



Agenda Item 5

Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Falkirk Council

Title: Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Meeting: Executive

Date: 17 October 2023

Submitted by: Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 for approval and to update Members on the progress and key achievements of the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22. The Local Housing Strategy, supports the Council Plan “Supporting stronger and healthier communities” by providing good quality affordable housing and delivering services that meet the needs of those who live in them.

2. Recommendations

2.1 **The Executive is asked to: -**

- **Note the progress and key achievements of the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 as set out in paragraph 5.**
- **Approve the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 (Appendix 1) for submission to Scottish Government for assessment and the Local Housing Strategy Summary 2023-28 (Appendix 2) for publication.**

3. Impact on Climate Change Targets

3.1 One of the priorities in the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 is tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency and climate change. The Local Housing Strategy will support the Local Heat and Energy Strategy which is due for completion at the end of 2023.

3.2 The recommended actions in the new Local Housing Strategy include reducing building emissions, improving insulation and utilising alternative energy sources which will have a positive impact on Falkirk area wide emissions.

3.3 The Local Housing Strategy is developed with reference to the Council's Climate Emergency declaration and will enable the Council to monitor progress in reducing carbon emissions and assist the Council's aim to achieve net zero by 2030.

4. Background

4.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to prepare Local Housing Strategies for their area which are informed through consultation with stakeholders and residents and data gathered through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (Appendix3).

4.2 The Housing Need and Demand assessment is undertaken every 5 years to inform the development of the Local Housing Strategy. Falkirk Council's current Housing Need and Demand Assessment was prepared during 2022 and key findings were reported to Members at the Executive Committee on 4th October 2022. The Housing Need and Demand Assessment was approved by Scottish Government as robust and credible in December 2022.

4.3 The 5-year Local Housing Strategy sets the strategic direction for:

- tackling housing need and demand,
- informs future investment in housing and related services across the Falkirk Council area,
- and is the sole overarching strategic document on housing, homelessness, housing support and fuel poverty.

4.4 The Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 has been written to comply with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and follows guidance issued to local authorities. The Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 will be assessed by Scottish Government based on compliance with this guidance.

4.5 The Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 has been developed collaboratively with considerable input across Council services, Registered Social Landlord partners, the Health and Social Care Partnership, Falkirk Landlords and Letting Agent Forum, Homes for Scotland, and tenants and community groups which is reflected in the Strategy and the priorities and actions for delivery.

5. Progress and Achievements of Local Housing Strategy 2017-22

Annual Update 2022-23

5.1 Members will recall that the final full update report for the Local Housing Strategy was reported to the Executive Committee on 4th October 2022.

5.2 Table 1 below provides an overview of the actions during 2022-23. Ongoing actions relate to the delivery of affordable housing and meeting Scottish Government energy efficiency and housing condition standards for social rented housing which will be carried over into the next strategy. Actions which

were revised relate to changes following the introduction of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans.

Table 1 Local Housing Strategy actions 2022-23

Status	Actions 2022-3
Carried over to LHS 2023-2028	27
Complete	10
Revised	3
Delayed	0
Total	40

- 5.3 During 2022-23 an additional 164 affordable housing properties were provided including 43 new build social rented properties and 103 properties through the Buy Back scheme by Falkirk Council and Registered Social Landlords.
- 5.4 During 2022-23 the Health & Social Care Partnership contributed financially to the delivery of a new build development of specialist housing provision including amenity housing and wheelchair accessible bungalows. This example of best practice and best value enables the Council and the Health and Social Care partnership to work together to meet housing and care need and one which we will develop further over the next 5 year strategy.

Summary of the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 Key Achievements

- 5.5 811 additional affordable homes have been delivered, including: -
- 254 new build social rented properties by Falkirk Council and our Registered Social Landlord partners (includes, 10 larger properties, 87 older or amenity, 9 wheelchair, 9 for care leavers)
 - 535 through the Council and RSL Buy Back Scheme (this includes 11 larger Council properties 4 bedroom plus)
 - 5 reconfigurations of former office accommodation in older peoples' housing to self-contained additional social rented properties
 - 17 mid- market rented properties.
- 5.6 262 empty homes have been brought into use which contribute to the overall housing supply target and enhances the areas where people live.
- 5.7 Falkirk Council have prioritised engagement with tenants and as a result the Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy 2021-2024 identified, 98% of tenants were satisfied with opportunities to participate in comparison with 93% in the previous Strategy 2018-2021. This demonstrates an increase in satisfaction of 5%.
- 5.8 Property conditions within the private rented sector are being robustly monitored. As a result of this robust approach Falkirk Council is the top referring local authority to the Housing Property Chamber relating to the enforcement of property conditions in the private rented sector.

- 5.9 A Housing First project has been introduced which includes a Peer Mentor approach for our most vulnerable homeless service users. A Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan has been developed to set out how Falkirk Council intends to move away from the current homelessness system to one with rapid rehousing at its centre.
- 5.10 A Homelessness Prevention Team has been introduced which is delivering new and innovative ways to collaborate and deliver initiatives to prevent homelessness. These include working with the Employment and Training Unit to reduce the number of homeless and repeat homeless presentations from single males 25 to 40 years old. Working within schools to develop a module that can be delivered in schools to raise awareness of homeless and housing options for young people to create better pathways to settled accommodation.

6. Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 Housing Supply Target and Property Type

- 6.1 Guidance from Scottish Government emphasises the importance of the housing supply target aligning with the Local Development Plan. The target sets out the estimated level of additional housing that will likely be delivered over the period of the Local Housing Strategy. We have set our minimum supply targets for new build completions by considering several factors, including: -
- the Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2022,
 - the target in the existing Local Development Plan,
 - the minimum all tenure land requirement set by Scottish Government in planning legislation.
 - anticipated build rates and
 - estimated investment in affordable housing through Scottish Government grant.
- 6.2 Applying the factors set out above in 6.1 the housing supply target is set at 520 units per year and a total of 2,600 over the 5-year lifespan of the Strategy. We have introduced “a range” for affordable and private units with 180-225 units of affordable and 295—340 private units which is both ambitious and achievable as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Housing Supply Target 2023-28

Tenure	Average per Year	Total 2023-2028
Affordable New Build	180-225	900-1,125
Private New Build	295-340	1,475-1,700
Total	520	2,600

- 6.3 The Housing Need and Demand Assessment, consultation and research shows particular need for the following property types and housing support over the next 5 years :

- an acute need for larger properties.
- a growing need for wheelchair properties including homes for families where one or more family members have a physical disability since wheelchair housing is increasing most amongst younger age groups.
- a growing need to provide homes in the area for people who have complex care needs.
- support provision for people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse and increasing numbers of people with alcohol and drug use who require specific support to sustain tenancies.

6.4 Collaborative working with the Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership, our Registered Social Landlord partners, support providers and communities are critical to maximise resources to address needs of all our communities.

7. Consultation

7.1 The consultation process for this Local Housing Strategy has been particularly thorough. We have built upon experiences gained across the service and effectively applied a wide range of methods to proactively engage with local people and stakeholders.

7.2 The Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 reflects the views of around 1,000 participants gathered through survey responses and focus groups including groups perceived to have a quiet voice; asylum seekers and refugees, tenants in the Homeless Assessment centre/ hostel, Youth Learning, Young Parents' groups, Older Peoples' breakfast club and Military Matters (Housing Options Scotland).

7.3 We also engaged and consulted with stakeholders and partners as well as Forth Valley College, Forth Valley Sensory Centre and local Autism Family Support groups who promoted the survey to their clients on our behalf.

7.4 A workshop was carried out with Elected Members in April 2023 to provide information on the development of the Local Housing Strategy, findings from the Housing Need and Demand Assessment and update Members on consultation activity with stakeholders and partners.

7.5 Consultation emphasised the importance of providing more housing through a range of methods such as new build housing, bringing empty properties into use and providing a range of affordable housing options across tenures. Local people supported advice on how to access suitable housing, improve their property conditions and energy efficiency of their homes. Digital technology is an option supported by some. However, others commented that assistance was needed on how to access and use digital technology. A Digital Housing Strategy and associated actions are being developed.

7.6 The issues that mattered most to people were:

- information and advice on energy efficiency and fuel poverty
- income maximisation services

- regeneration of housing which is no longer meeting peoples' current and future needs.
- a sense of place, health and wellbeing were commented on as important,
- access to disabled adaptation services easily and quickly
- supporting people to prevent homelessness.
- housing for people with physical disabilities.
- clear advice and information on housing services developed with local people.

7.7 Further detail on consultation is available in Appendix 4 of this report.

8. Summary of Priorities and Actions Local Housing Strategy 2023-28

8.1 Based on consultation we have developed the following vision: -

“Working in Partnership to ensure everyone has access to good quality housing in safe sustainable and connected communities.”

8.2 There are seven priorities to be achieved, these include 6 priorities from the previous Strategy and one additional priority; Priority 7 as outlined below. We value the impact of collaborative working with local communities and partners to achieve these priorities.

- Priority 1 – Increasing housing supply
- Priority 2 – Creating sustainable communities
- Priority 3 – Access to housing
- Priority 4 - Housing & Support for Vulnerable Groups
- Priority 5 - Tackling Fuel Poverty, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
- Priority 6 - Improving Housing Conditions
- Priority 7 – Creating a Sustainable Private Rented Sector

8.3 The Monitoring and evaluation framework (Appendix 5) contains actions, milestones and targets to attain the strategic priorities over the next 5 years.

9. Implications

Financial

9.1 Funding to deliver the priorities outlined in the Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 will be met from Falkirk Council Housing Revenue Account and General Fund as well as Registered Social Landlords private finance and Scottish Government Resource grant funding.

9.2 Falkirk Council Housing Services has introduced a Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023-53 (Appendix 6) which sets out how the housing revenue account will be managed in line with best value.

- 9.3 Housing Services will continue to explore funding opportunities and collaborative funding models to meet the priorities outlined in the Local Housing Strategy 2023-28.

Resources

- 9.4 The Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 will be delivered from existing resources.

Legal

- 9.5 There are no legal implications anticipated.

Risk

- 9.6 Potential funding constraints including rising construction costs may restrict the number of affordable housing units delivered. This could have an impact on meeting housing need.

Corporate Risk

The risk of not delivering the Local Housing Strategy is currently rated on the Corporate Risk Register as Medium. This means that Officers consider that the risks are within the Council's Risk Appetite, and they can give Substantial Assurance on the effectiveness of the mitigations.

Risks and mitigations are documented throughout the strategy, including:

- Section 3 (the Local Housing System, Context and Evidence) includes horizon scanning of demographic, economic, and housing market challenges and trends;
- Sections 4-10 (the 7 LHS priorities) details key risks and mitigation actions; and
- Section 11 (Resources) details key financial risks to delivering the HRA and SHIP, including rent arrears, funding, and the economy.

The Corporate Risk Register provides more information on these high corporate risks, and these are reviewed and agreed by the Executive 6-monthly.

Equalities

- 9.7 A full Equalities & Poverty Impact Assessment (Appendix 7) was carried out and no significant equality issues were identified.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 9.8 A Strategic Environmental Assessment screening report was submitted to and agreed by Scottish Government Strategic Environmental Assessment Gateway. The screening indicated that the Local Housing Strategy is aligned with the Local Development Plan which had a full Assessment.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 Despite the unprecedented challenges encountered across the country during the lifespan of the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 good progress has been achieved by increasing the affordable housing supply.
- 10.2 The needs of our tenants have evolved over the lifespan of the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 and we have been able to respond to these needs by placing a strong focus on adopting a person centered approach and investing in ways to support tenants such as the income maximization strategy and by investing in our staff who deliver these services to ensure that the right support is offered as early as possible.
- 10.3 The Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 sets out the 7 priorities and the strategic direction which will underpin all housing activity over the next 5 years and link to the Council plan and associated strategies. The priorities will be delivered through the 84 actions outlined in the Monitoring and evaluation framework. These actions place a strong need on partnership working and collaborative approaches.
- 10.4 Following consideration and approval by the Executive, the Local Housing Strategy will be submitted to Scottish Government for review and approval.
- 10.5 Progress will be reported to Executive Committee and Scottish Government annually. Performance monitoring and indicators are also reported within the Council Plan.

Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services

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Date: 8 October 2023

APPENDICES

1. Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028
2. Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 Summary
3. Falkirk Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2022
4. Local Housing Strategy Consultation 2022-23
5. Monitoring and evaluation framework

6. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023-53
7. Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment

Appendices 2 to 6 can be found on this link:

<https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/homes-property/policies-strategies/local-housing-strategy-2023-28.aspx>

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

Draft Falkirk Council Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

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Foreword

Welcome to the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for the Falkirk Council area covering the period 2023 to 2028. The LHS has been developed following consultation with stakeholders including residents, elected members, Registered Social Landlords, service providers and statutory bodies.

The LHS is the leading strategic framework for housing and related services across all tenures. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a requirement on local authorities to have an LHS accompanied by an assessment of need (Housing Need and Demand Assessment). The LHS must also link to the Strategic Housing Investment Plan setting out priorities for affordable housing. Additionally, the LHS must link to the Falkirk Housing Contribution Statement which is the bridge between the LHS and the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan.

The first stage LHS consultation was carried out from March 2022 until November 2022. This generated 937 responses in total to four separate surveys. Focus groups and stakeholder meetings were also carried out. In addition, we also carried out a Fuel Poverty Survey between January-March 2023, with members of the Fuel Poverty Forum and front-line Housing staff.

Second stage LHS consultation was carried out on the draft LHS over July and August 2023 which led to 53 responses.

Scottish Government guidance highlights that a full LHS must be carried out every 5 years and should coincide with the Local Development Plan evidence report. The last full LHS was approved by Scottish Government in 2018. A new HNDA (Housing Need and Demand Assessment) was carried out by housing and planning colleagues along with stakeholders. This took account of the Falkirk Local Development Plan 2. The HNDA was approved by Scottish Government in 2022.

Our proposals reflect the Scottish Government vision for high quality sustainable homes. The LHS is aligned with the Falkirk Plan themes which is the Local Outcomes Local Improvement Plan for Falkirk. Account has been taken of 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 issues for them. These have been woven throughout this document and set out fully in the LHS consultation appendix.

Recent years have been unprecedented and have highlighted the importance of our homes and places in improving our health and wellbeing. We face unparalleled challenges including the climate emergency, recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and the current economic downturn. This has led to increasing homelessness and poverty. This strategy recognises the vital role that housing and related services play in Falkirk Council area's social and economic recovery. The challenges are immense. However, we believe by creating a synergy between public, private and voluntary sectors we can combine our resources and efforts to maximise housing services achieving more together than separately.

As highlighted in the Falkirk Plan "our greatest asset ... is our people".

Councillor Gary Bouse
Housing Portfolio Holder

Introduction

The Housing (Scotland) Act places a responsibility on local authorities to prepare a Local Housing Strategy accompanied with an assessment of housing need and demand along with priorities for new housing provision. The Scottish Government issued revised guidance in 2019 to help local authorities and partners develop their LHS.

Housing is important to meet both national and local ambitions including tackling poverty, homelessness, the effects of climate change, improving health and well-being and promoting inclusive economic growth.

We recognise that access to a warm, affordable, and accessible home throughout our lifetime allows us to achieve our potential relating to educational attainment, employment, health, and wellbeing. We want to ensure everyone in Falkirk Council area has access to high quality housing and support within sustainable communities. This means accepting that we need to take the tough decisions to recognise where our current housing stock does not meet the needs of the current and future population then consider demolition and rebuild options. We must work in partnership over the long-term to address the challenges of demographic change, the aging population and working with our communities to help deliver housing that meets peoples' needs and aspirations. Collaborative working is pivotal to tackling climate change, poverty and creating sustainable communities. The core of housing planning and partnership working is to prioritise outcomes for all Falkirk residents and communities. This is ambitious but it is only in recognising our challenges and opportunities that we can tackle inequality, reduce disadvantage, and allow equal access to chances to prosper and achieve our full potential. The background is the global pandemic, economic downturn, and war in Ukraine. Although these factors have impacted on everyone the impact has been felt hardest by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We recognise through the place principle; people location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose. This LHS is more important than ever before, and we must work together to improve the outcomes for us all.

We have a new vision for this LHS recognising the importance of place on health and wellbeing.

The vision for this LHS is:

Working in partnership to ensure everyone has access to good quality housing in safe sustainable and connected communities.

Based on consultation the LHS (2011-2017) will have the following priorities.

Priority 1 – Increasing housing supply.

Priority 2 – Creating sustainable communities.

Priority 3 – Improving 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.

Priority 7 - A sustainable private rented sector.

The following table sets out that 13 of our LHS 2017-22 were achieved. 3 were revised around the introduction of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Most actions relate to activities which are ongoing in this new LHS. These relate to increasing housing supply, increasing numbers of specialist housing and statutory requirements relating to property conditions and energy efficiency standards.

Appendix 1

Table 1 – LHS 2017-22 Actions

LHS Priority and actions final review	Ongoing	Achieved	Revised
1 Increasing housing supply	7	1	
2 Creating sustainable communities	5	2	
3 Improving access to housing		4	3
4 Housing and support for vulnerable groups	7		
5 Tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency and climate change	7		
6 Improving housing conditions	3	6	

Section 1 Strategic overview

This section sets out links to national outcomes and policy, key local strategic documents and consultation.

National Housing Strategy

The Scottish Government's first long-term national housing strategy [Housing to 2040](#) sets out the vision and route map for homes and communities over the long term. Housing is now within a post pandemic context of rebuild and recovery in a fairer and greener way, underpinned by the principles of social justice, equality and human rights.

Housing to 2040 is centred on four key themes:

1. More homes at the heart of great places
2. Affordability and choice
3. Affordable warmth and zero emissions
4. Improving the quality of all homes

The aim for everyone to have a safe, high-quality home that is affordable and meets their needs. To achieve this the strategy sets out an ambitious target to deliver a further 110,000 affordable homes nationally up to 2031/32, with at least 70% of these for social rent. The strategy also promises to ensure that these new homes will be high quality, zero emission and will help create strong and vibrant places. There is emphasis on quality of places, developing vacant and derelict land, reusing existing properties, locating homes closer to amenities within 20-minute neighbourhoods and residential development within town centres.

Housing to 2024 aims to improve accessibility, affordability, and standards across the whole rented sector. Scottish Government published a new Rented Sector Strategy and new housing legislation which strengthen tenants' rights is planned. Action in the housing market is also outlined to implement the short term lets licensing scheme, tackle empty homes and increase opportunities for self-provided housing. Ensuring housing contributes to tackling climate change is a key priority and the strategy sets a goal of all new social rented homes to be zero emissions by 2026, and to enable this the greater use of offsite construction and a plan to work with the wider housing sector to innovate and modernise the design and build of homes.

Housing to 2040 sets out an aim for all homes to be good quality, both existing and new homes. This will include the introduction of new legislation to implement a new Housing Standard which includes digital connectivity and new building standards to underpin a new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard to futureproof new homes for lifelong accessibility.

This LHS makes a key input to achieving the Housing to 2040 vision through the range of actions which span across sectors to help realise the ambition set out in the national strategy.

National Performance Framework

The vision for the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework is:

'A Scotland that is Wealthier and Fairer, Smarter, Healthier, Safer and Stronger and Greener'.

This includes seven high level targets for public services to work around growth, productivity, participation, population, solidarity, cohesion and sustainability.

The LHS links to achievement of the overall vision and specifically to the targets of growth, participation, population, cohesion, and sustainability.

National Planning Framework 4

The fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) sets out a vision for what Scotland, could and should look like in 2050. This includes national planning policies and provides a plan for future development in Scotland. It links to addressing climate change and focuses on achieving outcomes around net-zero emissions, wellbeing economy, resilient communities and better greener places.

This LHS has been informed by the concepts and aims set out in the NPF4 such as the 20-minute neighbourhood, use of Place Principle, and appropriate development, prioritising brownfield development over release of greenfield land.

Scottish Government has developed a methodology used to set Housing Land Requirements (HLRs) as per NPF4 and advised on minimum HLRs for local authority areas. NPF4 informs the first steps of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment and the setting of Housing Supply Targets in the LHS.

Community Planning

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (2015) requires the Community Planning Partnership to publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). This is known locally as [The Falkirk Plan 2021 - 2030](#) which sets out priorities for and describes how the Community Planning Partnership will work together with communities.

The Falkirk Plan themes below are linked to relevant LHS priority.

Table 1.1 – Falkirk Plan

Falkirk Plan – theme	Local Housing Strategy – priority
Working in partnership with communities	Creating sustainable communities
Poverty	Supply of housing is increased. Sustainable housing, fuel poverty and climate change
Mental health and wellbeing	Housing and support for vulnerable groups
Substance misuse	Housing and support for vulnerable groups
Gender based violence	Housing and support for vulnerable groups
Economic recovery	Supply of housing is increased

Towards A Fairer Falkirk 2019-2024

“Towards A Fairer Falkirk” will set out how the Community Planning Partnership will try to mitigate the impact poverty locally.

The vision is for an inclusive and fairer Falkirk, with equality and equity of opportunity for all. This is to make sure that everyone enjoys the benefits of living and working locally, and that people are not excluded or disadvantaged because of poverty.

Economic recovery

KPMG projected the impact on the economy at a local authority level in September 2020, which estimated the Falkirk GDP would decline by 11% in 2020 making some recovery in 2021 with growth of 8.7%.

Falkirk Economic Partnership will deliver on priorities for economic growth through Falkirk's Economic Strategy, Economic Recovery Plan, and Local Employability Partnership Delivery Plan.

Local Development Plan

The [Local Development Plan 2](#) (LDP2) is the statutory document guiding future development locally over 2020-2040. It was adopted on 07 August 2020.

LDP2 contains a vision for the area. It is the spatial strategy detailing how and where the area will grow and develop, along with detailed policies and proposals indicating where development should or should not take place. LDP provides the criteria used to assess planning applications.

The vision is: *"The Place to be, a dynamic and distinctive area at the heart of central Scotland characterised by a network of thriving communities set in a network of high-quality green spaces and a growing economy which is of strategic importance in the national context, providing an attractive, inclusive and place in which to live, work, visit and invest."*

The Local Development Plan aims to deliver sustainable safe communities, to stimulate the local economy and to protect the built, historic, and natural environment by promoting appropriate development and future growth.

The LHS is closely linked to the LDP process. The HNDA estimates the number of properties required to meet existing and future housing need and demand, while the main interest for Development Plans is likely to be on the amount of new housing land required.

Falkirk Council's approach to Place-Making for new and existing neighbourhoods are set out in LDP with place priorities being:

- Town and local centres are at the heart of communities yet face significant economic and environmental challenges. Renewal and regeneration will be a priority through new development and investment in the existing fabric of town centres, this could include changing the use of shops to homes.
- Major areas of change – sets out both growth area and business locations where the most significant change will be seen in communities, with major new residential and business neighbourhoods being created.
- Green and Blue Network - investment over several years has created a network of green and blue spaces around and within communities, which contributes hugely to quality of life and sense of place including include parks, woodland, river and canal corridors, countryside, the coast and the path network.
- Historic Environment - locally sense of place links to the historic environment.
- Areas of disadvantage -raising quality of place is known to have positive outcomes in terms of the health and well-being of residents. As part of the commitment to tackling inequality, investment in the physical environment of places which suffer social and economic disadvantage is important.
- Transport Corridors - provide the 'window' on the area and the gateway to settlements. Their quality is central to how the local area is seen as a place.

Key links are to housing supply (LHS priority 1) and creating sustainable communities (Priority 2).

Integration of health and social care

The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 set out the structure for integration of all adult social care services, community health services and some acute health services.

