹⁵ Scottish Government, Guidance for Local Authorities June 2013, Housing Support Duty to those found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness – amendments to Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (inserted by Housing (Scotland) Act 2011), p4).

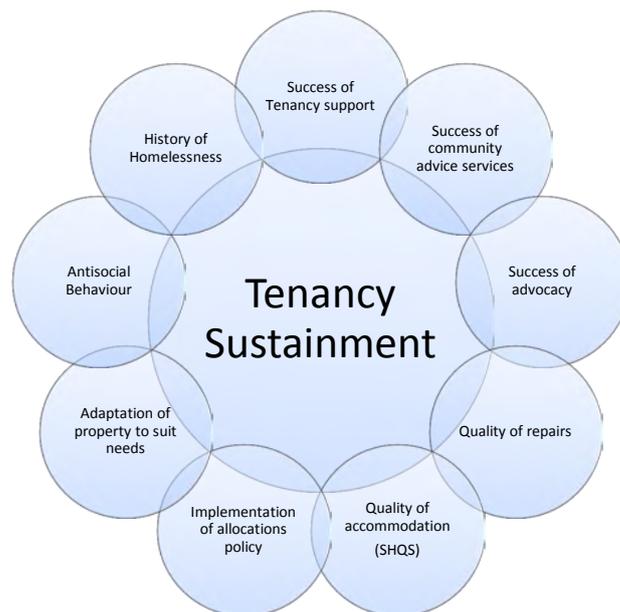
¹⁶ Scottish Government HL1 Annual Report for Falkirk Council 2014/15, household analysis.

applicants. More specific support services are available as and when required to meet individual needs and assist to sustain or secure accommodation.

Tenancy Sustainment

Tenancy sustainment is a key part of our homelessness prevention and can be affected by many contributing factors, as detailed in Figure 10 (albeit this is not an exhaustive list). There are many reasons why tenancies may not be sustained and it is important to note that it is often not just one particular reason but a combination of multiple factors. This means that simply managing one factor may not be able to help the situation as other factors may still cause issue and therefore clients need to be able to access more than one service at a time¹⁷.

Figure 15: Contributing Factors to Tenancy Sustainment



Source: Falkirk Council Tenancy Sustainment & Support Services Report 2013/14

Tenancy sustainment figures for 2015-2016 have been reported and show that over the 12 month period a total of 317 tenancies were not sustained. The most common reason for ending tenancies was 'moved to non-Falkirk Council property' (30%) followed by 'internal transfer' (22%) and 'moved out of Falkirk Council area' (9%). These are relatively positive and natural reasons for tenancies ending¹⁸.

In 2015-2016, 54 tenancies were either abandoned tenancies or tenants evicted. Breaking this figures down shows a total of 11 evictions and 43 abandonments. For evictions 82% were evicted after 12 months while for abandonments 47% sustained the tenancy for more than 12 months with 28% after 9 months¹⁹.

This provides us with data in order to establish if our support is being targeted at the right applicants and everyone is offered the opportunity to take up necessary support, if required.

Recently a Tenancy Sustainment Working Group has been set up to investigate further the factors and reasons involved in someone failing to sustain or abandon their tenancy. Many

¹⁷ Falkirk Council Tenancy Sustainment: 2015/16, p13

¹⁸ Falkirk Council Integrated Housing Management System.

¹⁹ Falkirk Council Integrated Housing Management System.

contributing factors can affect whether someone will end their tenancy and is not always due to a lack of appropriate support. The working group will be involved in more in-depth analysis of tenancy sustainment to enable a targeted response across the service. Services will also be identified that can offer support and complete the appropriate referrals.

Areas within Falkirk Council with the most homeless presentations

Table 17 details sub areas where applicants became homeless from. Out of the 1069 homeless applications received in 2015-2016, only 351 recorded the postcode where the applicant became homeless from. Of these 351 applications, the Falkirk sub area had the highest number of presentations at 26%.

Table 17: Sub Area Applicants Became Homeless From

Sub Area	Number of applications with completed postcode homeless from	%
Bo'ness	17	5%
Denny & Bonnybridge	54	15%
Falkirk	92	26%
Grangemouth	43	12%
Larbert/Stenhousemuir/Rural North	39	11%
Polmont/Rural South	46	13%
Outwith Falkirk Council area	60	17%
Total	351	100%

Source: Falkirk Councils Integrated Housing Management System.

It is important to note that the information contained in the table is not truly reflective of the total number of presentations, however this provides a base to begin our investigations into the homeless 'hotspots' in the Falkirk Council area in order to target appropriate resources.

Consultation

As part of LHS consultation, a number of questions on homelessness and housing options were incorporated into the two consultation surveys. In addition, a focus group for people under the age of 35 was organised to discuss the realistic housing options available for this particular age group and to discuss their housing aspirations. A stakeholder engagement event was also carried out. Full analysis can be found in appendix 5.

Summary

Over the course of this LHS key challenges have been identified to ensure Falkirk Council are preventing homelessness in the first instance which requires positive joint working and a shared sense of ownership from all agencies involved. The LHS will consider housing support issues and suitable housing options to assist customers to become more resilient to the factors that can lead to homelessness. However, commitment from all agencies who deliver services to homeless people is vital if homelessness is to be prevented and people are to be sustained in accommodation as part of sustainable and inclusive communities.

Priority 4 - Providing housing and support to vulnerable groups