Scottish Government's Public Health Priorities for Scotland which focus on areas to improve life expectancy, reduce inequalities, and support sustainable economic growth. Public health priority 1 "a Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities" is of most relevance to the LHS.

Mandatory functions delegated to the Falkirk Integration Joint Board (IJB) include adaptations and the garden aid scheme. Housing support services to address tenancy sustainment and homelessness remain with Falkirk Council as the strategic housing authority.

The [HSCP Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) describes how the IJB will plan and deliver services for the Falkirk area over the medium-term, using the integrated budgets under its control. The HSCP outcomes are:

- Self-management - Individuals, their carer and families can plan and manage their own health, care, and well-being. Where supports are required, people have control and choice over what and how care is provided.
- Safe - high quality health and social care services are delivered that promote keeping people safe and well for longer.
- Experience - people have fair and positive experience of health and social care delivered by a supported workforce that are skilled committed motivated and valued.
- Strong sustainable communities - Individuals and communities are resilient and empowered with a range of supports in place that are accessible and reduce health and social inequalities.

The IJB approved the HSCP Strategic Plan 2023-2026 on 31st March 2023.

Housing Contribution Statement

The most recent HCS was approved by the IJB in 2019. This sets out housing's role in health and social care integration and is an appendix to the Health and Social Care Strategic Plan and the LHS. We will revisit the HCS after this LHS is approved. This will allow the HCS to align with the new HSCP Strategic Plan, HNDA and LHS.

Falkirk Council housing service collaborate with the HSCP in the following ways:

- Falkirk Council housing service are represented on the HSCP strategic planning group.
- We work with the HSCP around administration of adaptations and garden aid.
- Housing Contribution Statement Steering Group has representatives from HSCP, Falkirk Council housing services, and RSLs with a focus on HCS and LHS priority 4 (support for vulnerable people)
- Progressing the HCS priorities and actions particularly priorities 3 and 4.

The HCS priorities and how we have progressed are below.

Priority 1 Make the best use of technology to help people stay in their communities for as long as possible.

The action to transfer all users of Mobile Emergency Alarms from analogue to digital has been achieved. Falkirk Council became the first local authority in Scotland to go live with an end-to-end digital telecare service in 2021 and has won Gold Level 1 Digital Telecare Implementation Award from "digital telecare for Scottish local government programme".

We also worked in partnership to access digital devices for people in supported accommodation and mainstream tenancies. Technology is vital for Falkirk Council housing services with an emphasis on the introduction of a new housing management system. We have therefore aligned the FC Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy with the HCS through actions around digital technology. We have worked with Connecting Scotland and Fairer Falkirk to address digital poverty by accessing devices for tenants. Also, tenant representatives are involved in testing the new housing management system.

The above work is set out in the Digital Housing Strategy which accompanies this LHS. Actions from the Digital Housing Strategy are included in this LHS. We will continue to work with the HSCP towards the Strategic Plan actions relating to digital technology. Housing services are represented on the HSCP Digital Health and Care programme board.

Priority 2 Recognise the importance of well-being and connectedness.

We have progressed the action on hoarding through training organised by the HSCP with front line staff from both Falkirk Council and RSL partners have taken part. This has been of great benefit as hoarding has increased post covid lockdown.

We recognise there is more work to be done in this HCS priority. The LHS consultation highlighted confusion around accessing specialist housing and adaptations. We have included actions in this LHS to progress (Priority 4). This links to the HSCP Strategic Plan outcomes relating to self-management and keeping people safe.

Priority 3 Make the most of the built environment.

The above included an action around rolling out the Combined Heat and Power in the High-Rise Flats which has been progressed.

Housing and planning have worked together to set all tenure wheelchair targets in the Affordable Housing Policy.

Additionally, housing and planning worked together to set key workers as a key priority group in the AHP (Affordable Housing Policy) for alternative tenures of affordable housing. Recently key workers were able to purchase shared equity housing provided on a site next to Forth Valley Hospital.

Priority 4 Improve access to housing. commuted

Housing and support options for people under 65 with complex needs is a key priority in the HSCP Strategic Plan. We progressed an action in the HCS to work in partnership to deliver properties in a core and cluster model. The HNDA identified the ongoing need for similar accommodation and support options. We are continuing to work closely with our social work colleagues in this area through housing representation on the Coming Home working group.

Priority 5 Provide housing options for homeless people.

In relation to HCS priority around homelessness, we have progressed actions around Housing First.

Strategic Housing Investment Plan

The [SHIP 2023/4 to 2027/8](#) identifies housing priorities that will contribute to meeting the key priorities set out within this LHS. The main purpose of the SHIP is to ensure resources available from

the Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme are effectively targeted to deliver affordable housing to meet local priorities.

Preparation and delivery of the SHIP requires close collaboration between a range of stakeholders including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), Scottish Government, Private Developers, and other services within the council, including Place Services (Planning). We have well established partnership arrangements to facilitate delivery and implementation of the LHS and SHIP¹.

Other Strategic Planning Arrangements

Joint working forms our approach to housing strategic functions. This is well established through participation in the Scottish Housing Network, the East of Scotland Housing Options Hub, and a range of Falkirk Council and partner working groups. Well established groups include the Housing Contribution Statement Steering Group, joint working around the Rapid Rousing Transition Plan, HSCP Strategic Planning Group, and working groups to tackle poverty.

Table 1.2 - Legislation and national policy

Key legislation/ policy	Key LHS impacts/ requirements
General	
Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014	Assess housing need, demand, provision of housing and related services / provide a LHS / consult with stakeholders. Put children and young people at the heart of planning and delivery of services
Equalities	
Equality Act 2010 Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, 2015, 2016 Fairer Scotland Duty	Address discrimination and promote equality for protected groups
Ending Homelessness	
Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 HARSAG (2018) Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan Housing (Scotland) Act 2014	Assess extent and nature of homelessness / provide temporary accommodation/ end homelessness. Provide a housing register, create Scottish Secure Tenancies
Homes in the Right Place	
Scottish Government (2014) Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 / National Planning Framework Community Empowerment Act (2015) Place Principle	Links the LHS to development planning. LHS link to Strategic Housing Investment Plan for affordable housing investment Links the LHS to the outcomes and priorities in Local Outcome Improvement Plans and Locality Plans Requires collaborative approaches to improving community outcomes
A Suitable Home	
Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 Age, Home and Community: The Next Phase Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	Housing functions delegated to integrated health and social care partnership (specifically housing support, adaptations).

¹ Strategic Housing Group, tripartite group and formal quarterly liaison meetings with developing landlords

Appendix 1

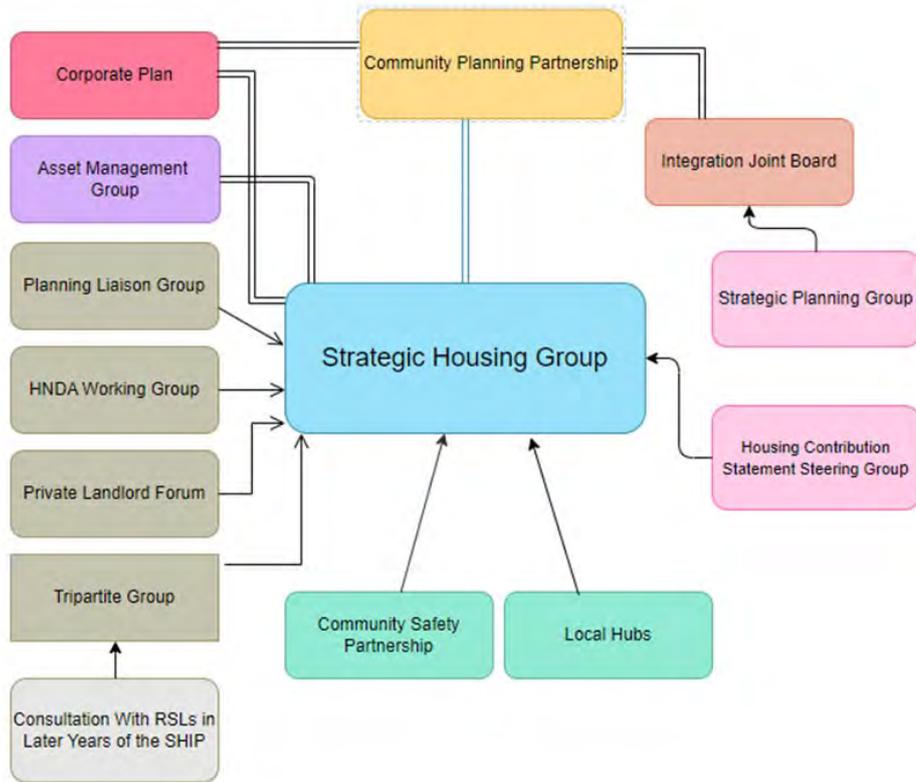
	Requires advice, homes and support to help older people enjoy full and positive lives in homes that meet their needs. Defines the offences relating to domestic abuse.
A Quality Home	
Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Act 2011 Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 Scottish Government (2004) Scottish Housing Quality Standard	Provide strategy for fuel poverty / achieve phased targets to reduce fuel poverty to <5% of households by 2040. Reduce child poverty by 2030. Tackle the effects of Climate Change. 2032 EESSH milestone
A Warm Low Carbon Home	
Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019. Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Scottish Government (2014) Energy Efficiency Standard.	Provide strategy for fuel poverty/achieve phased targets to reduce fuel poverty to <5% of households by 2040. Reduce child poverty by 2030. Tackle the effects of Climate Change. 2032 EESSH milestone.

In addition to the above, Scottish Ministers published the Scottish Social Housing Charter under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, setting wide-ranging standards and outcomes that social landlords should achieve when performing their housing activities, to be overseen by the Scottish Housing Regulator. These standards / outcomes are referenced in relevant parts of the LHS 2023-2028.

Strategic Links

The Strategic Housing Group is the local equivalent of the Housing Market Partnership which oversees the HNDA and the LHS. This group includes representatives from council services including (housing management (operations), homeless and support (housing needs), community planning, Place Services (planning), economic development, RSL partners, Homes for Scotland, and the Health and Social Care Partnership. We make connections to the private Landlord and Letting Agent Forum and Falkirk Council tenant and resident forum through updates on associated LHS actions. We have progressed the LHS at Strategic Housing Group meetings and members of the group have been involved in developing relevant priorities. We agreed Priority 4 actions with representatives from the Health and Social Care Partnership on 1st August 2023.

The following diagram sets out linkages between the Strategic Housing Group and Partners and Council working groups which oversee relevant Strategic documents which steer and inform the LHS.



Section 2 Impact assessments and consultation

Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

A Children's Rights Assessment has been carried. Key findings relate to the need for more larger properties including larger disabled properties and assistance to mitigate poverty. Moving forward mitigating the impacts of poverty necessitates a synergy between RSLs and community planning.

Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

A desk top Health Inequalities Impact assessment was carried out and the results will be discussed with key stakeholder as part of the LHS second stage consultation summer 2023.

The key areas which will require robust mitigation measures being low literacy and numeracy, sensory impairment, poverty and ensuring support measures are in place around digital technology and on-line services.

Key issues to be addressed are the necessity to ensure that we collect comprehensive equalities data, so we know the needs of all our communities particularly people with autism and the LGBTQ+ community. We recognise that these communities can be easy to miss. We also need to actively address the needs of gypsy travellers, people with physical disabilities, support for those with mental health difficulties, people who misuse drugs and alcohol and those with complex care needs.

Equalities and Poverty Impact Assessment

The LHS takes account of The Equality (Scotland) Act 2010 and places a responsibility on local authorities to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, to reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage and to foster good relations between people. The LHS is designed to benefit all protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act.

Falkirk Council aims to ensure that equality is central to both housing and the delivery of housing related services. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) commenced with the development of this new LHS to proactively consider opportunities to promote equality. The EQIA will be completed following second stage LHS consultation in summer 2023.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Under the terms on the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, Falkirk Council completed a Pre-Screening Strategic Environmental Assessment SEA. The report was submitted to the SEA Gateway in August 2022. SEA Gateway advised we can presume no concerns have been raised.

Falkirk Council's Local Development Plan considers all options surrounding housing and includes mitigation to address any negative impacts of the plan. As with other local authorities we perceive the environmental impacts of the LHS to be covered by the SEA carried out for the LDP.

Consultation and stakeholder engagement

A summary of LHS consultation and engagement is set out below with more detail in appendix 4.

Stage 1 local consultation

Surveys - We carried out LHS surveys which covered similar issues to the surveys for the LHS 2017-2022 and LHS 2011-2016. This was done so we could take a longitudinal approach to changes over time. As with the two previous LHS surveys, affordable housing remains a key priority for local people. When considered alongside consultation for the 2 previous Local Housing Strategies, there were significantly more comments and concerns around improving property conditions, energy efficiency and fuel poverty. Across all three LHSs the priorities remain supported.

742 residents engaged in the Local Housing Strategy survey. Responses indicated that most people had a desire to remain in their homes for as long as possible and homes should be adaptable with services available to offer suitable support. Responses highlighted quality homes in good condition are important and that resources should be spent on maintaining and improving neighbourhoods for all. Importance was also placed on preventing homelessness and early intervention with easily obtainable housing advice being vital. Appropriate accommodation should also be available if required.

In recognition of the role the private sector plays in meeting housing need we also carried out 3 specific private sector surveys (for landlords, private tenants and on Scheme of Assistance) which in total generated 195 responses. These surveys included key questions asked from the general LHS survey and specific questions around private sector issues. This approach was taken in responses to changes in the housing system as indicated in the HNDA namely increasing house prices/ private rents, and from ongoing monitoring data indicating a recent decline in numbers of private rented properties and landlords. This supported a priority being given to the private rented sector in this LHS.

We advertised locations where we were available in the community and went to Falkirk College to promote LHS surveys with students. However overwhelmingly responses came after we sent letters to private rented tenants and advertising to stakeholders i.e., the private Landlord and Letting Agent Forum.

In total we received 937 responses to all first stage LHS surveys.

We also carried out a survey in 2023 with stakeholders around energy efficiency, fuel poverty and climate change which is set out further in section 8.

Local stakeholder engagement – we engaged with stakeholders including the Scottish Association of (Private) Landlords, the Falkirk Council Private Sector Team (PST) (influencing the new priority 7), the Veterans Champion (Elected Member with responsibilities for veterans - informing priority 4). We also engaged with stakeholders around fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues (informing priority 5).

Over the course of the LHS 2017-2022, we have carried out two consultation exercises with estate and letting agents to discuss the state of the market in relation to house sales and private rents (influencing priority 1,2 and 7).

Focus groups – We carried out 9 sessions with the following groups - Asylum seekers and refugees, tenants in the Homeless Assessment centre/ hostel, community groups, Youth Learning, Young Parents' groups, Older Peoples' breakfast club, Military Matters (Housing Options Scotland). We also liaised with the Forth Valley College, Forth Valley Sensory Centre and local Autism Family Support groups who promoted the LHS survey to their clients on our behalf.

Local consultation stage 2

We carried out stage 2 consultation with stakeholders over July to August 2023.

Stage 2 consultation started with an elected member workshop in June where we discussed progress with LHS action 2017-2022, the HNDA, feedback from stage 1 LHS consultation and potential LHS actions.

We circulated a survey with 8 questions to stakeholders including RSLs, private landlords and letting agents and Homes for Scotland. There were 53 responses to this survey. This is included in the LHS consultation appendix.

Stage 2 consultation informed the LHS monitoring and Evaluation framework particularly actions and milestones with partners who will deliver the LHS.

We gave feedback to the Strategic Housing Group on 23rd August 2023 who approved the LHS and its actions.

Ongoing LHS engagement

The LHS is a standing issue on the following working group agendas.

1. The tripartite group where we discuss projects in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan
2. Housing Contribution Statement Steering Group – which oversees our working with the Health and Social Care Partnership

The Strategic Housing Group oversees the LHS and HNDA acting as the housing market partnership.

Recent consultation informing the LHS.

Falkirk Council officers carried out Place Standard consultation with residents on the gypsy travellers' site to explore what improvements they required. This informed Priority 4.

The community planning partnership funded independent consultation to carry out the Community Links Report and the Place Standard Report, both relating to Grangemouth. These reports were the starting point for Priority 2 Creating Sustainable Communities.

We took account of the tenant satisfaction survey carried out by Research Resources in 2020/21. This advised what tenants told us around satisfaction with their neighbourhood, desire to move, property conditions. This informed priorities 2,4, and 6.

Ongoing monitoring engagement with stakeholders informing the LHS.

We routinely monitor private rented property adverts collating in our private rented database (PRD). The purpose is to collect information on as many adverts as possible to give us an indication of the sector rather than collecting every rented property. We collect a range of information including location, rents, EPC rates etc. This has been ongoing for 15 years and data is used for the HNDA.

Appendix 1

<p>“More larger housing for families.” “I’m concerned about current length of time it is taking from initial assessment to adaptations being installed, needs to be improved.”</p>	<p>Increased priority for 5% larger affordable properties in the SHIP. Set actions to improve partnership working around onsite delivery via the Affordable Housing Policy Set action to continue with the buyback programme. Prioritised town centre sites for housing in the new SHIP</p>
<p>“Need more wheelchair housing” “A need for the provision of adaptations and information surrounding these to be easily accessible” “Provide more housing for people with disabilities” “Empty homes should not exist” “Concerned about the quality and standard of (existing) social housing” “Worried about property conditions” “Improve the quality of existing housing.” “Meeting standards, ensure heating, windows etc are all of a good quality.” “New build housing should meet requirements and demands”</p>	<p>Increased priority for wheelchair housing in the SHIP Set action to coproduce with older and disabled peoples’ groups adaptations advice. Started revising our Empty Homes Plan exploring options such as grants. Set a target to bring 70 empty private properties into use annually. Social rented landlords continuing to work towards statutory targets. Began exploring the role of digital technology as a tool to improve property conditions and energy efficiency. Started considering place making re SHIP sites</p>
<p>“Staff should be more knowledgeable on whats going on” “More visable housing officers” “People have strong local connections and are proud of the areas they come from...” “Housing organisations need to work together”</p>	<p>Set an action to work in partnership to promote community well-being activities. Tenant representatives and start working to coproduce the Tenant and Resident Forum Been proactively working with RSLs around training, data sharing and exploring environmental projects</p>
<p>“More help for those who are homeless or on the verge of it” “Improve the lives of those less fortunate” “Check-ups to see how people are managing in the tenancies.” “Housing Advice should be readily available and easy to access...” “Importance of the resettlement officer, the housing support provided is vital.” “A huge importance should be placed on Tenancy Support and help to develop living skills including budgeting, arranging appointments, welfare benefits, paying bills”</p>	<p>Set an action to develop a homelessness prevention plan. Agreed an action to set up a homelessness prevention team. Set an action to relaunch Private Sector Leasing Will continue to provide Housing First service for our most vulnerable clients.</p>
<p>“Relevant staff should complete the Armed Forces Mental Health First Aid Training”</p>	<p>Set action to carry out Armed Forces Mental Health First Aid training.</p>
<p>“I am very concerned about cost of living, inflation and energy prices going up” “Staff should give advice on cost of living” “Impact of climate change on housing is increasingly apparent” “Concerned about need to reduce carbon footprint of housing in Falkirk.”</p>	<p>Set an action to roll out training on fuel poverty for front line workers so they can advise or signpost clients to relevant services. Falkirk Council working to reduce emissions from Council owned properties and buildings and support residents to be net zero carbon emission ready. Continue to improve energy efficiency in homes by meeting all statutory requirements.</p>

Appendix 1

<p>“I'm sure there are grants, help out there for people but as with benefits, the things you are entitled too are usually hidden away so it's difficult to find them.”</p>	
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Section 3 The Local Housing System - context and evidence

Falkirk Council is situated in the centre of Scotland equidistant between the cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. It has a growing population which in 2021 stood at 160,700, making it the 11th largest council in Scotland. Being situated in the centre of the country means it has excellent transport links to the rest of the country. It covers an area of 112 square miles and includes a network of towns and villages, Falkirk being the principal administrative and service centre, but each community has its own strong identity. The main towns of Bo’ness, Falkirk, Grangemouth, Larbert, Stenhousemuir and Denny make up 60% of the population. The rest of the area is made up of smaller settlements and villages.

Falkirk is a mainly urban area with 90% of the population living in other urban areas, 2% in small towns and 8% in accessible rural areas⁴. It is recognised that there can be challenges for those living in rural areas around access to public transport and fuel poverty. Priority 5 provides further detail on challenges for those living in the Braes villages and ongoing plans in relation to fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

Demographics

The population of Falkirk makes up 2.9% of the total population of Scotland’s. Since 1996 Falkirk’s population has steadily increased and the population by mid-2018 was 160,340. The NRS 2018 mid-year population projections indicate the population of Falkirk will continue to rise, with a 6% increase estimated in the 25 years between 2018 and 2043 which will mean a population of 169,962 by 2043. Migration will drive the projected increases in population in Falkirk, with the majority of people coming from within Scotland.

The following table shows the projected changes in different age structures between 2018-2043. It highlights that most age structures will see an increase apart from children which will fall by 9%. The working age will only increase by 2.2% whereas for Scotland this is projected to fall by 0.2%. The 75+ age group is projected to see the biggest increase at 80.3%, which is 10.3% higher than Scotland.

Table 3.1 Projected percentage change in population (2018-based) by age structure.

Area	Children (Aged 0 to 15) 2018 – 2043	Working age 2018 – 2043	Pensionable age and over 2018 – 2043	Aged 75 and over 2018 – 2043	All ages
Falkirk	-9.0%	2.2%	32.8%	80.3%	6.0%
Scotland	-10.5%	-0.2%	23.2%	70.6%	2.5%

Source: NRS 2018 population projections

In line with population projections, National Records Scotland (NRS) estimates a steady increase in households over the next 25 years. There were estimated to be 72,267 households in the Falkirk area in 2018 with estimated projections suggesting that the number of households in Falkirk will increase by 9,523 (13%) between 2018 and 2043. This is on average an increase of 380 households every year. In comparison, it’s estimated that households in Scotland will increase by 9.6%. The projected increase in the number of households is driven by an older population living alone or in smaller households. By 2043 the average household size in Falkirk is expected to have fallen from 2.20 to 2.05 and from 2.15 to 2.03 in Scotland.

⁴ Scottish Government, 2016, Urban Rural Classification

Between 2028 and 2043 the number of households aged 75 and over is expected to increase by 83% which is a higher rate than the national average of 74%. The increase of 14% for the 60-74 age group is also higher than the national figure of 14%. Falkirk will see a smaller than average decrease in the 16-29 age group at 8% compared to 13% nationally.

Table 3.2: Household projections by age group of head of household 2018 and 2043, Falkirk, Scotland

Age Group	Falkirk No.	Falkirk %	Scotland No.	Scotland %
16-29	-495	-8%	-32,727	-13%
30-44	428	3%	11,792	2%
45-59	-1,220	-5%	-18,211	-2%
60-74	2,254	14%	12,413	2%
75+	8,556	83%	264,198	74%
Total	9,523	13%	237,463	10%

Source: National Records Scotland

In 2018, one person and two person households made up the majority of households in Falkirk at 33%. Between 2018 and 2043 there are projected to be:

- 21.1% more one person households in Falkirk, compared to 16.4% nationally.
- 19.6% more two person households in Falkirk, compared to 12.7% nationally.
- 1.9% increase in 3+ adult households, compared to 0.4% nationally.
- A negligible increase in one adult and one child household and a decrease of 1.4% in 2+ adults and 1+ child households in Falkirk compared to a decrease of 0.5% and 1.6% respectively.

Economy

The economic output, Gross Value Added (GVA), per person in Falkirk was estimated at £47,430 in 2019. In 2020 this fell to £39,815 which is 11% lower than Scotland as a whole. This compares to 2010 when the GVA per person was 12% higher in Falkirk than nationally⁵.

Prior to the pandemic, the region's economic growth rate was lower than Scotland's. On average Falkirk's economy increased by 0.5 per cent each year (2009-2019). From 2019 to 2020, the region's economy contracted sharply as measures were taken across the UK to limit the spread of COVID-19. The contraction of economic output in Falkirk was estimated to be 9.4 per cent between 2019 and 2020, which was smaller than what occurred across Scotland. In 2021, GVA was forecast to be £4,038m in Falkirk, 2.7 per cent of Scotland's output (£146,920m)⁶

The proportion of the Falkirk population that are of working age is 63.5% which is very similar to the national figure of 63.9%. The employment rate for the working age population in Falkirk between 2021-2022 was 76.8%, which was above the national rate of 73.8%. The region's overall employment rate means that under one in four of the region's working age population were unemployed (1.9%) or economically inactive (21.7%)⁷.

The unemployment rate in Falkirk in 2021-2022 was at its lowest rate (1.9%) in many years and much lower than the high (5.1%) of 2019-2020. It was also lower than the national average of 3.5%. In 2021 average incomes in Falkirk were 7% lower than the national average.

⁵ [SABS+2020+Tables.xlsx \(live.com\)](#) – 9 September 2022

⁶ Skills Development Scotland, March 2022, Regional Skills Assessment, Falkirk

⁷ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/ia/1946157418/report.aspx>

Average incomes in Falkirk in 2021 were 7% lower at £33,367 than the Scottish average of £36,018. In the last 10 years incomes in Falkirk (11%) have increased at a slower rate than the Scottish (17%) average.

COVID-19 has hit Scotland's economy hard, exacerbating several pre-existing issues and challenges. Inflation rose to 10.4% in February 2023 the highest UK rate since 1982. Although driven by large increases in energy, fuel and food prices inflation continues to be exacerbated by the impacts of the war in Ukraine on global energy and commodity markets. The combination of supply shortages and rising inflation is presenting significant cost challenges for businesses and cost of living pressures for households⁸.

According to the 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), 15 per cent of Falkirk council residents (24,575) are currently living in the most deprived 20 per cent of areas in Scotland. Falkirk ranks as the 13th most deprived out of the 32 local authorities in Scotland. There are 214 data zones in the Council area with:

- 35 datazones are in the worst 20% in Scotland, an increase of 2 from 2016.
- 5 datazones are in the worst 5% - one more than 2016.
- 9 datazones are in the worst 6-10% - one less than 2016.
- 11 datazones are in the worst 16-20% - two more than 2016.

Housing Market

In 2021 there were estimated to be 75,942 dwellings in Falkirk and 97.5% of them were occupied. Only 1% of dwellings were long term empty properties which is lower than the 1.6% nationally⁹. Owner occupation (62%) is the main tenure in Falkirk followed by renting from a social landlord (27%) and then renting privately (9%). Compared to nationally, there is a slightly higher percentage of homeowners and council tenants and a lower percentage of private rented properties and RSL properties.

There is a higher level of home ownership in Falkirk is within the Braes and Rural South housing submarket area (73%) and in Stenhousemuir, Larbert and Rural north (73%) and a lower percentage in Falkirk (57%) and Grangemouth (57%). In terms of the private sector the Falkirk (12%) area has the highest percentage of private rented properties and Grangemouth (36%) the highest percentage of social rented properties¹⁰.

The average house price in 2021-2022 for the Falkirk area stood at £166,679¹¹, which is 17% lower than the Scottish average of £201,744. Average house prices in Falkirk have increased at a higher rate in the last 10 years, 40% compared to 31% nationally.

Falkirk is relatively self-contained although it does have links with neighbouring councils such as West Lothian, North Lanarkshire and Stirling. There are 6 distinct housing sub-market areas within the council area, and they are Falkirk, Grangemouth, Bo'ness, Denny and Bonnybridge, Braes and Rural South and Stenhousemuir, Larbert and Rural North.

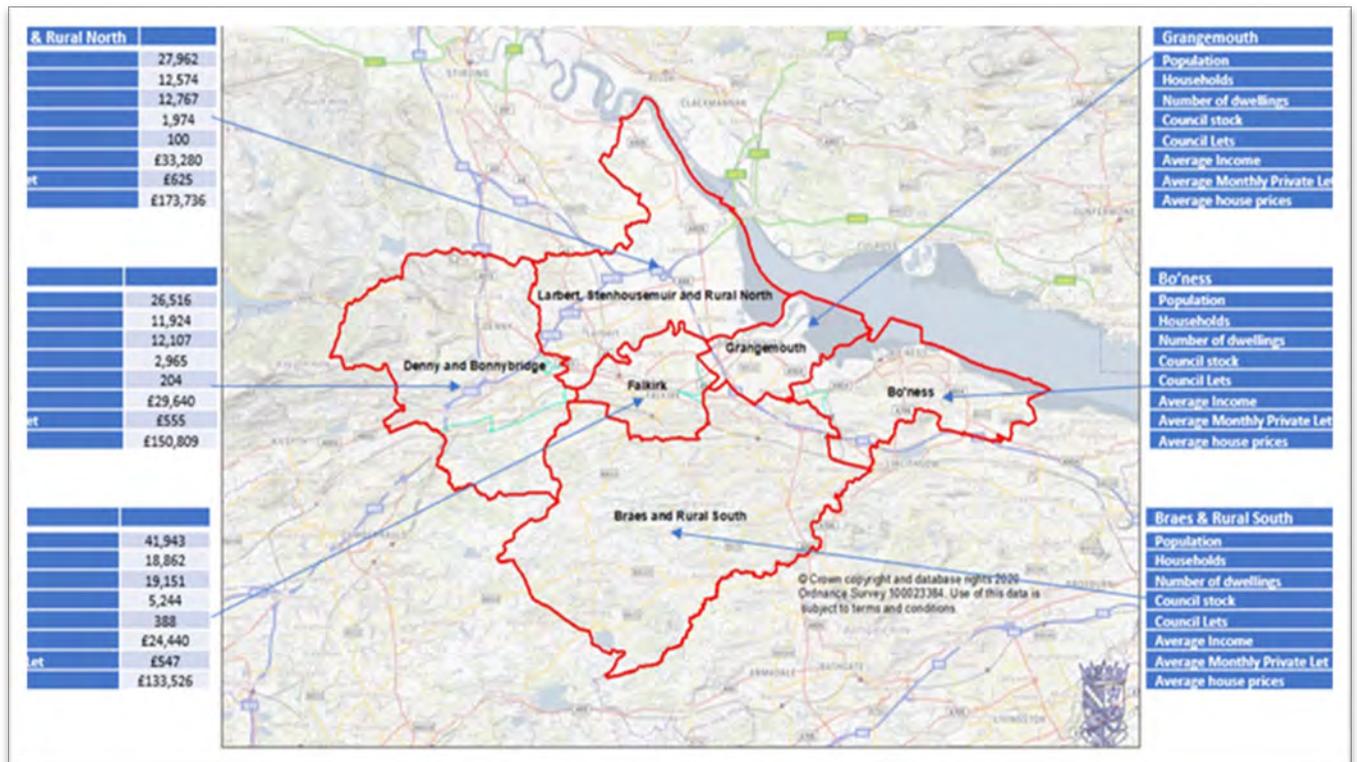
⁸ Scottish Government (2021). Monthly Economic Brief: July 2022. [Monthly economic brief: July 2022 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2022/07/2022-07-01-monthly-economic-brief-july-2022.pdf)

⁹ [Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2021 | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/households-and-dwellings-in-scotland-2021)

¹⁰ Scotland 2011 Census, Table QS405SC

¹¹ Register of Scotland. Property Market Report 2021-2022

Chart 3.1: Housing Submarket Area Profiles 2021-2022



Section 4 LHS priority 1 Increasing housing supply

LHS Outcomes

We increase the supply of housing across tenures.

We increase the supply of affordable housing.

Contributes to the following national outcomes.

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We respect, protect, and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth, and power more equally
- We value, enjoy, protect, and enhance our environment
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy
- We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone

Introduction

The main purpose of the LHS is to provide housing of the right types in the right places, to meet the current and future needs of the Falkirk population across all housing tenures. This section looks at housing supply, need and demand, choice and affordability and covers all tenures. We recognise the importance of having a shared understanding of place and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for people and communities.

Housing Need and Demand Assessment

The HNDA estimates the number of additional homes that are needed to meet existing and future housing need and demand. It also captures information on the operation of the housing system to assist local authorities to develop policies on new housing supply, management of existing stock and the provision of housing-related services.

The HNDA provides a robust, shared and agreed evidence-base for housing policy and land use to ensure that both the Local Housing Strategy and Local Development Plan are based upon a common understanding of existing and future housing requirements. Where the Scottish Government is satisfied that the HNDA is robust and credible, the approach used will not normally be considered further at a Development Plan examination. Falkirk Council's [HNDA](#) was considered to be Robust and Credible by the Scottish Government in December 2022.

The following table shows the estimated average annual number of units needed over the next 20 years. There are 2,328 units needed in total between 2022-2026, 1,120 units of affordable housing and 1,208 units of private housing. In terms of the first five years which is the timescale of this LHS, there are an estimated 466 units needed annually, 224 of which are affordable and 242 market housing.

Table 4.1: Need for new build additional housing 2022-2041

Year	2022-2026	2027-2031	2032-2036	2037-2041	20 yr. total	20 yr. pa
Social Rent	131	117	75	66	1,946	97
Below Market Rent	93	77	78	67	1,579	79
Private Rented Sector	80	69	66	61	1,378	69
Buyers	162	139	137	122	2,801	140
Total	466	402	356	317	7,703	385

Source HNDA

Housing Supply Target

The actual amount and type of additional units that can be delivered is decided in the Housing Supply Target (HST). The HNDA estimates in the previous table are the starting point for setting the HST. While it is expected that there is a clear alignment between the HNDA and the HST the two are not the same and are therefore not expected to match. The HST will set out the estimated level of additional housing that will likely be delivered on the ground, over the period of the plan. We have set our minimum supply targets for new build completions by considering several factors, such as the Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2022, the target in the existing LDP, the minimum all tenure land requirement as well as anticipated build rates and committed investment in affordable housing. A full explanation of how our targets were set is available on our website. Affordable housing is defined as housing of a reasonable quality affordable for people of modest incomes. Forms of affordable housing are set out in the Local Development Plan Affordable Housing Policy [SG06 Affordable Housing \(falkirk.gov.uk\)](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/SG06-Affordable-Housing).

The following table sets out the housing supply target for the period of the LHS and highlights that an annual target of 520 units has been set. It was decided to provide a range for the annual target for affordable and private units with 180-225 units of affordable and 295—340 private units which is both ambitious and achievable. We consulted with the Strategic Housing Group when setting the housing supply target.

Table 4.2: Housing Supply Target 2023-2028

Tenure	Per Year	2023-2028 Total
Affordable	180-225	900-1,125
Private	295- 340	1,475-1,700
Total	520	2,600

Local Need and Demand social rented housing register

Demand for social housing is usually identified through the number of people on the housing register and by looking at the areas and house sizes they have requested. The housing register will include applicants who do not have any housing need conversely there will also be people in housing need who are not on the waiting list. As Falkirk Council does not have a common housing register there may be people that are not on the council's waiting list but on one of the waiting lists for the RSLs in the area. Many of the RSLs also advertise their properties for let on the Council's website.

Demand outstrips supply with 11,535 applicants on the waiting list in March 2023, this compares to 8,879 on the list the year before which is a 30% increase. There are on average 1,300 lets made annually with a turnover of 6.7% in 2021/22, this compares to 9% pre covid. Most applicants on the waiting list are new applicants at 7,095 (62%) and 3,442 (30%) were existing tenants.

Table 4.3: Breakdown of applicant status

Applicant Type	No.	%
Mover (Existing Tenant)	3,442	30%
Seeker (Homeless Applicant)	905	8%
Starter (New Applicant)	7,095	62%
Housing with Care	93	1%
Total	11,535	100%

Source: Falkirk Council Information Systems

One of the ways to identify demand for specific house sizes is to look at the applicant to let ratios. These ratios provide an indication of the stock sizes that are the most pressured. As can be seen in the following table, there are 17.4 applicants for every let. The highest ratio is for 4+ bedroom properties at 59.1 applicants per let and then one-bedroom properties at 24.8 applicants per let.

One-bedroom properties account for 16% (2,737) of the Council's stock but 51% of applicants are one person households so demand is high for this property size. In terms of 4+ bedrooms, there is very little stock of this size at only 3% (499). There are around 746 applicants on the waiting list looking for a 4+ bedroom property but when only around 20 are let annually demand for larger properties is acute. The demand for larger properties has meant that families have had to spend a lot longer in temporary homeless accommodation.

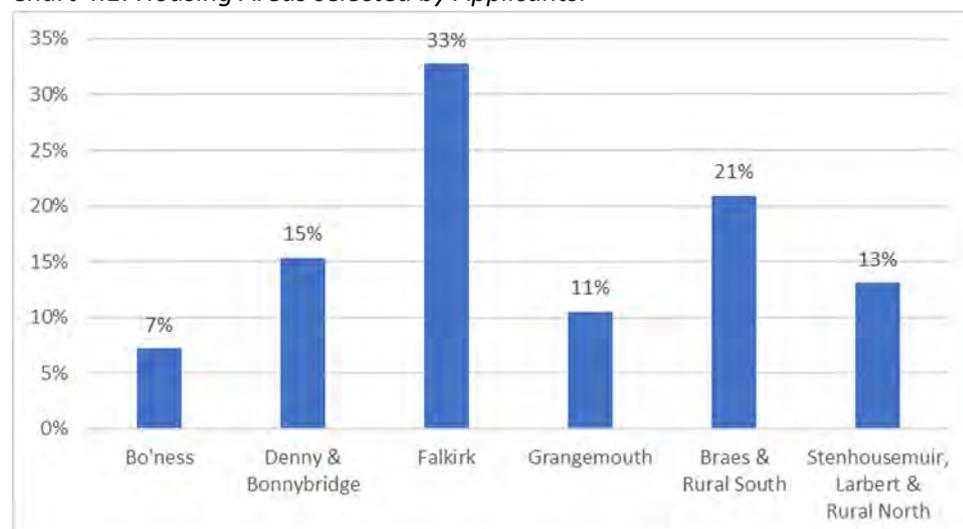
Table 4.4: Applicant to Let Ratio

Size	Ratio
1 Bedroom	24.8
2 Bedroom	15.1
3 Bedroom	9.8
4+ Bedroom	59.1
Total	17.4

Source: Falkirk Council Information Systems

Housing register applicants can select as many or as few letting areas on their housing application form as they wish. This means that there are many more area choices than there are actual applicants, with applicants on average selecting 3.9 letting areas. Our analysis of the housing register, as shown in the following chart, indicates that by far the most area choices are for the Falkirk HSMA (33%) followed by Braes and Rural South (21%).

Chart 4.1: Housing Areas selected by Applicants.



Source: Falkirk Council Information Systems

Private Sector Housing

Falkirk consists of a range six different housing submarket areas with differences in terms of property prices and the range of property sizes and types available. The Falkirk and Grangemouth area have a higher-than-average number of flats and subsequently a higher number of smaller

properties which means households who want to move on to larger family homes are limited in what's available in the area.

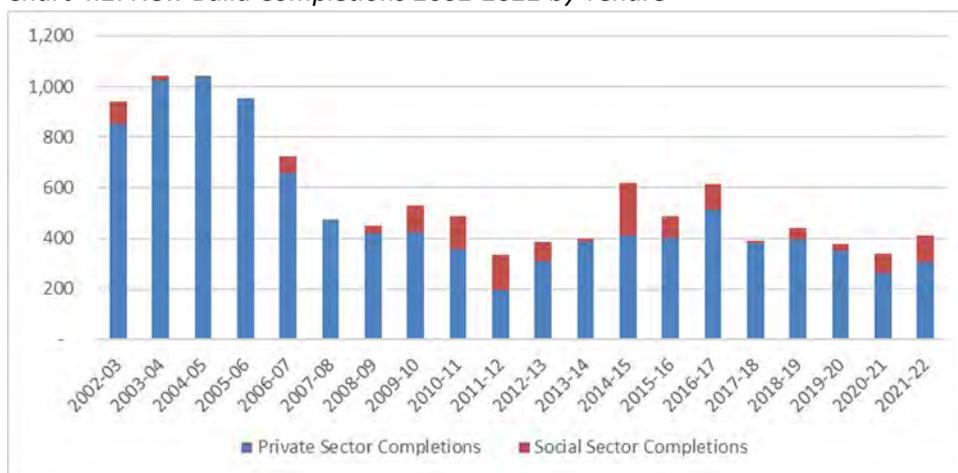
Larbert and Rural North have a higher-than-average number of houses and larger properties which means that these areas constrain the ability of newly formed households to move into the area.

The council has an Affordable Housing Policy to ensure that for large housing developments there is a diversity of house types and tenures to create mixed communities. In areas where the shortfall of affordable housing is greatest, Stenhousemuir, Larbert & Rural North as well as Braes and Rural South, there is a requirement for 25% affordable housing on sites of 20 units or more and for the other four housing submarket areas there is a requirement of 15% affordable housing.

New Build House Completions

As can be seen in the following chart, new build completions peaked in Falkirk in 2004/05 at 1,043 and then declined significantly following the 2008 financial crash reaching 336 completions in 2011/12. Although housebuilding rates have not returned to pre-2008 levels, there have been some years, 2014/15 and 2016/17 most notably where completions reached just over 600 units. In the last 5 years the average number of completions has only been 382, only 37% of the 2004/05 peak. The housing supply target from LDP 2020-2040 is for 520 units annually, which means the average 382 completions of the last 5 years are 27% less than the target.

Chart 4.2: New Build Completions 2002-2022 by Tenure



Source: Scottish Government Housing Statistics

Private Sector Sales and Prices

The number of market sales and the average price of properties is a good indicator of affordability. The following chart highlights the number of sales in Falkirk in the last 20 years as well as the average price. Since 2010/11 the number of sales steadily rose until 2019/20 and 2021/22 when covid impacted on sales and there was a slight fall. The total number of sales reached 2,890 in 2021/22 which is a 57% increase since 2009/10, compared to 53% nationally. In terms of house prices, there has been a steady increase since 2015/16. House prices in Falkirk have increased by 31% since 2015/16, compared to 21% nationally. House prices in Falkirk are lower than most other local authorities, they are the 9th lowest in Scotland.

Chart 4.3: Number of Sales and House Prices 2003-2022



Source: Registers of Scotland Property Market Report 2021/22

Affordable Housing Completions

The following table shows that over the last 5 years there have been 1,280 affordable or subsidised housing options delivered in Falkirk. There were 682 additional units built, 187 by RSLs and 495 by the council. The Council has had a buy back scheme in operation since 2013 and has bought back 431 ex council properties in the last 5 years. Paragon Housing Association also have a buy back scheme which has been in operation since 2018 and they have bought back 16 properties. There have also been 111 homes delivered through the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme which enables people to buy a home without having to fund its entire cost.

Table 4.4: Affordable Housing Supply Programme Completions 2017-2022

	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	Total
RSL Rent	0	42	5	34	106	187
Council House (Rent)	98	156	106	134	1	495
Buy Backs council	95	87	80	90	79	431
Buy Backs RSL		5	4	5	2	16
Home Owners' Support Fund (Rent)	1	6	3			10
Mid-Market Rent	17					17
Local Affordable Rented Housing Trust (LAR ¹²)				13		13
Open Market Shared Equity (OMSE)	50	41	11	5	4	111
Total	261	337	209	281	192	1,280

Source: Affordable Housing Supply Programme: out-turn report

Affordability

Housing in Falkirk is dominated by owner occupation with a higher proportion of homes in this tenure (62%) than nationally (59%)¹³. The conventional indicators of affordability has been house price to income ratios, expressed here by mortgage size as a multiplier of a buyers stated household income. The average price for a residential property in Falkirk in 2021/22 was £166,679. Using the mortgage multiplier of 3.9 shows that a household would need to earn £42,738 to afford to buy a property in the area. The median income of full-time earners residing in Falkirk is £30,013¹⁴.

¹² LAR is a housing charity set up to provide mid-market rent [LAR housing charity](#)

¹³ Scottish Government, stock estimates by tenure 2018

¹⁴ Nomis 2021, Annual Survey Income & Earnings, Resident full-time workers

The private rented sector (PRS) in Falkirk is smaller (9%) than nationally (14%) but it is an important transitional and flexible housing tenure which offers accessible housing options to those in housing need. Rents for the private rented sector in Falkirk are between 34% and 52% higher than Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, depending on the property size. Work undertaken on the affordability of the PRS for the HNDA 2022 highlighted that on average 38% of lower quartile income was spent on rent but this could increase to as much as 53% in some housing sub market areas.

There is opportunity for intermediate tenure options to provide good quality housing at lower than market rents and this is something that we hope to explore in more detail throughout this LHS. Shared Equity housing is another tenure model that can be utilised to improve housing options for people in Falkirk and will be explored in more detail.

New Supply Affordable Housing

Falkirk's 5-year Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) is updated every year and sets out all potential projects for delivering new affordable homes in the area. The majority of homes are social rent with mid-market rent not seen as a viable option in recent years due to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.

The SHIP also includes off the shelf purchases of ex council properties with a target of 85 units (80 council and 5 RSL) annually for the purchase of these properties. These are a value for money option and can help to achieve the following:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing in areas of high demand
- Ensuring investment and improvement in mixed tenure blocks of flats
- Providing larger family homes and homes suitable for adaptation for people with a disability.

Falkirk Council's SHIP 2023-2028 sets out plans to potentially deliver 1,059 new build affordable homes over the next 5 years. We recognise the importance of placemaking and will consider SHIP projects in relation to services and amenities nearby.

Other Supply Self-Build

Self-build offers people the chance to create and deliver a home which can offer people greater choice, flexibility and quality in terms of both their home and its location, with affordability and energy efficiency embedded. The Planning Act 2019 requires councils to prepare, maintain and publish a list of persons interested in self-build. The council does not have a list, but this will be developed in the coming years. Analysis of completions of small sites show that over the last 10 years there were on average 13 new build properties built annually in the area.

New build

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan sets out new build affordable housing provided by Falkirk Council and RSLs which is supported by Scottish Government grant. Both Falkirk Council new build team and RSL partners or their agents carry out local consultation prior to starting on site.

Several of the RSL projects in the SHIP are sites which come under the Affordable Housing Policy. Therefore, affordable properties are built alongside new build private properties creating mixed housing developments which contributes to several positive outcomes for place making.

Key issues and challenges

Falkirk Council buybacks have been subject to Land and Buildings Transaction Tax or Additional Dwelling Supplement. RSL buybacks are not subject to this tax.

Following the review of Land and Buildings Transaction Tax, the Scottish Government have published proposed legislative changes which would mean that Councils would no longer pay a tax on additional properties when are supported by the Scottish Government grant for affordable housing stock. These proposals have been consulted on. Scottish Government are currently considering the responses to the consultation on draft clauses, one of which being Council exemption proposal. Once updated clauses are finalised Scottish Government will prepare a Scottish Statutory Instrument (SSI) but do not have a firm timetable for that as yet.

Consultation

The LHS consultation survey highlighted that 84% of 737 respondents thought it was important or very important to provide more affordable housing. Face to face consultation with local groups also noted that there is a high demand for affordable housing, many respondents called for an increase in the supply of affordable particularly social rented housing in their local area.

The second stage consultation respondents were asked their opinion on the housing supply target. The feedback highlighted concerns regarding affordability, allocation, infrastructure, and the overall adequacy of the proposed target to address the housing crisis in the region. There is a common sentiment that the target needs to be more ambitious to effectively meet the diverse housing needs of the community. While the feedback is essential, the number of affordable units identified for the target takes account of the number of properties planned in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan which is dependent on Scottish Government funding.

Actions

1. Ensure housing land supply is available to build 2, 800 properties by 2028.
2. Work in partnership to deliver 180 affordable properties annually.
3. Deliver 5% of the SHIP programme as wheelchair properties.
4. Deliver 5% of the SHIP programme as ambulant disabled properties.
5. Deliver 5% of the SHIP programme as larger properties (4 bedroom or more)
6. Explore Build to Rent linking with release of census information.
7. Update housing information annually to inform the SHIP and AHP discussions.
8. Encourage the use of the place principle in the development of new housing and in housing regeneration.
9. We will prioritise town centre sites for housing in the SHIP where viable and in areas of housing need.
10. We will explore conversion of former shops for housing where viable and in areas of housing need.

Section 5 LHS priority 2 Creating sustainable communities.

LHS Outcomes

Our communities are connected and empowered, to make decisions about their area and the services in it.

Contributes to the following national outcomes.

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We respect, protect, and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth, and power more equally
- We value, enjoy, protect, and enhance our environment
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy

Context

The starting point for this priority are two reports carried out for the Falkirk Community Planning Partnership firstly the Place Standard (2017/18) and secondly Community Links (2018/19). Both are examples of placemaking and emphasised the importance of regeneration in Grangemouth. These reports lead to consultation with the community on a wide range of issues. Key housing points highlighted were lower demand for tenemental flats, environmental issues, need for a range of tenures and types of accommodation.

The covid pandemic followed by the current economic downturn negatively impacted on resources. High inflation rates leading to increasing costs to maintain and improve the current housing stock have been compounded by labour shortages. Although committed to change, social rented landlords stress the importance of a long-term approach on what is deliverable. They emphasise taking account of financial challenges to meeting Scottish Government legislative requirements relating to Energy Efficiency Standards in Scottish Social Rented Housing (ESSH 1 and ESSH2).

Placemaking

As set out in the Local Development Plan, placemaking is the art of creating good places.¹⁵ Falkirk Council's approach to placemaking is set out in the [Local Development Plan 2](#). Principles of good placemaking are set out in detail in LDP Policy PE01. This aligns with policies in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), now part of the LDP.

There are some locations where investment will be particularly focused on creating good places. These are the areas of the greatest need or opportunity, where the economic and social impact of placemaking will be greatest. These 'place priorities' are set out in the LDP.

Planning colleagues used the place standard as the basis for questionnaires in the call for evidence stage of the next local development plan (LDP3). This includes two surveys specifically for children and young people. This will provide additional evidence to identify community priorities in the LHS and its annual updates. The survey work already undertaken for the LHS has been shared with planning colleagues as evidence for LDP3. We work closely with planning colleagues and will provide information for the LDP3 evidence report.

¹⁵ Scottish Planning Policy identifies six qualities of successful places which should form the basis of placemaking and the design, development, renewal and regeneration of our urban and rural built environments (distinctive, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, adaptable, resource efficient). Falkirk Council LDP2

Housing regeneration

Following the Community Links and Place Standard Reports we are working towards housing regeneration in Grangemouth. Falkirk Council developed a scoring matrix for their stock in Grangemouth considering the following: percentage of flatted blocks in council ownership, land available and footprint of blocks, turnover, incidents of anti-social behaviour, energy efficiency (SAP ratings), environmental factors (refuse and bins). This information informed areas of greatest concern. This was considered alongside the Falkirk HNDA 2022 which highlighted acute need for larger and disabled properties including larger disabled properties. Falkirk Council have designs and options prepared that outline demolition of flatted accommodation, to be replaced with new build larger family homes. Plans also include options to improve current flatted accommodation to create better places to live that are bright and welcoming and have enhanced energy efficient standards and the reconfiguration of ground floor flats to be fully wheelchair accessible and have access to private outside space. The Net Zero agenda and reducing poverty are at the heart of our re-design. Tenant and resident consultation and tenants' choice will inform how this project develops and consultation will begin in September 2023. This new regeneration pilot is included in the SHIP 2024/5-2028/9. Early discussions with Greener Grangemouth are underway as are future proposals to work with other social landlords to change the use of the Town Centre and create additional affordable homes.

Previous regeneration work carried out.

The FC pilot will build on previous small-scale improvements in Grangemouth including:

- A successful bid to Zero Waste Scotland which funded environmental improvements to flatted areas providing new, more suitable and accessible bin store areas.
- Environmental improvements in some flatted blocks to create defensible spaces, planters and further redesigned new bin stores.
- Refurbishment a shopping precinct to make it more aesthetically pleasing and a place to socialise.
- Reconfiguration and refurbishment of two low demand flatted including landscaping and parking areas. This also included a pilot project on close-cleaning and sensitive allocations.

Future housing regeneration priorities

We recognise the need for further housing regeneration across Falkirk Council area. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation will influence this particularly around areas in the worst 20%. We will agree future housing regeneration priorities taking account of placemaking and the following criteria:

- Cost to meet statutory requirements.
- Land available taking account of constraints set out in the LDP.
- Housing demand factors (stock profile size/ type, bids per let, turnover, void rates), social factors (incident of anti -social behaviour reported)
- Environmental factors (bins and refuse)
- Energy efficiency (SAP ratings, heating costs)
- Consultation and engagement social rented landlords tenant satisfaction survey. Engagement with the private landlords and community planning.
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation particularly areas in the worst 20%. We recognise the links between poverty and poor health (Health Inequalities Impact Assessment)
- Areas with a lack of all tenure options
- Areas with more limited access to public transport, amenities (GPs, dentists etc), leisure facilities, and supermarkets

- Digital connectivity.

Housing partnership working

The section below sets out partnership working between Falkirk Council (FC) and RSLs and further partnership working examples in Priority 5 and 7. Falkirk Council and local RSLs (Link, Paragon, Kingdom) meet quarterly. Joint working is ongoing to identify environmental projects which can be carried out in our housing estates relating to importance of place and environmental factors. These projects include site visits to areas of mixed-tenure where regeneration is being (or has been) carried out, the cross-partnership use of CCTV to tackle antisocial behaviour (including fly-tipping etc), some environmental improvements to the landscaping around areas of Grangemouth are. Other projects have included agreement on what constitutes 'demand' for housing; joint working on training and the collection of equalities data; investigation into the possibility of a Common Housing Register; scoping of a FC Digital Housing Strategy; sharing of information on the Scottish Government's 'Connecting Scotland' project/digital inclusion. Joint training and awareness raising has been carried out around the impact of mental health issues particularly relating to hoarding also around poverty issues e.g., access to the housing support fund.

- In the short to medium term Paragon Housing Association advise that their key priorities are improving and maintaining their existing stock to Scottish Government standards taking account of green energy initiatives along with tackling tenant poverty and wellbeing. This takes account of the current economic situation and the many challenges faced by the poorest in society.
- Paragon is proactively working to give their staff tools to assist tenants. They have been successful in accessing funding from a range of organisations¹⁶. This funding will assist their tenants in food and fuel poverty also access public transport vouchers. There is a recognition of negative impacts of social isolation and Paragon have been successful in accessing funding to assist tenants with telecommunications and measures to improve wellbeing.
- They are also working with Link Living to provide self-help coaching sessions. Additionally, the Association employs a full time Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

Link Housing Association have carried out the following projects to assist their tenants.

- Received Fuel Insecurity Funding - to support tenants who are struggling to pay their fuel bills/debts.
- Link also have a Tenancy Sustainment Budget for each area office which is used to support vulnerable tenants directly to purchase/fit white goods, furniture, floor coverings.
- Link have a Think Differently budget where each Housing Officer has £500 to use as they see fit e.g., improving the estates, bin closes or to identify/support a tenant.

Falkirk Council estate improvements

A rolling programme of estate improvement work relating to Falkirk Council estates is currently in place, e.g., fencing, walls, and path upgrades. A provision of £3 million has been made to support this programme of improvement works annually from 2023/24 to 2027/8.

¹⁶ Scottish Government, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Employers in Voluntary Housing, Warm Homes and the private and voluntary sectors

Community Choices

The Falkirk Community Planning Partnership operate Community Choices participatory budgeting programme. Through a public vote, participatory budgeting offers a democratic way for residents to have a direct say in how public money can be used to address their priorities and invest in local, community led projects. There are 2 types of funds:

- [Small Grants Programme](#) – for bids up to £5,000.
- [Place Based Capital Programme](#) – for larger projects of £5,000 and above.

The following hyperlink provides information on the most recent round of community choices projects. [Community Choices recent projects](#)

A tenants choice scheme was introduced for Falkirk Council tenants in 2022.

Wider regeneration

Parks

Great work that has been done with the local community and Falkirk Council Parks and Estates at Zetland Park in Grangemouth. Major refurbishments have been carried out costing £2 million. This included improvements to the war memorial, repair and conservation of gates, creation of a performance space, inclusive park, improvements to tennis courts and creating a pump cycle track.

Falkirk Council has received UK Shared Prosperity Funding to improve and enhance 3 parks across the Council area.

Town centres

Town centres form the heart of communities, providing a sustainable focus for shopping, business, leisure, services and community life, and shaping the area's sense of place. However, they face economic and social challenges and need adaptation and continuing investment if they are to continue to thrive and meet community needs. Planning Policy strongly supports the health and vitality of town centres through the 'town centre first' principle which seeks to prioritise town centres as the first choice for uses which generate significant footfall. Falkirk Council is pursuing a programme of town centre regeneration. This aligns with the action in LHS 2017-22 to explore town centre sites for affordable housing and a Falkirk town centre site was delivered by Link Housing for 36 units in 2020 providing 4 wheelchair properties.

The Council has completed several successful town centre regeneration projects across the area in recent years. It is acknowledged that further regeneration activity is likely to be required over the long-term by the Council, private sector and other partner organisations to address the needs of each town centre.

Stenhousemuir Town Centre - Public Wi-Fi to the town centre has been recently installed via the Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Fund. Officers will look to engage with the local stakeholders to understand community aspirations and concerns to create a shared vision and action plans for future projects.

Bo'ness Town Centre - is a conservation area. Recent improvements to the town centre were delivered by the Scottish Government's £2.7m Town Centre Capital Fund. These included an e-bike station, public wi-fi and Bo'ness Library accessibility project.

Grangemouth Town Centre - Scottish Government's aspirations for a just transition to a zero-carbon economy, and a target for investment through the Council's Investment Zone Growth Deal which will

include consideration of the future of the Town Centre. Responding to excessively high vacancy rates, a town centre regeneration project is underway to reduce the retail footprint of the town centre by relocating businesses from the periphery of the town into the hub to create a cleared site for future development. The final relocation and subsequent demolition are scheduled to take place in 2023.

Public Wi-Fi has been introduced into two centres in Grangemouth to support the Digital Place priority and drive to be an ambitious digital council. With infrastructure in place, communities can be empowered to access information and businesses to improve their on-line trading and engagement with customers.

Denny Town Centre - Regeneration is being developed in three phases. There has been extensive community consultation and significant improvements have been made including demolition of former 1960s housing and retail block. Changes include a modern two-storey building. The new library has flexible and vibrant community spaces and services. There is a new town centre square with flexible seating and a dedicated town centre website www.dennydiscovered.co.uk. The war memorial has been relocated from the town centre to a park next to the town centre. There are community led Public Art installations.

Recognising the challenges faced by many smaller settlements, a working group is being established to focus on options for small-scale priority actions for two pilot village centres in the following:

1. Slamannan (Rural South)
2. Bonnybridge (Rural North)

Current Town Centre Regeneration

The Falkirk LDP2 identifies Falkirk Town Centre as a Major Area of Change and identifies a range of development opportunities which have the potential to contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre.

- Grahamston provides an important arrival point to the Town Centre, with the large areas of surface car parking offering potential for redevelopment and enhancement. The emerging proposal for Falkirk Central Transport Hub is likely to be the focus for this site.
- Callendar Square has very high levels of vacancy, although part has now been leased to the Department of Work and Pensions. To the east of Callendar Riggs, the former bus station remains vacant, but other uses are relatively stable, and the overall scale of redevelopment here appears to be more limited than envisaged in LDP2.
- Williamson Street – as previously indicated, Link Housing Association now provide new build social rented properties on this site.
- The former Municipal Buildings has been demolished for sustainable housing supporting the town centre vitality.
- Development Framework Masterplan will set a place making framework for physical and spatial change as the town centre evolves over the next 10 to 20 years. The requirement is to ensure a coordinated and aligned approach across key stakeholders to ensure there is a managed response to the changing patterns of how town centres are used and inform the further development work and long-term regeneration opportunities for Falkirk Town Centre

Greener Grangemouth

Greener Grangemouth is a local “place programme” to build a community led Just Transition which addresses local need by strengthening community wellbeing, quality of place, community wealth, and community capacity and skills to benefit from the transition to net zero at Scotland’s core manufacturing cluster.

Greener Grangemouth will be organised as a local place programme, supported by a collaborative advisory group. The programme will be supported by a capital investment of £10 million over 10 years, and a revenue budget of £2m over 10 years.

The [Forth Green Freeport](#) proposal was chosen by the UK and Scottish governments with hopes that transformational plans will generate up to 50,000 new green jobs across the UK, acting as a catalyst for new green technologies and renewable energy manufacturing which will make a significant contribution to the re-industrialisation of Scotland.

Areas given Freeport status will benefit from tax reliefs, simplified customs procedures, streamlined planning processes to boost redevelopment and government support to promote regeneration and innovation.

Empty Homes

Compulsory purchase orders

Compulsory purchase powers have been used on two occasions to return empty homes to use. The process can be challenging fraught time-consuming usually only used as a last resort for properties that are structurally unsound, unsafe, or are otherwise putting communities at risk and the owner cannot be found. An Enforcement Panel is in place that provides a partnership response and collaborative decision making in such situations.

Empty Homes definition

Empty homes are defined as properties which have been empty for six months or more, locally there are approximately 800 empty private properties. The LHS target is to bring 70 empty private properties a year into use. Further detail is provided in our new Empty Homes Plan.

We have employed an Empty Home Officer (EHO) since 2013. We now have two EHOs who cover empty homes, buybacks and mortgage to rent. They have formed strong relationships with staff in Housing operations, Environmental Health, Building Standards, Planning, Social Work Criminal Justice and Council Tax. The Officers are active members of the Scottish Empty Homes Best Practice Group.

EHOs offer advice and assistance to help return properties back into use using the following tools:

- Leaflets tailored to provide information for empty home owners on how their property can be brought into use.
- Matchmaker Scheme which 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 from His Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) incentive where an owner of an unused property for 2 years or more can apply for proof that the property is empty.

If a property has been vacant for two years any work required and carried out by a VAT registered trader may be eligible for a reduced VAT rate of 5%. If the property has been vacant for ten years or longer the works may benefit from a zero-rated VAT.

The following table sets out the number of properties brought back into use in the last 3 years and the amount of time they were empty. Most properties brought into use have been empty between 1-5 years. Empty properties brought into use reduced during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Table 5.1 Empty Homes brought back into use.

Period	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Under 6 Months	0	6	0	1	4
6-12 Months	4	8	3	2	3
1-2 Years	13	18	13	13	8
2-5 Years	29	17	22	14	22
5-10 Years	7	12	7	4	13
Over 10 Years	4	4	7	4	12
Total	57	65	52	38	63

Source: Falkirk Council empty homes team

We recognise the vulnerability of some empty homeowners particularly those with mental health issues relating to hoarding. Hoarding is a priority which the Adult & Social Care Partnership have recognised by providing training for front line staff and the Change Live Grow support service along with putting operational guidance being in place,

Use of increased council tax income

At present, there is no direct funding allocated to the affordable housing programme in Falkirk from revenue raised from applying the council tax levy on long-term empty homes. The provision of grant funding for owners of empty properties is being explored, using some of the money raised from this levy, to help bring empty properties back into use.

Potential empty homes actions (add to action plan as milestones under empty homes action)

- Explore the use of grants to assist owners to bring their empty homes to a standard where they can rent, sell or move into their property. The funding for this could be from the Council Tax levy charge.
- Devise a procedure for dealing with problematic empty homes that may result in CPO. This will include 3 stages of letters – with the final letter being signed by Legal services.
- Continue to promote the work of the Empty Homes Officers through media channels such as Falkirk Council website, Tenant Talk magazine, Empty Homes Partnership website.

Current and future joint working

Falkirk Council housing services work in partnership with RSL partners and are looking to set out short-, medium- and long-term proposals for how we can work together to progress environmental projects.

Paragon Housing Association advise that when tenants are asked about their reasons for dissatisfaction with management of their estate, they cite environmental factors such as fly tipping and other refuse issues. This is an ongoing cause for concern. As previously advised, Paragon have entered into an arrangement with Falkirk Council whereby a mobile CCTV camera is deployed in fly

tipping hotspots and continues to work with residents to look at other ideas and solutions to this increasing issue.

Falkirk Council Housing Services' Scrutiny Panel, made up of tenant volunteers and independently led by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), carried out a scrutiny exercise on "How bin collection service affects Indicator 17: Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of their neighbourhood". How this is progressed will be set out in the Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy annual updates.

Consultation

Respondents to the LHS consultation survey thought the following issues were important or very important.

- Bring empty homes into use (95%)
- Regenerate less popular areas (79%)
- Improve the appearance of the local area (88%)

Participants in LHS consultation focus groups highlighted the need for local people to take pride in their homes and neighbourhoods, others noted the importance of Housing Officers being more visible helped communities. Responses also indicated an interest in housing officers being able to advise on local groups, events.

Key issues and challenges

- Aligning the work streams in this area to create a synergy between all housing partners and community planning.
- Working with colleagues in Community Planning and Place Services (Policy Planning) to progress all tenure diversification in Grangemouth.
- Working with social rented landlords in Grangemouth to progress regeneration of existing stock and supporting communities in the current economic climate.
- Exploring the potential of town centre sites to provide housing options.
- Balancing the need for new build affordable housing alongside demand for the current social rented stock.
- Addressing challenges around refuse collection and impact on environmental factors

Actions

1. We will work in partnership to carry out housing regeneration throughout the Council area.
2. We will encourage effective collaboration and community engagement to improve the impact of resource allocation and investment in community.
3. We will develop local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods to deliver the healthy, sustainable and resilient places required to support a good quality of life and balance our environmental impact.
4. We will work in partnership to promote community well-being activities.
5. We will work in partnership to tackle poverty and maximise incomes.
6. We will work in partnership with RSLs to collect comprehensive equalities data covering all strands in housing surveys, identifying how we store and use this data.
7. We will bring empty properties in the private sector into use.
8. We will promote digital technology and online services.
9. We will report annually on progress with the Falkirk Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy and work towards coproducing the Tenant and Customer Forum.

Section 6 LHS priority 3 Improving access to housing.

LHS Outcome

We prevent and address homelessness.

Contributes to the following national outcomes.

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential.
- We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely.
- We are healthy and active.
- We respect, protect, and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth, and power more equally.
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy.
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.
- We value, enjoy, protect, and enhance our environment.
- We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone.

National Context

The Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act places a statutory duty on each local authority to carry out an assessment of homelessness in its area and to prepare and submit to Ministers a strategy (as part of the LHS) for the prevention and alleviation of homelessness. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was set up in 2017 to recommend to Scottish Government Ministers the actions and solutions needed to eradicate rough sleeping and transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland.

The final report from the group was published in 2018 and from these all-local authorities in Scotland were asked to develop a five-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP). The RRTPs set out local context and challenges and how each local authority plans to reduce the use of temporary accommodation (especially hostel and B&B accommodation), moving towards housing people in mainstream accommodation as quickly as possible if they have low support needs or providing Housing First for people with more complex needs.

The vision for the Scottish Government's "Housing to 2040" strategy is that everyone is able to have their right to an adequate home realised. This includes an aim that everyone has a settled home that meets their needs and homelessness is ended by 2040. This means that rough sleeping has been eradicated and that an effective system is in place to ensure that homelessness is only ever rare, brief and non-recurrent.

Scottish Government updated Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan in 2020 taking account of the global covid pandemic with a focus on nation and local government and the third sector working together with a focus on prevention.

Local Context

Housing Options provides an important pathway for people seeking advice and information to make informed choices about their housing circumstances. Anyone who is at risk of homelessness is made fully aware of their rights and is supported to make a homeless presentation if they choose to do so. Falkirk Council is part of Housing Options East Hub which consists of six local authorities who share knowledge and best practise on areas including housing allocations, RRTPs and developing a new Housing Options Toolkit. The National Housing Options Guidance has been integrated into the Council's practises.

Welfare Reform continues to place further challenges on our homelessness and housing options, most notably with the introduction of Universal Credit from 2013. A report written by the Scottish Government, Homelessness and Universal Credit found that a range of evidence from charities and other organisations demonstrates that certain features of Universal Credit have directly contributed to homelessness, particularly sanctions and the five-week wait¹⁷. The channels through which Universal Credit leads to homelessness include forcing tenants into rent arrears and evictions and contributing to relationship issues and mental health problems.

The United Kingdom economy has rebounded from the COVID-19- induced slump of 2020,22 but spiralling energy, food and other prices, now seriously compounded by the war in Ukraine, are driving a cost-of-living crisis greater than that seen for many decades.¹⁸ At the same time, poverty and destitution have been exacerbated by the removal of temporary measures to bolster household incomes during the pandemic, notably the £20 uplift to Universal Credit, as well as by the refreezing of the Local Housing Allowance at April 2020 rates.¹⁹

Housing options have also become more limited especially for those under 35 due to the shared accommodation rate which in 2021/22 in Falkirk was £296.48 a month. The average rent for a one-bedroom flat is £484 which makes renting a flat for a single person challenging and with low numbers of HMOs in the council area there are few housing options in the area for this group.

During and after the covid pandemic the way that homeless services were delivered changed and interaction with customers, stakeholders, and partners also changed. The lessons learned from the pandemic will be built on to ensure that services are as accessible as possible with coordinated support.

The main focus of the service is on prevention interventions, identifying and designing preventative pathways. A homeless prevention team are now in place, who will drive forward and contribute to the ongoing development of the homeless prevention action plan. The action plan will look further than just homelessness and those at risk, it will develop early intervention models and practise to ensure that those within the community have the tools and knowledge to access support and advice to prevent a housing crisis. The team are currently in the initial stages of developing a 3-year plan to reduce homelessness through prevention and ensure we conform to any future homelessness duty on prevention.

The extent and nature of homelessness in Falkirk

The following chart shows the number of homeless applications and households assessed as homeless in the last 10 years. This indicates an increase in the number of applications (6.4%) and households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness (12.8%) in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. This follows a marked reduction between 2019/20 and 2020/21, largely explained by changes in service use as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency COVID-19 legislation and a temporary ban on home repossessions.

The following chart also highlights that applications have fluctuated from year to year. When applications are compared to Scotland as a whole during the same timeframe, nationally there has

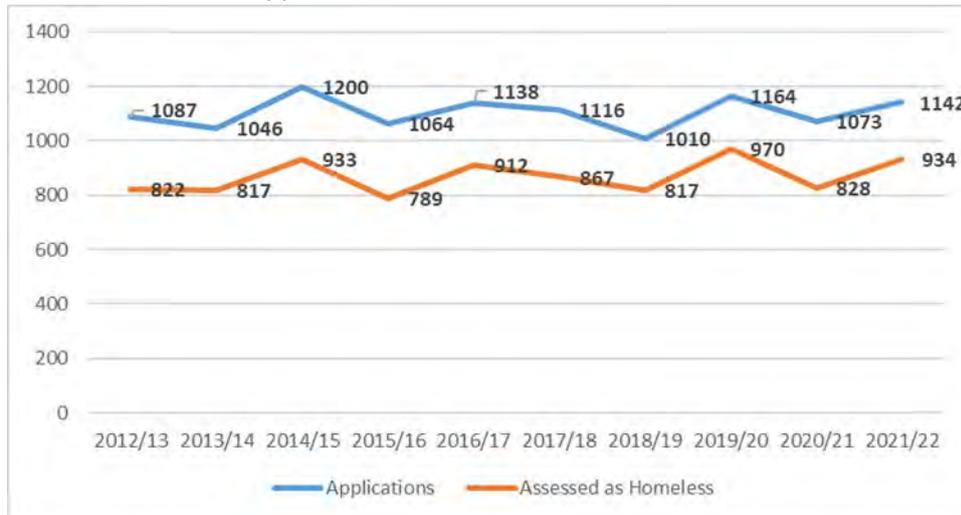
¹⁷ [Homelessness and Universal Credit \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

¹⁸ Karjalainen, H. & Levell, P. (2022) 'Inflation Hits 9% With Poorest Households Facing Even Higher Rates.' Institute for Fiscal Studies. 18 May. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/16058>

been a trend of decreasing applications over the same timeframe although there was also an increase in the number of applications last year.

Comparing homelessness figures with the population for Falkirk (i.e., rates) provides a useful insight as to how homelessness in Falkirk compares to Scotland as a whole. When the rate per 100,000 of the population of households assessed as homeless in Falkirk is looked at it, this is 702 which is higher than the rate of 632 for Scotland as a whole

Chart 6.1: Homeless applications and Assessments 2012-2022



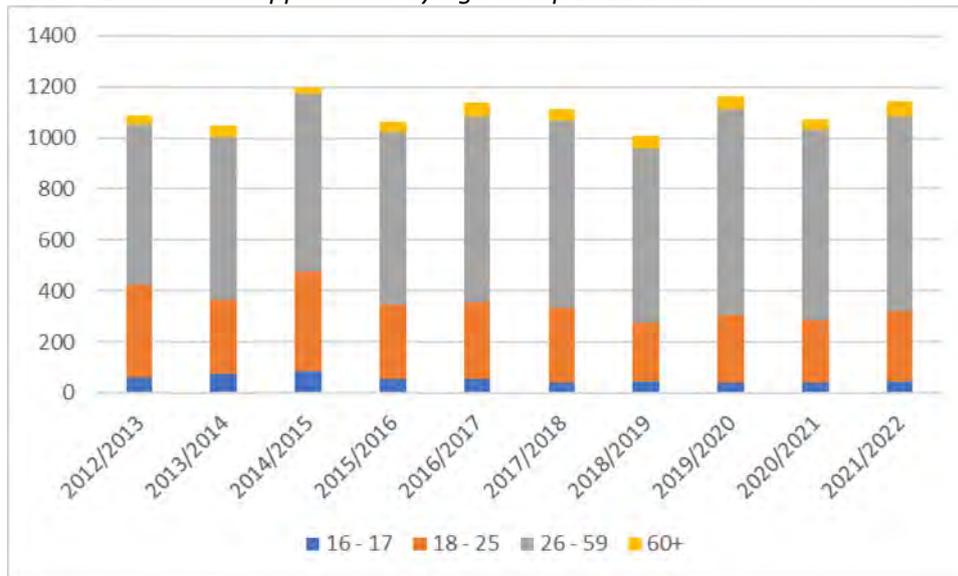
Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

For those who have disclosed rough sleeping either the night before application to Falkirk Council, or in the three months prior to application, has decreased in 2021/22. These figures are low with only one applicant having slept rough the night before applying as homeless in 2021/22 and 3 applicants in the three months prior to application.

Homeless applications by Age

As shown in the following chart the majority (67%) of homeless applications are from the 26-59 age group. Numbers in this age group have decreased by 2.89% since 2020/21, leading to increases in the other age groups, particularly in the 18-25 age group. Breaking this down further into individual ages, the highest numbers of applications in 2021/22 were seen in the mid 20's to mid-30's ages. This would seem to reflect the difficulties that many can experience in sourcing settled accommodation at that age, particularly with the lack of private rented housing in the Falkirk area.

Chart 6.2: Homeless Applications by Age Group 2012-2022



Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

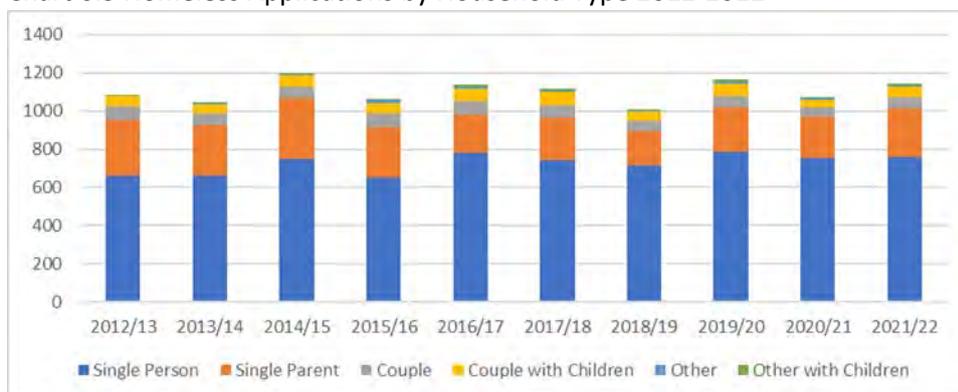
Homeless Applications by gender

Over the last 10 years most homeless applications have been from males, and this is true for 7 out of the last 10 years. In 2021/22 just over 50% of applications were from females which is a 19% increase from 2020/21.

Homeless Applications by Household Type

Looking at the household type of homeless applicants the following chart shows that the majority are single people, and this is true for each of the last 10 years. For the last six years this group has made up at least 66% or more of homeless applicants. At the same time the number of single parents fell from 27% in 2012/13 to just under 20% from 2016/17. It should be noted that the number of single parents did increase to 22.5% of homeless applicants in 2021/22, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Chart 6.3 Homeless Applications by Household Type 2012-2022



Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

Reason for Homeless Application

As shown in the following table, “Asked to leave” has consistently been one of the main reasons for homeless applications in the last 5 years however, this is closely followed by “dispute within household: violent or abusive” which was the highest presenting reason in both 2017/18 and 2020/21. This can be partially attributed to Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, leading to more people spending time in their households.

There is a Family Mediation Service available with the aim to prevent homelessness for young people and ensure that they have the support of their family/ relevant services if they are moving into their own tenancy to help promote tenancy sustainment and reduce the number of failed tenancies by young people.

Table 6.1: Five Main Reasons for Homeless Application 2017-2022

Reason for Homelessness	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	%
Asked to leave	276	245	379	320	347	30%
Dispute within household: violent or abusive	311	241	301	336	330	29%
Other reason for loss of accommodation	177	153	159	85	81	7%
Other reason for leaving accommodation / household	181	182	194	145	134	12%
Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent	122	114	73	128	139	12%

Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

Domestic Abuse

The following table highlights the number of homeless applications due to a violent dispute in the household and highlights that although the number decreased slightly in 2021/22, it still accounted for 29% of all homeless applications and compares to 14% for Scotland. The Falkirk Council area also had the fifth highest rate of domestic abuse cases per 10,000 of population in 2021/22, according to Police Scotland figures.^[1] In 2021/22 the rate was 143 in Falkirk compared to 118 nationally.

Table 6.2: Number of Homeless Applications due to Dispute within household: Violent or Abusive

Year	Dispute within household: violent or abusive No	% of all applications - Falkirk	% of all applications - Scotland
2012/2013	264	24%	11%
2013/2014	257	25%	12%
2014/2015	281	23%	12%
2015/2016	253	24%	12%
2016/2017	281	25%	12%
2017/2018	311	28%	13%
2018/2019	241	24%	13%
2019/2020	301	26%	13%
2020/2021	336	31%	14%
2021/2022	330	29%	14%

Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

Statutory and third sector partners recognise rates of domestic violence are increasing locally and it is recognised by all partners that consideration requires to be given to future arrangements. We are working with domestic abuse partners, Police Scotland, and other bodies such as health and social care services and the Scottish Government to develop our own policy to tackle domestic abuse and reduce the impact of homelessness.

The delivery of the council's domestic abuse services has been under review over the last few years. In addition, the Scottish Government are conducting a National Strategic Review of Domestic Abuse funding that will set out a Scotland-wide mechanism for the oversight and distribution of funding based on need at national and local levels. It will explore how Local Authorities and HSC Partnerships can be supported to develop a strategic, collaborative commissioning and procurement framework, aligned robustly to the delivery of Equally Safe. This work is not expected to be fully operational until 2025 and will inform a longer-term approach to the funding and commissioning of services.

The Falkirk Community Planning Partnership have recognised six priority themes or areas, in the Falkirk Plan 2021-2030. One of the themes being gender related violence. These themes will be a focus of sustained joint working to make a positive difference to communities. Work is currently ongoing to develop a Domestic Violence Policy.

The Falkirk Gender Based Violence (GBV) Partnership is now in place, a forum which represents Council Services, partners including Police Scotland, Forth Valley NHS and local voluntary organisations. The main objectives of this is to raise awareness of GBV issues, to develop services which effectively meet the needs of women, men, children and young people experiencing, or who have experienced, all forms of GBV in the Falkirk area, to identify gaps in service provision and to identify opportunities for working together.

There is no refuge accommodation available in the Falkirk area, accommodation for anyone fleeing domestic abuse is available through our temporary accommodation pool. Support is provided by Committed to Ending Abuse (CEA) which was formerly Falkirk & District Women's Aid. CEA offer individual support as well as group work.

Leaving Institutions

The following chart shows the number of people applying as homeless after being discharged from an institution and highlights that between 2017 to 2021 there were no applications from people leaving hospital but in 2021/22 there were 4 applications. For those leaving long term hospital placements, we have a pathway planning and discharge protocol to ensure that the correct housing options advice is received, and a suitable housing option or adaptation found that will meet the person's needs. In order for the housing service to be more accessible and ensure other services have access to officers, the service is looking at co-location with an officer working in the hospital one day a week.

The largest group applying are those leaving prison as shown in the following chart. It highlights the number of prison leavers fell from a high of 61 in 2012/13 to 4 in 2017/18. In response to the pandemic prisoners were released early under emergency powers used by the Scottish Government. This can be seen in the number of applications for 2020/21 which increased to 64, the number fell again in 2021/22 to 49.

Chart 6.4: Application by Property Type: Prison, Hospital 2012-2022



Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

Since the development of the Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone standards (SHORE), Falkirk Council has embraced its ethos and has a dedicated Housing Outreach Officer to ensure assistance is offered to any individuals entering or leaving a prison establishment. Homelessness is prevented by providing housing advice on current and future housing options and ensuring that on release an appropriate housing solution is sought. The earliest opportunity is used to engage with each individual through a person-centred approach and focus on a seamless comprehensive joint planning for the individual, taking account of needs and vulnerabilities. Following the successes of the prison liaison officer in 2019/20, this has now been made a permanent resource.

Armed Forces

There have been very few homeless applicants over the last 10 years who were members of the armed forces. Discussions with Military Matters, which is a part of Housing Options Scotland, highlighted that many ex-military personnel do not always see themselves as being ex-military which makes it difficult to ensure they are getting the help they need.

We understand that it can be difficult for veterans to reintegrate into society following military service and in 2020 the Council reaffirmed its support for local veterans by being a signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant. Having a joined-up approach between veteran's services and council support upon discharge was highlighted as a priority of the covenant. Also, promotion to raise awareness of services such as benefits advice and adaptations was of high importance. To deliver on our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, Falkirk Council, in partnership with Citizens' Advice Bureau, provide the Armed Services Advice Project. This project is based in the Denny and Dunipace Citizens' Advice Bureau and is our primary point of contact to identify the support that is available to veterans by providing advice, information, and direction to Falkirk's Armed Forces Community. This single point of contract should make contacting Falkirk Council housing services easier.

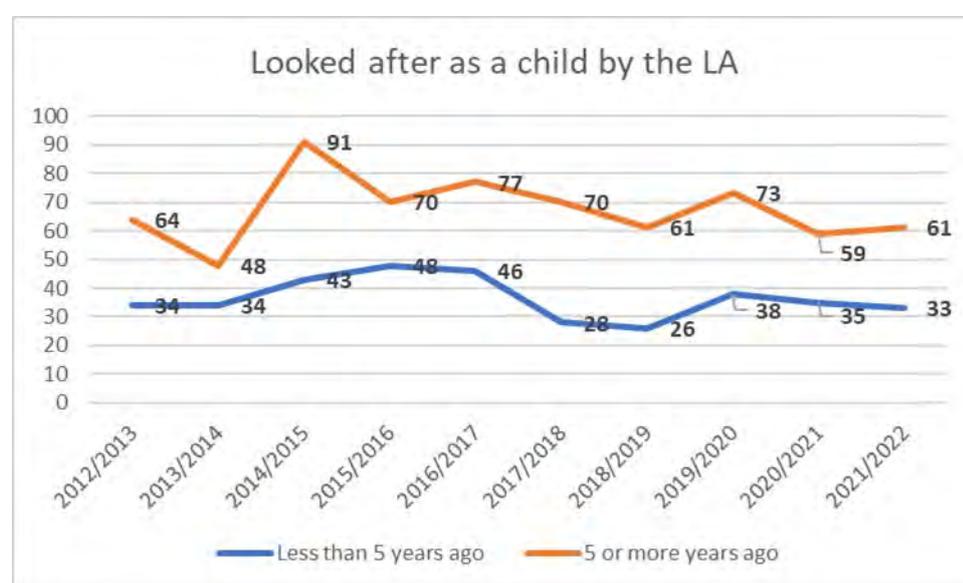
Once an individual applies for housing with the Council, their application is assessed, and they will be awarded one of four Bands of priority depending on their circumstances. The highest level of priority that can be awarded is Band 1. This band is awarded to applicants who are leaving the Armed Forces and their right to occupy service accommodation is coming to an end and a certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to occupy Service Living Accommodation has been issued.

Young People Leaving Care

The journey for care experienced young people is challenging, their outcomes are much poorer than their peers and recent policy and legislative developments acknowledge the need for care experienced young people to be supported until adulthood. Their rights have been extended to allow them to remain in their care placement to the age of 21, to receive aftercare support to the age of 26 and for joint social work and housing protocols to be established to help achieve the best outcomes for care leavers.

The following chart shows the number of looked after children that have applied as homeless in the last 5 years. It highlights the number presenting has fallen since 2016/17. The fall in homeless presentations coincides with the development of the 'Housing options Protocol for Care leavers,' which looks at the wider range of housing options to stop a crisis homeless presentation. This is reviewed on an annual basis and a performance framework has been implemented to ensure that progress is monitored, and the plan is achieving its key objectives.

Chart 6.5: Number of applicants looked after as a child by year 2016/7-2020/21



Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

Falkirk Council's commitment to improving options and opportunities for young people leaving care is demonstrated in our collaborative approach to meeting young people's needs which include:

- solutions to overcome the challenges of providing accommodation,
- a dedicated protocol for housing options,
- the need to continue support and how this is provided,
- the role and remit of the leaving care service and how support is provided to "older" young people in line with the Council's obligations.

The 'Housing options Protocol for Care leavers,' developed as part of this commitment, looks at the wider range of housing options to stop a crisis homeless presentation. This is reviewed on an annual basis and a performance framework has been implemented to ensure that the Council can monitor the progress of the plan in achieving its key objectives.

Falkirk Council's Children's Service also launched a five-year 'Closer to Home' strategy in 2019 that aims to deliver better outcomes for children and young people on the edges of care or care experienced. The Closer to Home strategy specifically looks at housing options for young people to

ensure they have effective transitions into adulthood with fair and equal access to housing, employment, and lifelong learning.

In order to facilitate resettlement back to the area, Children's Services have opened up a dedicated development of 12 one-bedroom self-contained flats with support that will support young people during this transition. This model is seen as both flexible and affordable. This offers young people a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy with support.

The council has been raising the profile of housing options for young people with partners such as youth coaches from Department of Working Pensions (DWP), Education Training Unit (ETU) and Family Nursing Partnership (FNP). Offering team training, housing options drop-in sessions and individual housing advice, support and sign posting for customers that have been identified as at risk if homeless or who are currently trying to navigate the system.

A Youth Tenancy Film has been developed with the East Housing Options Hub and other local authorities and champion's boards²⁰ to create a media resource for young people to help them sustain their tenancies. This has now been shared with partners and this resource will be promoted as a talking point for youth homeless prevention.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Falkirk Council together with RSL partners provide homes for people fleeing conflict from mainstream housing stock. Since 2016, the council has helped 13 families (just over 60 individuals) by participating in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Re-Settlement Scheme. The majority of these families still remain in Falkirk with only one family moving away from the area so far.

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Re-Settlement Scheme ended in 2021 with the launch of the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). This scheme has a global focus beyond Syria although most refugees on the scheme are from the Middle East North Africa region. The criteria for being eligible for resettlement in the UK, includes:

- those requiring urgent medical treatment.
- survivors of violence and torture.
- women and children at risk. those living in formal refugee camps, informal settlements, and host communities.

Two families have arrived in the area through the UKRS scheme with support being in place to help individuals access further education, employment, and voluntary work. Two more families are scheduled to arrive late summer and autumn 2023.

Two RSL properties have been offered to the Afghan Relocation Scheme (ARAP) we await a suitable match.

Falkirk is currently a welcome hub for arrivals from Ukraine, there are three established hubs in Grangemouth in 3 hotels together with 12 serviced apartments. The Scottish Government have procured the hotel estate until March 2024; however, this is subject to change with 28 days' notice. After displaced Ukrainians arrive at the welcome hubs, they should be matched to hosts or assisted with finding more permanent accommodation. All our Ukrainian households are provided with Housing Options advice, and most are bidding for properties via Housing online together with

²⁰ Care leavers engagement group

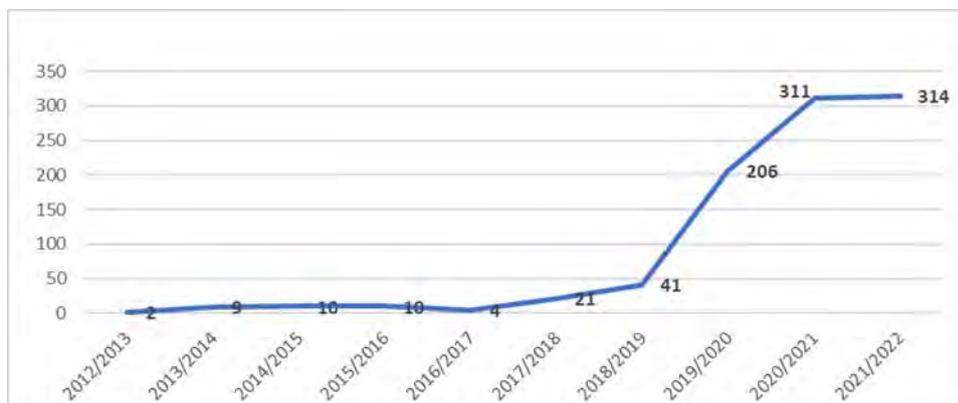
sourcing RSL properties and private rentals. Since March 2022 we have welcomed over 620 individuals to the area either in temporary welcome hub hotels or with sponsors in our community.

Mental well-being

Health and homelessness go hand in hand and interactions with health services increase after someone becomes homeless. Housing therefore has the potential to reduce or reinforce inequalities. People who become homeless have some of the highest and costliest health needs in a community which often are multiple and complex. In December 2022, 1,401 people who applied for Council housing indicated that they had a mental health issue.

There is an increasing trend since 2017/18 of those who have lost their accommodation because of mental health issues, especially since 2019/20 where there was just over a 400% increase between 2018/18 and 2019/20. Part of this increase can be attributed to a change in recording.

Chart 6.6: Number of homeless applicants failing to maintain their tenancy due to mental Health Reasons



Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

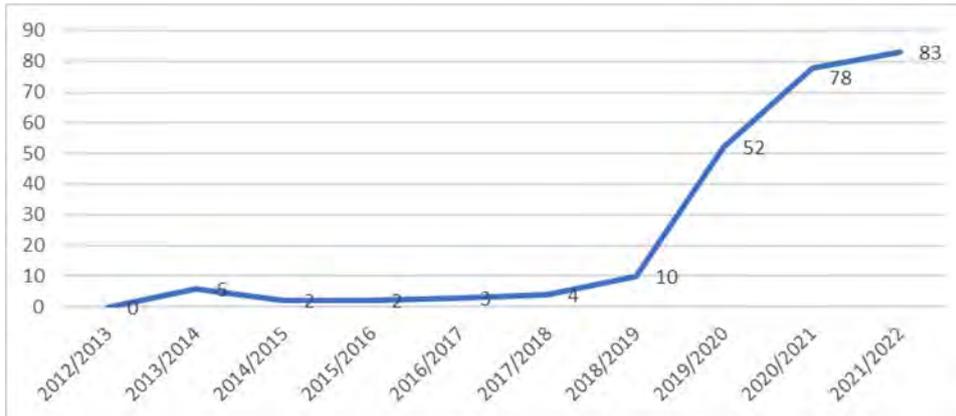
We are committed to improving the services we offer and how we offer them ensuring people have access to professional service at the right time. Therefore, we employed a Community Psychiatric Nurse to work with people across the Falkirk area who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The postholder delivers g assertive outreach, access to mental health assessments, providing a listening ear, signposting, liaising with GPs and primary care services, brief interventions, and referral to secondary services.

In addition, we work proactively with mental health colleagues, front line housing staff, secondary services, FDAMH and Salvation Army to assist with discharge planning with any case that has been identified as homeless or potentially homeless.

Alcohol and Drug Use

The following chart indicates the number of homeless applicants who gave alcohol or drug dependency as their reason for failing to maintain their accommodation. Between 2018/19 and 2019/20 there was a 420% increase and the numbers have increased every year since then.

Chart 6.7 Number of homeless applicants failing to maintain tenancy re drug/alcohol dependency.



Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

The highest number of deaths were recorded in 2018 in Falkirk at 43 deaths, but they have been falling since then, albeit a very slight increase in 2021. Falkirk has now recorded the tenth highest number of drug related deaths in Scotland with the majority being described as accidental poisoning^[2]. A dedicated action group was set up within the Falkirk Alcohol and Drug Partnership to examine the reasons behind these cases and implement significant changes to practices to ensure that these deaths are prevented and reduced.

A new Harm Reduction Hub has been established to help reduce the significant health inequalities that exist in this cohort and address matters relating to mental health and poverty.

The council's Housing First project has a dedicated Recovery Peer Mentor with lived experience to ensure that support can be provided to those on the project who are working towards or maintaining their recovery to sustain and enhance their progress. Naloxone training has been provided to all supported accommodation staff by the NHS with supplies of naloxone in supported accommodation units to respond to potential opiate overdoses. This training will be expanded to ensure that all front-line staff are also trained and informed to respond to incidents of overdose and suicide.

The Falkirk Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) has been working hard to reduce the number of drug deaths and near fatal overdoses over the last two years and the Homeless service has been participating in this journey. It has been recognised that there is a correlation between homelessness or those who have experienced homelessness and drug related deaths.

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and Housing First

The Falkirk Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is working toward the vision that the council will.

- Rehouse those who are homeless as quickly as possible.
- Reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation and limit the number of moves.
- Meet the needs of those who have complex and multiple needs we will commit to the development of a housing first approach through a partnership approach.

The R RTP focuses on proactive measures to prevent homelessness through early intervention and working in partnership with stakeholders. The following work is ongoing:

- Working closely with the Health and Social Care Partnership to ensure that mental health service are delivered for customers with the development of a homeless mental health post to work with homeless customers.

- Working proactively with our mental health colleagues, front line housing staff, secondary services, FDAMH and salvation army to assist with discharge planning with any case that has been identified as homeless or potentially homeless.
- The housing Community Psychiatric Nurse is working with people across the Falkirk area who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by providing an assertive outreach service, offering access to mental health assessments, and referral to secondary services.
- Joint working with Employment training unit (ETU) has taken place to reduce the number of homeless and repeat homeless presentations from single males 25 to 40 years old.
- Working closely with the family nursing partnership to attend Quartey meetings and sit on the advisory board to deliver housing options advice and support with a view to developing drop-sessions.
- Work is taking place to with the NHS teams, to see where the opportunities are to deliver housing options, looking at best practice and reviewing cases together.
- Attending regular meetings with pastoral teachers across Falkirk to inform and support them with housing options for young people.
- We continue to have good links with the Champions Board and engage regularly with young people with care experience to inform our practice while offering housing options advice and support.
- Good links have been developed with youth advisers in DWP and to date have assisted with 17 cases.

The RRTP is supported by a well-established annual review process through which priorities are adjusted to meet changing circumstances.

As part of RRTPs Local Authorities have also been asked to consider how a Housing First approach could be delivered within their area to address the multiple needs of some of the most complex homeless clients. These individuals will have a history of repeated homelessness, drug and alcohol issues or mental health issues and experienced previous intervention methods such as “housing last” that have not worked for them.

By providing secure and permanent homes with an intensive wrap around person centred support, Housing First will assist these individuals to resettle quickly into a community and start to rebuild their lives. This will be achieved by developing a multi-agency approach to address their issues whilst providing a secure and permanent home. To date the 18 households (tbc) have moved into their own secure tenancy.

Temporary Accommodation

Local authorities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation whilst assessing Homelessness duty and until duty is discharged. The Council’s temporary accommodation includes around 350 self-contained dispersed local authority and private sector leased properties which are for applicants with low support needs. There are two interim accommodation units for applicants with low to medium support needs, one for young people and another unit for families and single people. There is also an interim unit for single males which offers short-term low-level support (56 days) for single males who are undergoing their homeless assessment, but it’s hoped that this will be expanded to females in the future. There is also emergency crash pad accommodation for use out with office hours which are self-contained with basic cooking facilities with a maximum stay in these properties of 3 days.

In 2021/22, 100% of households who advised that they needed temporary accommodation were made an offer. Of the offers we made, 7.9% of these were refused. While this was above the 5% target this reflects changes made over this year in how temporary accommodation is allocated, and the limitation of the type of temporary accommodation available at certain times over this period. When surveying residents of temporary accommodation, 90.7% of them advised that they were satisfied with the quality of accommodation provided.

The council has worked over the last ten years to eliminate the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for homeless households although there were thirteen instances in 2021/22 where Bed & Breakfast accommodation was used for very short periods. This was due to pressures on the availability of temporary accommodation at these times, or the specific needs of the individuals involved. In all instances, the length of stay was less than seven days, and so we recorded no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order

The following chart indicates the number of people in temporary accommodation at the end of March each year for the last 10 years. Between 2019 and 2021 the numbers increased steadily to a high of 378 in 2021. At the end of March 2022 there were 329 households in temporary accommodation, 90 households with children and 170 children in total which was a 4% increase on the previous year.

We recognise the detrimental impact of homelessness on children health and are committed to reducing the time children and families spend in temporary accommodation. We know that the increase in families in temporary accommodation is partly as a result of a number of larger families requiring assistance. There is a limited number of larger properties becoming available for let in either the social or private rented sector in the area. Turnover within these properties is also much lower than in smaller properties. To try and increase the number of larger properties in the council's stock the approval was given to pay 10% over the DV valuation for larger properties. On new build sites the council highlights the need for larger family homes to be included in the site mix. There is also a need to reduce the number of temporary properties used, to ensure that mainstream stock is maximized to give people more permanent housing solutions.

Chart 6.8: Households in Temporary Accommodation at the end of March 2013-2022



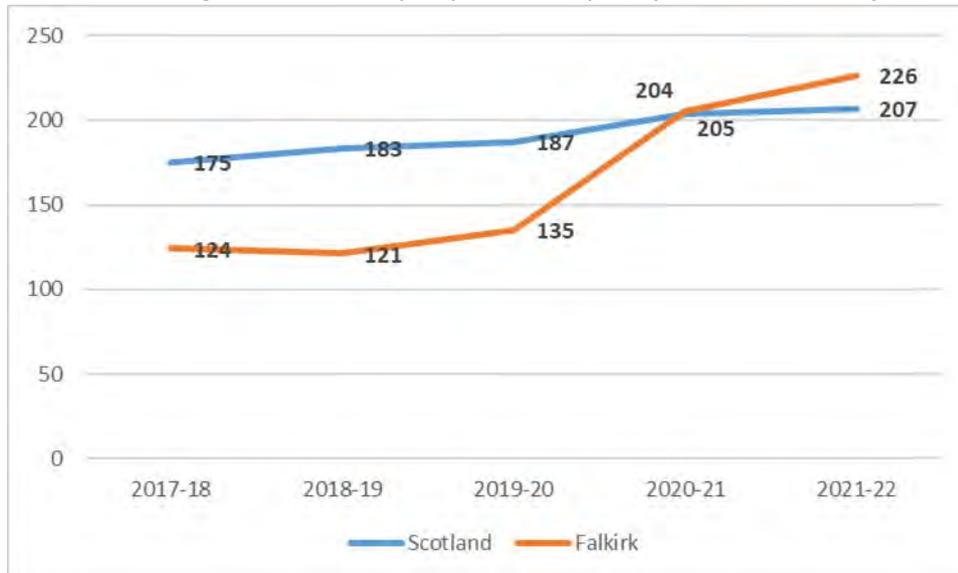
Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

Despite the rise in homeless applications, we are working towards ensuring that people are rapidly rehoused as quickly as possible. In 2021/22 there were 55 properties that were 'flipped' from temporary accommodation to permanent tenancies. This has a two-fold benefit of minimizing the

number of moves required by that household, as well as reducing the number of properties used as temporary accommodation.

Since 2018/19 there has been a steady increase in the average number of days spent in temporary accommodation, a 67% increase in three years with the average number of days higher in Falkirk now than nationally. This is putting pressure on the existing temporary accommodation stock and making it difficult to reduce this to pre-pandemic levels.

Chart 6.9: Average total time (days) spent in temporary accommodation for cases that closed

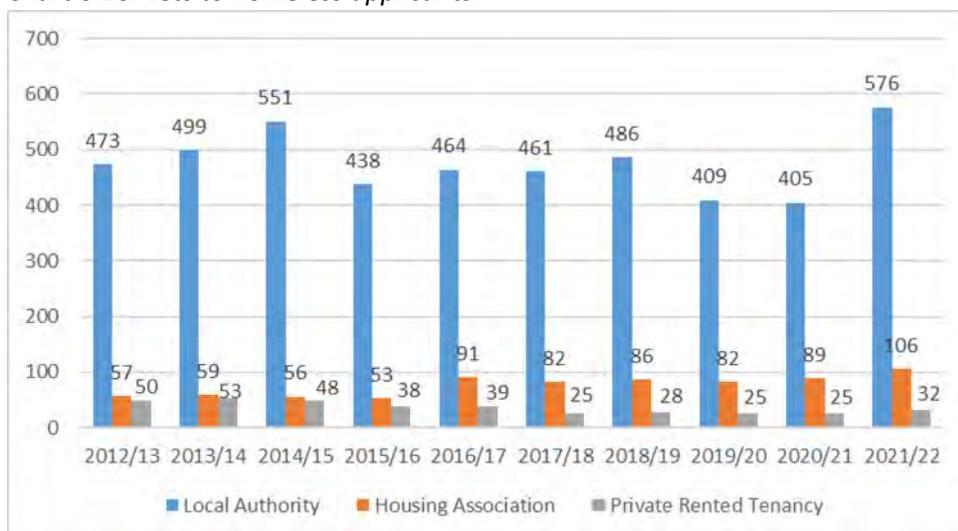


Source – Scottish Government Homelessness Statistics

Outcomes

The increase in the quota of lets to homeless applicants at the end of 2021 had an impact on the outcome of homeless applicants in 2021/22 as seen in the following chart. There was a 42% increase from 2020/21 in local authority lets. It also shows an increase in the number of lets by RSLs in 2021/22 with a 19% increase and there was also a 28% increase in private rented lets. The increase in RSL lets may be due in part to the 106 new build RSL completions in 2021/22 compared to 44 the previous year and the council having a minimum of 50% nomination rights to these lets.

Chart 6.10: Lets to homeless applicants.



Source: Scottish Government Annual Homeless Report 2021-2022

The average length of time from assessment to case closure for those assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness was 338 days in Falkirk for 2021/22 which was a 14% increase on the previous year and compares to 256 days nationally. There are several reasons for this increase in the time taken to rehouse homeless applicants including:

- a reduction in the turnover of available accommodation
- an increase in the numbers who the Council have a duty to rehouse,
- a decrease in stock from the Council new build programme and
- refusals of first offers (the Council currently have two offers for our statutory homeless clients who presented prior to 1st October 2020)
- Difficulties in turning void properties around with void re-let times increasing.

To reduce time spent in temporary accommodation a package of measures was approved by the Council's Executive committee. These included:

- increasing the quota of vacancies ring-fenced for homeless applicants. This was increased from 33% to 45% but at the end of 2021 this was increased to 70% for a 3-month period. This was extended for a further three-month period (March 2022)
- capping the period during which (choice-based) bids can be made before direct matching takes place and
- introducing a 'one offer only' policy.

Scottish Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets the standards and outcomes in terms of access to help and advice and continuing support to help people access and keep a home. Performance information is used to track how well we are doing and where we need to improve. We are constantly striving to deliver excellent services to address homelessness.

- In 2021-22 there were 1,124 applicants rehoused. The time taken to re-let properties increased from 66.8 in 2020/21 to 77 days, which is higher than the Scottish average of 51.6 days. Restrictions put in place during the covid pandemic affected how quickly we were able to re-let properties, as this restricted the number of trades undertaking work within a property at the same time. This resulted in a longer void turn-over and backlog of properties that required work. We have employed additional resources to tackle the backlog and longer void turnover. We continue to monitor voids so that they are prioritised for those who are in greatest need and have implemented processes to improve relet timescales and minimise rent loss.
- Tenancy sustainment increased on the previous year to 94.5% compared to 92.9% the previous year and is higher than the national average of 90.7%. Our approach to tenancy sustainment is based on building positive relationships with tenants. To support tenants at the crucial early stages of their tenancy we have improved the information provided at the pre offer of tenancy stage, we are currently working with the homeless team to review this crucial intervention to ensure the best possible start for a tenancy. We continue to support tenants through our programme of annual tenant visits. We have a formal group of Finance, Housing and Support staff who meet regularly to review our practice to ensure we support tenants and enable them to access other council services.

Housing Support

Local authorities have a duty to provide housing support services to people assessed as unintentionally homeless and having a support need under the Housing Support Duty 2013. Alongside our duties to provide support to homeless households under the Housing Support Duty 2013, we have a tenancy support service (delivered by a third sector organisation). The Tenancy Support Service provides a visiting housing support service to individuals at risk of becoming homeless or have recently experienced homelessness. Support is provided on a short-term basis to promote independence and ensure that individuals develop the skills necessary to maintain their home without support.

Data from the 2021/22 HL1 highlights that 932 households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness had at least one support need, this is a 13% increase on the previous year and compares to a 5% increase nationally.

Table 6.3 shows the number of referrals to the tenancy support service over the last four years. It clearly highlights the increase in referrals from 2020-2022 during covid.

Table 6.3: Number of Referrals to Tenancy Support Service

Year	No. of Referrals
2019/20	689
2020/21	840
2021/22	934
2022/23	838

Source: Falkirk Council Information Systems

Consultation

Preventing homelessness was a key comment made in the LHS consultation. Along with recognition of the importance of housing support and ending hostel provision.

The LHS survey highlighted the following issues were very important or important.

- Prevent people from becoming homeless (90%)
- Provide housing advice for people (90%)
- Provide supported accommodation/ hostel accommodation (79%)
- Signpost clients to services to maximise income and benefits (84%)

Focus group participants highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach to tackling homelessness, including prevention measures, access to support services, and the provision of suitable accommodation. Maximising Income and joint working with Department of Work and Pensions and the Health and Social Care Partnership being seen as essential.

Key issues and challenges

- The highest numbers of applications are from people in their mid-20s to mid-30's age group.
- Being asked to leave has consistently been one of the main reasons for homeless applications in the last 5 years.
- Falkirk has a high rate of domestic abuse cases, accounting for 29% of homeless applications.
- There has been an increasing trend in recent years of people losing their accommodation because of mental health issues.
- There has been a substantial increase in recent years of homeless applicants failing to maintain their accommodation due to alcohol or drug dependency.
- We continue to see an increase in length of time spent in temporary accommodation and time to rehouse customers into secure permanent accommodation.

- We are now having to use B&B accommodation which has not been used quite a few years and also breaching the unsuitable accommodation order.
- The removal of local connection requirement when making a homeless application could result in a huge increase in homeless applications.

Actions

1. Work in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that prevention pathways are developed and implemented.
2. Meet people's housing needs at the earliest opportunity.
3. Develop and implement a housing specific domestic abuse policy.
4. We will participate and contribute to the wider council trauma enforced practise.
5. Research barriers to mutual exchange to increase its use.
6. Relaunch an access to private rented accommodation service.
7. Work with partners to support those coming to the Falkirk area through the refugee, displaced people re-settlement Schemes to access suitable and secure accommodation.
8. Undertake a comprehensive review of the Council allocations policy.
9. We will make best use of RSL nominations and section 5 referrals.
10. Investigate options to launch a common housing register (taking into account the recommendations of the national task and finish group)
11. Undertake a comprehensive review of housing support/supported accommodation as part of the rapid rehousing plan.
12. Explore options to promote services for households with ongoing addictions and in recovery.
13. Review S11 and S14 processes and procedures.
14. Review the temporary accommodation action plan on an annual basis.
15. Continue to provide Housing First services for most vulnerable clients who experience multiple incidents of homelessness.
16. "Getting it right for everyone" - take a multi-agency approach to customers with embedded behaviour Improve delivery of homeless services and outcomes for customers.
17. Improve delivery of homeless services and outcomes for customers.

^[1] Domestic abuse: statistics recorded by the police in Scotland - 2021/22 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

^[2] Drug Related Deaths in Scotland in 2021, NRS, July 2022

Section 7 LHS priority 4 Improving housing and support for vulnerable groups

LHS Outcome

We have a range of housing and support options to promote independence for vulnerable people.

Strategic context

Contributes to the following National Outcomes

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- We are healthy and active
- We respect, protect, and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

Context

Enabling people to live independently in their own home as long as possible is a Scottish Government priority re National Health and Wellbeing outcome 2.

Helping people to be independent through support at home or in the community links to Falkirk Plan priorities around mental health and wellbeing, substance misuse and gender-based violence. This requires joint working across statutory and voluntary organisations to focus on prevention and enablement, facilitated by providing people with information around support services provided at the right time and in the right place.

Housing plays a key role through the provision of high quality accessible affordable safe and warm homes. It is also important for homes to have the infrastructure to create sustainable communities. This includes the provision of housing support services to help well-being, increase opportunities and reduce inequality.

We have covered all the equalities groups identified in LHS guidance 2019 (paragraph 10.10) in this section or section 6.

We are committed to the priorities in the Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan including identifying need for larger family homes. We have therefore also included within this section larger accommodation for families. This relates to both the need and supply of larger properties in general and for families where one or more members have physical disabilities.

Range of provision

There are a range of specialist services and provision in place locally which are set out below.

Living Well Falkirk offers quick and easy-to-use 24-hour access to:

- self-management advice to help stay as fit and able as possible.
- changes that can be made to help living independently.
- information about local and national services.
- suggestions on staying safe at home, preventing falls, help available with bathing, eating etc.
- options to purchase, or request the loan of, equipment matched to needs.
- contact information for further support.

A self-assessment is available for someone to do at their own pace in their own home. Staff at local libraries can also assist. If someone requires more support, they may be asked to make an

appointment at a Living Well Falkirk Centre. If needed, there is a wider range of equipment and small adaptations which can be provided free of charge after a Centre appointment.

The top five assessment areas that people identified where they have difficulty in the home are bathroom (29%), entrance (23%), stairs and steps (8%), personal care (8%) and bedroom (6%).

Over the period February-December 2022, there were 4, 112 users of Living Well²¹ Falkirk.

Equipment and adaptations Helping People to Stay at Home for Longer

Helping people to stay in their home for longer and ensuring access to homes that meet changing physical needs is supported by the delivery of our multi-tenure Disabled Adaptation Scheme. Council tenants have their needs assessed and properties adapted for them whilst private owners can receive full or part funding. [Housing adaptations](#) information on the council website provides more information including the [Care and Repair](#) service.

The following tables provide information on properties with adaptations.

Table 7.1: Dwellings with disabled adaptations in Falkirk Council area

% of area	Age of dwelling Pre 1945	Age of dwelling Post 1945	House	Flat	2 bedrooms of less	3+ bedroom
23%	32%	21%	19%	33%	34%	15%

Source SHCS 2017-2019

The following table sets out disabled adaptations carried out using the Scheme of Assistance.

Table 7.2: Adaptations carried out under the Scheme of Assistance

Year	No. of Adaptations	Amount (£)
2021/22	52	178,230
2020-21	26	122,577
2019-20	69	189,189
2018-19	83	362,462
2017-18	67	255,704
2016-17	94	319,273

Source: Scheme of Assistance data from Scottish Government, 2016-2021

To further support property conditions in the private sector elderly residents can access the [Small repairs and handypersons](#) service. The following table sets out use of this service. The drop in jobs undertaken during 2020/21 is a result of Covid and the service being placed on hold. The SRHS is funded from generated income from the service and the Scheme of Assistance. The service also offers Handyperson (Health & Safety based) works on a multi-tenure basis. Addressing low level tasks and repairs quickly, reducing the likelihood of them developing into a bigger issue for either the person or property.

²¹ A user in this context is someone who has returned to the Living Well site for 2 or more sessions.

Table 7.3: Services provided Small Repairs Handypersons service.

YEAR	Total requests	Electrician	Plumber	Joiner
2022-23	334	67	155	112
2021-22	464	143	148	173
2020-21	78	32	22	24
2019-20	547	148	182	217
2018-19	679	179	217	283
2017-18	432	146	137	149

Source: Falkirk Council SRHP service

Specialist housing

The following table sets out the existing supply of 3, 440 specialist properties. This relates to how landlords define their current accommodation in relation to their returns to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Table 7.4: Social rented stock by provider and type of provision 2020/21

Landlord name	Sheltered	Very Sheltered	Amenity	Wheelchair	Ambulant disabled	Retirement housing	Total
Bield HA	0	0	0	1	0	151	152
Blackwood HA	0	0	14	15	8	0	37
Cairn HA	0	0	44	0	0	0	44
Falkirk Council	205	27	401	189	1,937	0	2759
Hanover HA	0	0	47	0	0	136	183
Horizon HA	0	0	0	30	19	0	49
Key HA	0	0	0	8	12	0	20
Kingdom HA	0	0	4	2	0	1	7
Link Group	0	0	0	13	24	152	189
Total	205	27	510	258	2000	440	3440

Source: Scottish Housing Regulator, Stock data all social landlord's complete dataset 2020-2021

We have found it challenging to access information on specialist provision in the private sector and are working with our planning colleagues on this as set out on the section around wheelchair targets.

Health and social care provision

The following table sets out health and residential care provision. The term “bedded care” is used by HSCP to refer to hospital, nursing or residential care homes.

Appendix 1

Table 7.5: Supply of “bedded care” including residential care homes 2021.

Location	Bed	Comment
Falkirk Community Hospital	16	Provides specialised dementia care in an NHS setting prior to care home.
Bo’ness Community Hospital	40	24-bedded rehab unit for frail elderly and 16 for patients with dementia.
Intermediate care	34	Short-term (6-week) rehabilitation-/ reablement focussed interventions.
Care homes	1081	
Specialist rehab	16	10-bed unit for Forth Valley-wide specialist rehabilitation Bellfield Stirling.
Hospice	18	Strathcarron near Denny
Hospital at home	15	Target 25

Source Buchan Associates

Larger housing

The following table sets out social rented self-contained properties, highlighting only 1% are one apartment (bedsits) with 3% being 5 apartments (4 bedrooms).

Table 7.6 Social rented stock in Falkirk Council area by landlord and apartment size 2021/22

Landlord name	1 Apt	2 Apt	3 Apt	4 Apt	5 Apt	Total
Falkirk Council	26	2,711	8,928	4,494	499	16,658
Ark Housing Association Ltd	0	0	0	1	0	1
Bield Housing & Care	52	94	7	2	0	155
Blackwood Homes and Care	0	16	15	4	2	37
Cairn Housing Association Ltd	33	12	2	8	0	55
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association Ltd	0	12	75	8	0	95
Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association Ltd	0	167	18	11	0	196
Key Housing Association Ltd	0	51	13	7	0	71
Kingdom Housing Association Ltd	0	4	59	10	0	73
Link Group Ltd	28	741	832	332	34	1,967
Horizon Housing Association Ltd	0	25	40	24	0	89
Loretto Housing Association Ltd	0	69	50	24	8	151
Paragon Housing Association Ltd	5	117	438	276	24	860
West Lothian Housing Partnership Ltd	0	2	2	0	0	4
Total number	144	4,021	10,479	5,201	567	20,412
% of total stock	1%	20%	51%	25%	3%	

Source: Scottish Housing Regulator

Summary of need and gaps

The following table indicates 3% of households locally require adaptations. LHS consultation identified concerns around how to can access information on adaptations.

Table 7.7: Proportion of households reporting need of Disabled Adaptations

	Falkirk	Scotland
% Household's reporting requiring adaptation	3%	3%
Equivalent number of households	2000	82, 000

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019

Ambulant disabled (amenity) housing

The following table highlights 392 households on the Falkirk Council register have medical points indicating they are likely to require amenity or accessible housing. The definition for such housing is as Falkirk Council's allocations policy.

Table 7.8: Falkirk Council applicants with medical priority (bands 2-4) 2021

Current Location	Number
Central	141
East	109
Not available	18
Out with area	32
West	92
Total	392

Source: Falkirk Council Information Systems

Wheelchair housing

The following table highlights that 391 households on the Falkirk Council register have the medical points highlighting that they are likely to require wheelchair housing.

Table 7.9: Falkirk Council applicants with medical priority (band 1F) 2021

Current Location	Number
Central	133
East	97
Not available	20
Out with area	34
West	107
Total	391

Source: Falkirk Council Information Systems

The following table sets out estimates of wheelchair users and unmet need for wheelchair housing across all tenures.

Table 7.10: Estimate of wheelchair users.

Steps	Number*
Estimate indoor wheelchair user households	297
Estimate outdoor user wheelchair user households	1,706
Estimate indoor and outdoor wheelchair users	668
Estimate all wheelchair users	2,670
Estimate unmet housing need among indoor wheelchair user households	76
Estimate unmet housing need among wheelchair user households using wheelchairs full time	127
Estimate unmet housing need among wheelchair user households	527

Source: Falkirk Housing Need and Demand Assessment. *Numbers are subject to rounding and calculated at nearest whole number

Supported housing for older people.

The following table sets out demand for older peoples supported accommodation. The criteria being people over sixty-five with high medical points and assessed by social work. Although area of choice is provided below it is recognised that there is demand in areas which do not provide this type of accommodation. However, this is explored further in the following section on older peoples' accommodation.

Table 7.11: Area Analysis of supported housing for older people waiting list 2021.

Area Preference	Number of applicants
Bo'ness	6
Polmont & Rural South	12
Denny & Bonnybridge	28
Grangemouth	22
Larbert & Stenhousemuir	25
Falkirk	46
Total	139

Source Falkirk Council records

Bedded care.

The HNSA highlighted that Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership are taking a systems wide approach with an independent consultant (Buchan Associates) to “bedded care” and the future use of the community hospital site through a master plan. The term “bedded care” is used by the HNSA and most closely relates to residential or nursing care or hospital provision.

The HNSA identified that at occupancy rates for residential care were high for the three local authorities covered by Forth Valley Health Board (Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils). Housing services are represented in the working group progressing the work of the masterplan.

In response to new national planning arrangements for capital projects recently introduced by the Scottish Government, the next step for the master plan project, will be the development of an Initial Agreement. This will now be integrated into a Whole System Plan for the Forth Valley area. A series of projects will be aligned in a new long-term planning approach for health and care services across Falkirk and wider Forth Valley area.

It is recognised the national position regarding capital funding will be constrained. However, in addition to the Falkirk Community Hospital project, Falkirk Council recently re-affirmed its commitment to developing a new intermediate care facility in the area.

Discussion at Falkirk Council budget meeting in March 2023 acknowledged £3.7m previously earmarked for such a facility was unlikely to be sufficient. The Council took the decision to remove the funding from the capital programme and officers will work with Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership to develop a new proposal and business case which will allow new funding to be allocated later. This work will include conditions surveys of current buildings and maintenance costs.

In the meantime, work to implement new models of care, services and support continues to be taken forward by the Falkirk HNSA.

Older peoples housing

The HNDA indicated low demand for older peoples' housing developments previously classed as sheltered and very sheltered. RSL partners advise that the withdrawal of housing support for sheltered and very sheltered housing developments along with complexities with care home registrations led them to review their provision. Currently, local RSLs provide retirement housing for older people with a weekday staff presence to provide initial housing management oversight.

Table 7.5 sets out amenity (510), ambulant/ disabled (2000) and retirement (440) properties which may suit older peoples' needs. If the older person requires care, a community care assessment will be carried out and this provided in their own home. Ambulant disabled properties also include the 13 blocks of council high rise flats. Table 7.12 sets out the need for this type of accommodation.

People with complex needs

There is a need for housing, support and care options for people with community care needs who are aged under 65 and are currently housed out with Falkirk Council area as there are no suitable options locally.

Table 7.12: People under 65 housed out with Falkirk Council area February 2023

Care Group	Client numbers	Estimated annual costs
Learning Disability	28	£3,055,995
Mental Health	31	£1,756,624
Physical disability	21	£1,579,999
Other	12	£729,561
Total	92	£7,122,179

Source: Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership

Summary of local population's current specialist provision needs and gaps.

We identified in the HNDA that most older people are owner occupiers, the highest percentage of those in fuel poverty are pensioner households and that a high percentage of those who live in properties in disrepair are pensioner households. This therefore highlights the ongoing need for services which assist older people to remain in their own home through assistance or advice on how to keep their property warm and in good repair, particularly older people in the private sector. These services include Living Well Falkirk, care and repair, small persons handypersons service. Information on energy advice is provided under LHS priority 5.

The Falkirk Council Tenant Satisfaction Survey reported that people who identified as having a physical disability highlighted higher levels of satisfaction with their local community and feeling safe in their communities compared to all tenants.

Summary of levels or need for specialist accommodation and plans to address.

Adapted, accessible housing, wheelchair.

The HNDA highlighted the need for amenity, accessible and wheelchair housing comes from all age groups. There were 3,962 people in 2021 who qualified for an enhanced rate of Personal Independence Payments from the Department of Work and Pensions and live in Falkirk Council area. (This is based on having mobility limited to 20 meters.) 83% were below pension age and 17% of pension age. In the HNDA we indicated that disability is rising across all age bands with the highest

percentage increases being for working age adults and children. We estimated in the HNDA that over 400 children locally had a physical disability.

There are households in Falkirk Council temporary accommodation who require permanent accessible or wheelchair housing. This includes larger families where one or more members have a physical disability and need accessible or adapted housing. The lack of available permanent housing has meant households are spending longer in temporary accommodation.

We plan to address need for accessible and wheelchair housing in two ways. Firstly, we give priority in Strategic Housing Investment Plan to projects which include accessible and wheelchair housing. We plan to increase further the priority given to projects which include properties which meet Scottish Government Housing for Varying Needs wheelchair standards basic requirement. Secondly, we plan to explore how we can adapt properties purchased through the Council's buyback scheme to make them suitable for people who need larger housing including accessible or disabled housing. We are currently exploring with RSL partners who have a buyback programme.

Older people's housing

The HNDA identified that the physical layout of some older peoples' developments do not meet current and anticipated future needs of their tenants. A RSL project in the SHIP, reconfigured staff accommodation into three self-contained additional properties. Falkirk Council recently completed a project converting former staff accommodation in an older peoples' development into additional housing. A RSL has proposals to reconfigure a development in current SHIP.

Complex needs

We are working with partners in the HSCP and RSLs to identify suitable housing, support and care options locally for people under 65 who are housed out with Falkirk Council area where there are no options locally.

We are working with Kingdom Housing Association, Kingdom Support and the HSCP to provide a core and cluster model in a new build development. There are 4 properties provided for people previously in health and care settings out with Falkirk Council area. This was a section 75 site under the Affordable Housing Policy which involved us working with our planning colleagues to enable one of the properties to be designated as a 24-hour staff base. It is anticipated that as tenants settle into their new homes the need for a support base may reduce with potential for the staff base to be redesignated as affordable housing. This project was supported by grant funding through the SHIP.

We are exploring with the HSCP and our housing partners in the SHIP opportunities to provide further options for people under 65 with community care needs housed out with area. As we do this, we are linking with HSCP initiatives around Scottish Government Closer to Home.

Gaps

The HNDA the following gaps in relation to information on the supply and need for specialist provision.

1. There is a lack of robust information on accessible and wheelchair accommodation in the private sector.
2. There is a lack of clarity on terminology used for accessible, amenity and wheelchair housing by council and RSLs in relation to existing stock. As highlighted in LHS consultation this

causes confusion for local people looking to access such accommodation and stakeholders such as health and social care partners, voluntary groups.

3. There is no common housing register between Falkirk Council and RSL partners. To avoid duplication, we therefore used a range of data sources.
4. We have used SHCS data for numbers of disabled adaptations. This does not identify if adaptations are removed.
5. Consultation identified older people's groups are often not aware of where older people can get advice on disabled adaptations or how to access specialist accommodation.

Larger properties

As previously highlighted, we are aware that larger properties (4 bedroom and above) make up only 3% of social rented stock locally and have prioritised increasing supply over though LHS 2017-2022. The following tables set out how we have tried to address through buybacks.

Table 7.13: Bedroom and over buybacks 2017/8 -2022/23

HNDA sub area	2017-2018	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total
Bo'ness			1	1	2
Grangemouth	1		3	3	7
Stenhousemuir, Larbert & Rural North		1			1
Falkirk				1	1
Total	1	1	4	5	11

Source: Falkirk Council buyback monitoring

In relation to new build there has been 10 larger properties build (2 Council new build and 8 RSL) over the period of the last LHS.

Wheelchair target and future plans

The Falkirk Local Development Plan sets out an all-tenure target for 5-10% of new properties to be wheelchair accessible [SG06 Affordable Housing \(falkirk.gov.uk\)](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/SG06-Affordable-Housing).

We agreed with delivery partners increased priority being given to SHIP projects with wheelchair housing. The Falkirk SHIP 2024/ 25 – 2028/29 sets out that 5% of new build properties will be wheelchair and 16% accessible as per Scottish Government Housing for Varying Needs Standards.

We discussed wheelchair housing with Homes for Scotland in January 2023 and were advised that private developers need to identify at pre application stage if they can change their existing housing models to provide wheelchair housing. However, developers also emphasised that in the current economic climate they see few financial benefits to building wheelchair housing when they are not confident of having a market for such properties. Developers advised that their focus is on meeting legislation around building standards. We, therefore welcome the consultation around the review of Housing for Varying Needs Standards and reference to a future role re building standards.

In recognition of comments made by Homes for Scotland, we have committed staff resources to closer joint working with planning colleagues and we are jointly emphasising the all tenure wheelchair tenure target at pre planning application discussions with developers.

We are also working with our RSL partners to explore the potential to adapt future buyback properties for someone with mobility difficulties and or to be extended as larger properties. We have explored with colleagues at Scottish Government the potential for additional funding through Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant.

Learning Disabilities

The following table highlights people with learning disabilities known to the local authority by accommodation type, indicating that over 90% live in mainstream accommodation.

Table 7.14: Accommodation type adults with learning disabilities known to the local authority 2019.

Area	Mainstream accommodation – with support	Mainstream accommodation –no support	Mainstream accommodation – support status not recorded	Supported Accommodation	Registered Adult Care Homes	Other	Not known	All Adults
Falkirk	236	172	43	91	102	27	20	691
%	34%	25%	6%	13%	15%	4%	3%	100%
Scotland	6,787	6,159	1,638	3,466	1,837	921	2,776	23,584
%	29%	26%	7%	15%	8%	4%	12%	100%

Source: Scottish Council for Learning Disabilities (2019) accessed 30/1/22

The Scottish Council for Learning Disabilities (2019) report highlighted that most people with learning disabilities locally are male (69%). In relation to age profile, the highest percentage were under 35 (45%). Around a quarter of people with learning disabilities are on the autistic spectrum disorder. As a significant percentage live with family carers, it is anticipated that as parent age there will be increased need for support. The HNDA identified that there were 345 people receiving Homecare.

The Falkirk Collaborative Team are working to develop person centred models of support for people with learning disabilities. This includes partners from Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Falkirk HSCP, Falkirk Council, NHS Forth Valley, and Neighbourhood Networks. The project aims to work with service users, carers, staff, communities, and key stakeholders to improve outcomes and opportunities for adults with learning disabilities around living, learning, wellbeing, and working.

Tenant Satisfaction

Results from the Falkirk Council Tenant Satisfaction 2021 survey highlighted that when compared to the wider population there were:

- lower satisfaction levels from people with learning disabilities with their local area,
- higher percentages reporting feeling unsafe.
- higher percentages using the internet and preferring a range of communication methods.

We will work with HSCP and community planning to take improve working with voluntary groups on these areas.

Dementia

The number of people estimated to be living with dementia range between 1,198²² and 2, 598²³ although the lower figure acknowledges likely underreporting.

As per the HNDA 205 people receiving Homecare were classed as having dementia with 95% over 65.

We expect the number of people living with dementia in Falkirk is likely to increase by around 40% in the next 25 years as the population ages.

The Dementia Innovation Fund was developed in 2019. The HSCP Strategic Plan refers to funding allocated is to Town Break, who provide day services for people affected by dementia and their carers. They currently operate groups throughout Falkirk area, over 5 days. The service was paused during Covid-19, however, is now fully operational. Most referrals from the Community Mental Health Team, Alzheimer's Scotland, GPs and the Carers Centre. People are also able to self-refer.

The Joint Dementia Initiative (JDI) aims to help people with Dementia to continue to live the life they want to live by supporting them to live at home in their own communities for as long as possible. The JDI team work with the service user and carer to find ways to reduce the risks surrounding remaining at home.

The Dementia Innovation Fund was developed in 2019. The HSCP Strategic Plan refers to funding allocated is to Town Break, who provide day services for people affected by dementia and their carers. They currently operate groups throughout Falkirk area, over 5 days. The service was paused during Covid-19, however, is now fully operational. Most referrals from the Community Mental Health Team, Alzheimer's Scotland, GPs and the Carers Centre. People are also able to self-refer.

Ethnic minority groups

As part of LHS consultation a focus group was carried out with the Rainbow Muslim Women's group and refugees/ asylum seekers. Those resettled within Falkirk Council area all advised that they wanted to remain in their current community as their children had settled in schools and their homes were acceptable. All families advised they preferred a garden with the reasons being because they had a young family, or gardening improved their mental wellbeing. Generally, asylum seeker families highlighted they required larger properties, four bedrooms or more. In terms of accessing and using on-line services, the barrier (in the main) is language rather than I.T. skills. People advised they were proficient in using online services in their first language.

From our LHS consultation we have an improved understanding of the needs from ethnic minority groups. Over the course of the new LHS we will work to further improve understanding of the needs of ethnic minority families for larger / extended properties and their cultural needs.

The Falkirk Council Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2021 indicated that people who identified as coming from a minority ethnic group were more likely to want Falkirk Council to communicate with them by letter rather than other methods of engagement. However, levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood and feelings of safety were no different to those from all tenants. We set out in the Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy that we use a range of methods to consult with tenants.

²² Alzheimer Scotland as per the HNDA

²³ Falkirk Health and Social Care Strategic Plan 2023

Consideration of needs of armed forces communities and engagement with relevant organisations such as Veteran Scotland.

We found it difficult initially to contact armed forces organisations and veterans however we had a useful discussion with a representative from Military Matters a project ongoing within Housing Options Scotland and we had feedback from the Veterans Champion for Falkirk Council Area. Since discussion took place, Falkirk Council has reaffirmed its support for local veterans as signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Citizens' Advice Bureau will provide the Armed Services Advice Project in partnership with Falkirk Council. This project is based in the Denny and Dunipace Citizens' Advice Bureau and is the primary point of contact to identify the support available to veterans by providing advice, information, and direction to Falkirk's Armed Forces Community.

The key points from feedback with Military Matters and the Veteran Champion are:

- Ex Service Personnel often not identify as such, especially if they served for short periods of time. However, this still entitles them to full support.
- Early service leavers have no or very little transition support into civilian life if it is unplanned and little information is provided about “Real World” living.
- Second phase support is often required, some will often leave the forces to live initially with friends or family, but this is not a long term or settled housing solution.
- Ex Service Personnel do however generally know to contact Councils for housing.
- A huge importance should be placed on Tenancy Support and help to develop living skills including budgeting, arranging appointments, welfare benefits, paying bills, understanding choice based letting.
- Military Matters advised that an investment should be made into ex service personnel in new tenancies like Housing First models, including regular visits from housing staff.
- Importance on providing up to date service provision to Military Matters, they include all information within Good Area guides that are given during planned discharges.
- Relevant housing staff completing the Armed Forces Mental Health First Aid training course.
- Strong links between those named as Armed Forces Champions in the area e.g., Council members, DWP staff, NHS.
- Raise awareness of the Veteran Scotland Resource website.
- Fife Council’s support for veterans’ worthy of investigating and learning from

Key workers

From discussions with the HSCP we recognise that there is a shortage of social care workers. This impacts on bed blocking in hospitals when patients cannot be discharged due to a lack of workers to enable a care package to be put in place.

We recognise the important role that housing plays in retaining key workers who are vital to the delivery of local services. We have made key workers a priority group in our Affordable Housing Policy. Over the last year, one of our RSL partners delivered a shared equity project of 11 properties on a site close to Forth Valley hospital. 5 of these properties were sold to key workers.

We include an action in this LHS to develop procedures with the HSCP for marketing such properties.

Gypsy travellers

Falkirk Council has one purpose-built site with hard standing pitches. Each pitch has access to an amenity block with a kitchen, shower/ toilet and washing facilities. One of the blocks is adapted for wheelchair use.

There are currently five private sites providing a total of 24 Gypsy/ Travellers established these private pitches themselves, purchased the land and went through the planning process. There are no commercial holiday or touring sites which accept Gypsy/ Travellers locally.

There are low levels of encampments locally with figures dropping from 2017 where there were 18 to 7 in 2020. The number of homeless applications from Gypsy/ Travellers has remained low between 2015-2020/21 with 11 applications in 2020/21. Over the five 5 years to 2021, housing applications from Gypsy/ Travellers for mainstream housing peaked at 30 in 2021.

The HNDA therefore did not identify a need for an additional Gypsy/ Traveller site.

Following discussions with the Scottish fire and rescue service with reference to Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 which highlight that caravans must be 6 metres apart. We have had to reduce the site from 15 pitches to 10 to comply with this regulation. Currently 6 pitches are available to let from a possible ten on the site and there is no waiting list.

Gypsy/ travellers on the Council site advise that older residents with disabilities do not want to move from the site, as their support networks are in place. Following consultation (see below) with gypsy/travellers on site, plans were drawn up to reprofile. However due to the lack of waiting list and several voids.

Consultation was conducted in summer 2021 using the place standard tool by the Travelling Persons' Participation Group and Falkirk Council officers. As part of the Place Standard Consultation, Gypsy/ Travellers on site identified that there is a need for a transit pitch onsite. This would greatly assist when relatives and friends need to visit to provide care and support for a longer period. Currently although relatives and friends can visit and stay short term there is no provision for them to bring their own caravan.

The Place Standard consultation identified the following gaps:

- A transit pitch.
- Provision for future need from older and disabled travellers.

There is currently no waiting list for the Falkirk Council Gypsy/ Traveller site.

An options appraisal is currently ongoing in relation to the gypsy traveller site. Following completion this will be discussed with tenants onsite.

Travelling show people

The HNDA highlighted that there are no sites for Travelling Showpeople locally however there is one well established site in a neighbouring local authority. Travelling show people travel locally though Falkirk Council area attending fairs and events throughout the year. We consulted with the Scottish Showman's Guild as part of the HNDA and they advised that they are not looking for sites within Falkirk Council area. This is consistent with the previous HNDA. There have also been no planning applications submitted for a site locally from travelling show people.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

Falkirk Council housing services do not routinely collect sexual orientation on surveys data such as the Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Historically concerns and complaints had been raised around collecting this data. We contacted a local LGBT organisation on several occasions, although interested, they did not agree to a more formal consultation, as they advised they had several projects ongoing.

Falkirk Council Conflict Resolution Service work with people who have been victims of hate related incidents or anti-social behaviour. Also, those perceived as carrying out such behaviour. This includes neighbour disputes. This includes people from the LGBT community.

National research²⁴ [No Place Like Home](#) was considered in relation to the requirements of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. This aimed to uncover LGBT*Q²⁵ residents' experiences in relation to their social housing and their views about what needs to be changed. No Place Like Home acknowledged that little is really known about the needs and views of LGBT*Q residents who live in housing provided by local authority or a housing association.

Despite equality laws, the above research found that LGBT*Q social housing residents expressed the following concerns:

- Believe they are not being listened to, taken seriously or treated equally.
- Feel hypervigilant around their neighbourhood and home. A fifth of gay men reported that they regularly modify their home to make their sexuality less visible if their landlord or a repairs' person visits.
- A third of survey respondents felt that their housing provider was not able to deal effectively with issues like harassment.
- Almost half of LGBT*Q residents surveyed felt lonely, whilst a quarter felt unhappy. Less than a half felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

As we do not routinely collect equalities data covering all strands on all surveys, we cannot verify this represents the local picture. We therefore recognise the need to know our communities better so we can work to meet all needs. To do this we need to know their makeup. This means ensuring local people feel safe to share private information with us and officers will be supported asking and collecting such information sensitively.

National research recommends the following:

- Building trust by being more proactive on inclusion and be an openly LGBT*Q supportive organisation.
- Ensure all housing provider workers treat LGBT*Q residents with respect and on an equal basis with all other residents by taking complaints about their staff (including subcontractor staff) seriously and providers act on them quickly.
- If monitoring residents' sexuality/gender identity, be clear what the information will be used for, why, who will have access to it and how the data will be protected.
- Going beyond legislation and token gesture by advertising support for LGBT*Q residents across a wide range of media.
- Communication with residents; this includes staff-resident interactions (treating people courteously and with respect), improving accessibility to relevant information and services, and constantly advertising the organisation as LGBT*Q affirmative across a range of media.

²⁴ University of Surrey (2019) No Place Like Home Exploring the concerns, preferences and experiences of LGBT*Q social housing residents

²⁵ The research used the term trans* to cover the gender identity spectrum. This includes, but is not limited to, people who identify as transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, non-binary, non-gendered and agender. The research used the acronym BME to refer to individuals who identified as belonging to Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

- Staff training to improve awareness of LGBT*Q lives and interactions with residents.
- Procedures for dealing with complaints about harassment and abuse.

Key points from this research are that “home” must be seen as a safe place. If health and wellbeing is to be improved by participation in local communities some voices need to be sought out, welcomed and supported so they can be heard and included.

Difficulties engaging with the LGBT community was commented on by other local authorities working on their LHS to the Scottish Housing Network. As this is a wider issue than Falkirk Council, we would welcome a national exploration of issues perhaps like that undertaken by the research *Nowhere Like Home* or the approach taken with former armed services personnel. Locally we recognise the need to improve monitoring, training around LGBTQ*Q issues presenting a welcoming culture not dwelling on historic concerns and complaints. We recognise that the Scottish Housing Regulator require full equalities data to be collected. We have discussed with our RSL partners their approach to SHR requirements which centre around staff training and moving towards full collection of equalities information. We have therefore included actions in this LHS to do both.

Autism

We contacted local groups supporting people who have autism and their families asking to engage with them about LHS consultation. However as with the LGBT group we contacted, although interested, they did not want to pursue a more formal consultation.

Falkirk Council Conflict Resolution Service also work with autistic people who have been victims of hate related incidents or anti-social behaviour. Also, those perceived as carrying out such behaviour. This includes neighbour disputes, for example this can relate to children and young people who have learning difficulties including autism and their associated behaviour and noise they make or the way they behave around other children or neighbours which has resulted in complaints.

The conflict resolution and housing needs teams are also working with young people to review the Family Mediation project. One of the issues identified was the importance of reflecting all communities and the importance of training for front line workers.

We also considered a good practice guide on Autism²⁶ which highlights the issues some people with autism face when applying for housing for the first time, or the obstacles they can encounter within their tenancies. The Guide, and the associated training, provides housing practitioners with practical solutions for dealing with issues which can be perceived by some as anti-social behaviour. The Guide builds on a ‘person-centred’ approach, putting individuals at the heart of the decision-making process: helping to identify issues as early as possible. Some in the housing sector are following trauma informed approaches to create psychologically informed environments. Doing so makes it possible to address the sometimes-complex needs of tenants with autism who may be at risk of homelessness. This allows people with autism to access and maintain stable accommodation and live independent lives.

It is the view in the guide that evicting people from social rented housing makes no sense. The view being once such tenants have been made homeless, they are likely to live in less secure accommodation. Also, they risk losing contact with informal and formal support networks therefore making a “bad situation” worse.

²⁶ Welsh Government (2019) *Autism: A Guide for Practitioners within Housing and Homelessness Services*

It is recognised that military veterans, the LGBT community, people with autism should not be identified as “hard to reach” but as “easy to miss”. This means taking a proactive approach, with first steps to engaging with “easy to miss” groups will be improving and providing comprehensive equalities training for housing providers. Also ensuring we routinely collect information in our surveys when people engage with housing services. In addition, we would welcome an emphasis put on this at a national level through Scottish Housing Network, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations etc.

Consultation

The LHS survey highlighted that the following issues were very/ important to respondents:

- Build more homes which meet peoples’ changing needs (89%)
- Provide specialist advice for older people and those with disabilities (94%)
- Provide advice on housing adaptations (89%)
- Promote technology to help people stay at home for longer (Mobile Emergency Care), Home Safety Monitoring (92%)

Several focus groups emphasised the importance of providing larger family homes, they also highlighted the importance of the link between housing and health calling for more emphasis to be placed on the role of housing in promoting good health. This includes ensuring that homes are accessible and are designed to promote physical and mental wellbeing. Raising awareness of adaptations services and how to access them was a consistent recommendation throughout consultation.

LHS consultation highlighted often people are not aware of services and how to access them. Moving forward we are looking to strengthen links with between housing organisations (Council, RSL, private landlords) and Community Planning.

The place standard consultation carried out with the gypsy traveller community indicated the need to reconfigure the existing site.

Key Issues

1. More wheelchair housing.
2. More larger housing including for families where one or more have a physical disability.
3. A model of housing for people aged under 65 with complex needs.
4. Housing support for those with mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse, leaving the armed forces and with autism.
5. Collect data from all equality’s groups using housing services and in surveys.
6. Improve partnership working to assist military veterans.
7. A proactive approach with “easy to miss” groups.

Actions

1. We will work in partnership to provide accommodation and support for people with complex needs.
2. We will work with partners and older people to create an easily understandable guide on specialist housing for older people.
3. We will carry out an options appraisal on the role of the existing Falkirk Council gypsy travellers’ site in 2023/4.

Appendix 1

4. We will review develop and improve relationships with military veterans' organisations exploring Armed Forces Mental Health First Aid training courses.
5. We will provide services which enable older & physically disabled people to keep their properties in good repair.
6. We will redesign the Disabled Adaption delivery model to be co-located and tenure neutral to improve accessibility

Section 8 Priority 5 Sustainable housing: fuel poverty and climate change

LHS Outcomes

- Our Climate Change Strategy sets out Falkirk Council's approach to delivering on its climate change ambition and responsibilities.
- Our Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy sets out the long-term plan for decarbonising heat in buildings and improving their energy efficiency across the entire local authority area.
- We will improve energy efficiency and meet our statutory requirements.
- We will work to assist those experiencing fuel poverty.

Strategic context National Outcomes

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- We are healthy and active.
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth, and power more equally.
- We value, enjoy, protect, and enhance our environment.
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy.
- We are open, connected and make a contribution.

Context

Tackling climate change, improving the energy efficiency of homes, and reducing fuel poverty are key local and national priorities. The Scottish Parliament passed the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 requiring Scotland to become net zero by 2045 with interim targets for 2030 (75% reduction) and 2040 (90%). Tackling climate change, improving the energy efficiency of homes, and reducing fuel poverty are key local and national priorities.

We are aware of the climate emergency, acknowledge the impact of climate change on homes, communities and the wider environment, and that greenhouse gas emissions were the main cause of this.

The national Energy Efficient Scotland programme organises activities to improve the energy performance of Scotland's buildings, with local authorities having key roles in both instigating actions and imposing minimum standards.

The Heat in Buildings (HiB) Strategy was published in 2021 and outlines how greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced in Scottish homes, workplaces, and community spaces. It aims to ensure that poor energy efficiency is removed as a driver for Fuel Poverty. The HiB Strategy concentrates on energy demand for space and water heating in homes, workplaces, and community spaces.

The HiB Strategy builds on the Climate Change Plan Update and sets out how it can meet zero emissions in buildings by 2045. The HiB Strategy provides an update to the Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map published in 2018.

The HiB Strategy aims that by 2045 homes are "cleaner, greener and easy to heat" and no longer contributing to climate change. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 has set out targets to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, with interim targets of 75% reduction by 2030 and 90% by 2040.

Social rented homes will be required to meet the standards set out in the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing post-2020 ("ESSH2") which is being reviewed in 2023 to strengthen and realign it

with the net zero ambitions; social homes should meet Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of B or is as energy efficient as practically possible by 2032. This Standard is monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The HiB Strategy also sets out the direction it expects private sector housing to take over the next two decades. The details of this are outlined in the Energy Efficiency within the Private Sector section below.

Fuel Poverty Overview

Fairer Falkirk

Falkirk Council is deeply committed to upholding Preventing Poverty as a core corporate priority. The Fairer Falkirk Plan has undertaken a steadfast commitment to not only address the immediate needs of those experiencing poverty but also to proactively prevent its onset and halt its progression. Through collaborative partnerships and dedicated support programs, Falkirk Council aims to offer individuals and families the tools they need to secure stable livelihoods and a better future. By making Preventing Poverty a focal point of our efforts, we endeavour to foster lasting change, uplift our community.

The Scottish Parliament passed the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 requiring no more than 5% of all households to be living in fuel poverty by 2040 as far as reasonably possible, with interim targets for 2030 (15%) and 2035 (10%). Targets were also set for extreme fuel poverty - no more than 5%, 3% and 1% of households should be extremely fuel poor by 2030, 2035 and 2040 respectively - and for the median 'fuel poverty gap' (the reduction in spending which would take a household out of fuel poverty) to be reduced to £250 (adjusted to 2015 prices) per household by 2040.

The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 also reclassified how fuel poverty is defined. Under the new definition a household considered to be fuel poor if the costs of maintaining a 'satisfactory heating regime' are more than 10% of its net income and where its remaining income after deducting notional costs for energy, housing, Council Tax, and childcare is less than 90% of the minimum income standard applicable to the household.

This new definition strengthens the link between income and fuel poverty (with more income poor households now being considered fuel poor, when compared with the previous definition). Household income (which is related to how able a household is to pay for the energy it needs), energy costs, energy performance of the home, and how energy is used in the home are the four key drivers of fuel poverty. How energy is used has been identified by the Scottish Fuel Poverty Strategic Working Group because many households do not get the most out of their heating or the energy saving measures put in place.

It is recognised that Scottish Government and Falkirk Council can only have limited impact on increasing household incomes and reducing the cost of energy. However, both local and Scottish Government has a significant role and can take steps to have significant impact by providing energy efficient homes.

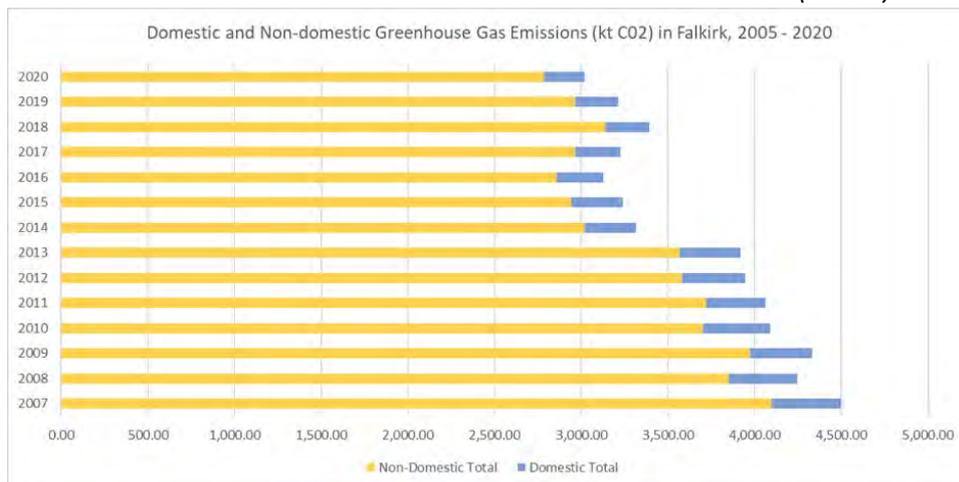
Climate Change

Falkirk Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, acknowledging the urgency of addressing climate change. The council is committed to achieving Net Zero emissions in its buildings, street lighting, and council service vehicles by 2030 with aims for Grangemouth to become the first net-zero town in the area. Falkirk Council will strive to take practical and impactful actions to reduce emissions within their organisation and promote area-wide decarbonisation, aligned with their statutory duties, values, and priorities outlined in the Council Plan and the Falkirk Plan. Furthermore, the council supports Scotland's goal of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2045 by complying with national climate change policies.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Residential buildings in the Falkirk Council area make a noteworthy contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions profile. These emissions arise from energy consumption for heating, lighting, cooking, and running appliances. A sizeable portion of emissions stems from the prevalent use of gas-fired central heating systems in most homes across Falkirk. Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed dedicated endeavours to enhance energy efficiency, encourage greater adoption of renewable energy, and curb emissions from residential buildings.

Chart 8.1: Domestic and Non-domestic Greenhouse Gas Emissions (kt CO₂) – 2007-2020

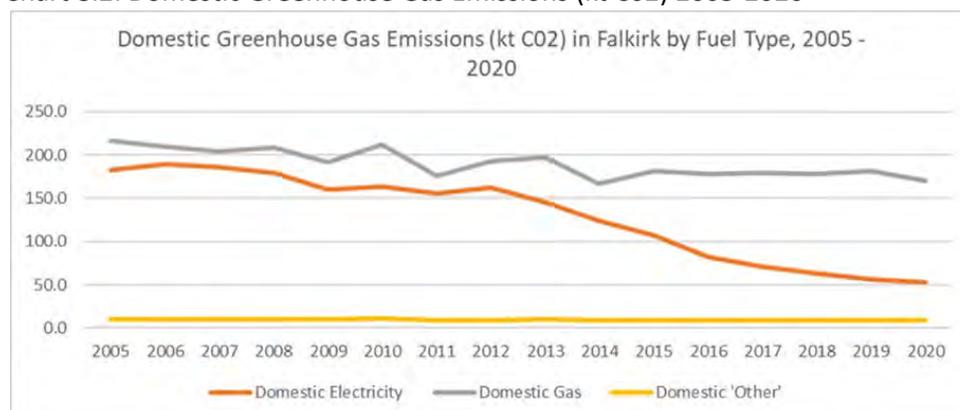


Source – 2005-2020 local and regional greenhouse gas emissions data tables

The BEIS (Business Energy and Industrial Strategy) Local Authority Analysis provides a comprehensive assessment of greenhouse gas emissions across Falkirk. The following chart highlights the gradual improvement in domestic emissions (CO₂) by Fuel type in the Falkirk Area between 2005 – 2020. A significant drop has been achieved in electricity related emissions reducing from approximately 180kt to 50kt.

Improvements in building materials and insulation, supported by Area Based Schemes (ABS), have reduced emissions. This is particularly noticeable in homes with electric heating. In off-gas villages, initiatives such as installing solar panels and heat pumps have been introduced. The electricity grid is also becoming cleaner leading to further reductions. Falkirk Council also operates the "Decarbonise Falkirk" program, urging homeowners and stakeholders to enhance energy efficiency in their homes.

Gas emissions have reduced at a slower pace due to a strong reliance on gas for heating in Falkirk. Additionally, gas is more cost-effective for residents compared to cleaner alternatives, making it challenging to motivate a transition to cleaner options.

Chart 8.2: Domestic Greenhouse Gas Emissions (kt CO₂) 2005-2020

Source – BEIS Emissions Local Authority Analysis

Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

Through LHEES the Scottish Government are driving area-based delivery and planning of the heat transition in a move to achieve emission reduction targets. In line with Scottish Government regulations, Falkirk's LHEES will be published by 31st December 2023. The strategy is a long-term plan for decarbonising heat in buildings, improving energy efficiency and will assist in reaching Net Zero targets across the Falkirk council area.

To achieve this Falkirk Council will:

- Set out how homes and domestic buildings need to change to achieve zero Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and poor energy efficiency.
- Identify zones for heat decarbonisation and set key measures for reducing emissions. These zones will then be used as a basis for further development.
- Prioritise areas for investment including private sector buildings and through public delivery schemes.
- The council will monitor and evaluate progress regularly to ensure that the LHEES is on track to meet its targets. This will enable the council to adjust plans as needed and ensure that the LHEES remains credible over time.

LHEES: phase 2 pilot

In 2018-19, Falkirk Council took part in the Scottish Government's LHEES Pilot project. The aim was to test methods for creating an LHEES, understanding data sources and what is required to develop low carbon heat and power options for the Council's public estate.

On completion of the pilot project a series of recommendations were then made, including focusing on making high-emitting buildings more energy efficient and using cleaner energy sources like heat pumps, biomass, and hydrogen. Specific targets were set, such as reducing emissions by 59%, having 70% of heat come from low-carbon sources, and reducing heat demand by 20% by 2032. Carbon offsetting should be considered to help meet the goal of having no net emissions by 2030.

As a result of the pilot, targets have been set for 2030 and 2045 with three identified phases of action. Phase 1 (2020-2030) focuses on full upgrades using heat pumps or biomass for suitable buildings. Phase 2 (2025-2035) involves energy efficiency upgrades for buildings where hydrogen is preferred, considering government direction. Phase 3 (2030-2045) entails the roll-out of hydrogen

heating to suitable buildings. If hydrogen is not a viable option for the existing gas network, alternative low carbon heating systems will be considered.

Flood Risk in Falkirk

The average temperature in Scotland in 2014 was 1.42 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Increased rainfall and warmer temperatures will bring climate related risks and opportunities in the coming decades, some of which are not yet well understood. The following chart from Scottish Environmental Protection Agency below highlights the areas within Falkirk that have a high likelihood of flooding, with main concerns running along the river Carron, areas of Grangemouth and the banks of the River Forth in Bo'ness.

A changing climate poses significant risk to homes and communities across the globe. There will be more extreme weather events and a greater occurrence of sudden rainfall, potentially increasing the risk of flash and other flooding. The 2019 Local Flood Management Plan estimated that 2800 residential properties in the Falkirk and immediate neighbouring areas are under threat of flooding which would attract an average damage cost of approximately £6.7 million.

Energy Efficiency

Falkirk Council Homes

The Housing Asset Management Plan sets out the key aims and objectives for the Council's assets in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to ensure they are used in an effective and efficient manner and links directly to the Housing Investment Programme.

The total investment over the 5 years of the 2023/24- 202/28 Housing Investment Programme (HIP) is £328m. A total of £184m will be spent ensuring that the housing stock meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) which replaces Section 35 of the SHQS. ESSH2 is currently under review by the Scottish Government who are expected to report back on this later in the year.

Each year Falkirk Council provides an update to the Social Housing Regulator on progress made towards the SHQS and ESSH targets.

Table 8.1: Stock Level compared to SHQS and ESSH 2021/22 - 2022/23

Date	Stock Level	SHQS	ESSH
21/22	16658	59.85%	96.93
22/23	16719	70.05%	95.01%

Source Social Housing Regulator Charter return

In 2021/2022, the number of properties meeting the SHQS dropped from previous years. This was due to restrictions put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic and legislative changes which moved from a five to ten-year test cycle for electrical testing. The pandemic prevented the Council from accessing and conducting many of the planned improvement measures and only essential emergency work could be carried out. The reduction in the number of properties not meeting the SHQS mostly relates to those where electrical checks could not be carried out.

Social rented landlords have now resumed planned maintenance and electrical safety checks. Falkirk Council have a five-year investment programme in place to ensure stock is maintained to the SHQS.

Figures reported to the Social Housing Regulator for 2022/23 now show that the energy efficiency of properties owned by Falkirk Council has improved with 70.05% meeting the SHQS and 95.01% meeting the EESSH. 91.38% of Council homes now have an EPC rating of C or above.

The Council continues to improve the EPC rating of its homes to meet EESSH standards by improving the fabric of its homes, installing energy efficient heating systems, and working towards the targets set in the Heat in Buildings Strategy.

The HIP includes a variety of projects with a focus on sustainability and protecting the environment through reduction of the carbon footprint associated with the housing stock. Projects within the HIP are included in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

During the period of this LHS (Local Housing Strategy) the Council plans to improve the energy efficiency of its homes following a fabric first approach. These include: -

- Installing external/internal wall insulation where technically feasible
- Installing A rated triple glazed windows and new energy efficient doors.

Provision has also been made to replace the external cladding at the Glenfuir Court. This project had been delayed, allowing for the findings of the Scottish Government fire safety review to be considered. This project is now expected to commence in 2023/24 and conclude the following year. Glenfuir Court provides accommodation for older people and includes housing with care tenancies.

An ongoing programme of heating system upgrades, estimated at £2m per annum, is required to improve the energy efficiency of c2,700 Council homes.

Falkirk Council currently has 574 tenants and 88 Owners (15 of these are private rented) connected to a gas fired combined heat and power (CHP) system over 9 tower blocks in Callendar Park. The Council continues to update these systems when required including the owner occupiers (using Scottish Government grant funding) and to extend the network where feasible.

A decision was made by Council on 29 September 2021 to progress with the installation of a hydrogen ready gas infrastructure to the off-gas villages of Avonbridge, California, Letham, Slamannan and Whitecross. In line with tenants' choices alternative heating supply such as Air Source Heat Pumps was also offered. Funding was approved by elected members as part of last year's Housing Investment Programme. The work is planned to commence during 2023/24, with completion expected in 2024/25.

Additionally, for areas where a gas supply is not viable, alternative heating solutions, including renewable technology measures such as Air Source Heat Pumps with solar photovoltaic panels and battery storage are being installed over 2 phases into tenant's homes. Phase 1 is complete with 27 systems installed, and Phase 2, which includes 100 homes, is now underway and due to complete later in 2023. These projects are being part funded through the Scottish Government's Social Housing Net Zero Heat Fund. Tenants received an update on the gas infrastructure programme in August 2023 and were given another opportunity to choose their preferred heating type. This

included details on the perceived benefits of a renewable energy system. A phase 3 is currently being explored and is subject to further Scottish Government grant and capital budgets being agreed.

Internet of Things (IoT) Pilot Project

To improve living conditions and reduce energy costs, an Internet of things (IoT) pilot project is being explored. Investing £20,000 for IoT sensors, the project aims to monitor, measure and control temperature, humidity, and CO2 levels within 50 homes, including urban and rural flats and houses with diverse construction and heating types. Objectives include improving indoor air quality, tenant comfort, early detection of mould/damp, and predicting potential problems. Data-driven insights will inform decision-making about improving the management and maintenance of the housing stock. This approach support the priorities outlined in our first Digital Housing Strategy (appendix 13).

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Sector

The Energy & Climate Change team circulated a survey to all RSLs (Registered Social Landlords) in the Falkirk Council area in 2022 to gain a better understanding of how energy efficiency and the decarbonisation of heat were being prioritised. This was undertaken in line with the stakeholder engagement work required for the LHEES Strategy development.

Findings showed that RSLs have set commitments and priorities to reduce their carbon footprint and achieve net zero emissions. Specifically: -

Kingdom Housing Association has passed EESSH and SHQS standards and will publish their first Net Zero Strategy as part of their Corporate Plan.

Bield Housing Association aims to achieve EESSH2 within designated timescales and exceed carbon mitigation wherever possible.

Link Housing Association has set a goal to achieve net zero carbon housing for new build projects by 2026 and net zero for all stock by 2040.

Wheatley Group is split into two groups, with corporate seeking to be Carbon Neutral by 2026, while RSL Lettable properties aim to achieve or surpass EESSH2 targets by 2032.

Paragon is working with the Energy Savings Trust to model their housing stock with energy efficiency, fuel poverty and decarbonisation in mind.

The following table sets out all social rented sector landlords in relation to percentage of stock meeting EESSH.

Table 8.2 Percentage of Stock in Falkirk Council meeting EESSH

Social landlord	Baseline LHS 2017-22	2017/18	2020/21	2021/22
Falkirk Council	79%	91%	97%	97%
Link Group Ltd	86%	94%	97%	93%
Paragon	77%	78%	96%	97%
Ark Housing	72%	81%	85%	85%
Barony Housing	94%	94%	n/a	n/a
Bield	93%	97%	98%	98%
Blackwood	92%	98%	100%	97%
Cairn Housing	71%	80%	86%	87%
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing	85%	90%	86%	92%
Key Housing	96%	98%	100%	100%
Kingdom Housing	93%	98%	100%	99%
Loretto Housing	98%	100%	100%	100%
Scottish Veterans	96%	97%	99%	99%
Hanover Housing	87%	93%	98%	84%
Horizon Housing	93%	98%	100%	100%

Source – Scottish Housing Regulator

Energy Efficiency within the Private Sector

The Scottish Government is currently consulting on the standards for the Private Rented Sector, and this will be concluded, with legislation published by the end of 2023. It is anticipated standards will require that Private Rented Sector properties should have a minimum EPC rating of C when the tenancy changes by 2028. Landlords will be able to access loan funding to pay for works required.

The Standard required for Owner Occupiers is currently under consultation and legislation will be published by the end of 2024. From 2025 properties will be required to achieve a satisfactory level of energy efficiency equivalent to EPC rating of C at the trigger point and where technically feasible and cost effective to do so by the end of 2033.

Data from Energy Savings Trust Home Analytics suggest the following number of properties meet EPC Band C and above.

Table 8.3: Tenure compared to stock level and Energy Performance Certificate Level FC area.

Tenure	Stock level	EPC A-B	EPC C	% EPC A-C
Owner Occupiers	51,925	3030	23016	50.16%
Private Rented	2513	562	2600	49.35%
RSL	2971	153	2088	70.77%

Source: EST (Energy Savings Trust) Data Analytics v 3.8.1

Falkirk Council continue to assist Owner Occupiers and Private Sector Landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Each year, funding from the Scottish Government's Home Energy Efficiency: Area Based Schemes (ABS) are used to improve the energy performance of Owners homes.

The ABS is part of the Scottish Government's wider strategy to tackle climate change and improve energy efficiency in Scotland. It aims to help households reduce their energy bills, improve their thermal comfort and health, and support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The Council has been successful in securing around £3.8m funding over the period of the last LHS and has assisted 483 Owners including 26 Private Landlords improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Some of the key features of the ABS include:

- Eligibility: The scheme is open to homeowners and private renters in Scotland.
- Measures: The programme covers a range of energy efficiency measures, including insulation, heating upgrades, and renewable heat technologies.
- Funding: The programme provides funding to local authorities and RSLs to deliver energy efficiency measures.
- Assessment: A home energy assessment is carried out to determine the most suitable energy efficiency measures for each home.
- Implementation: The energy efficiency measures are installed by approved contractors.

Future projects will continue the programme of external wall insulation to non-traditionally constructed homes and replacement heating for flats connected to the Combined Heat & Power system in Callendar Park accommodation for older people. Promotion of the Scottish Government grants and loans via Home Energy Scotland to Owner Occupiers and Private Landlords will continue.

Fuel poverty definitions

As previously detailed the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 requires that no more than 5% of all households to be living in fuel poverty by 2040 as far as reasonably possible, with interim targets for 2030 (15%) and 2035 (10%). Targets were also set for extreme fuel poverty - no more than 5%, 3% and 1% of households should be extremely fuel poor by 2030, 2035 and 2040 respectively - and for the median 'fuel poverty gap' (the reduction in spending which would take a household out of fuel poverty) to be reduced to £250 (adjusted to 2015 prices) per household by 2040.

Low-income households are a greater driver of fuel poverty as they are more likely to struggle with the costs of heating their homes and paying for energy.

The Scottish Government's Fuel Poverty review report (Fuel Poverty - Review of evidence) shows that low-income households are more likely to live in poorly insulated and energy-inefficient homes, which can increase their energy bills and contribute to fuel poverty. In addition, low-income households may have to choose between heating their homes and paying for other essential needs such as food, clothing, and healthcare, further exacerbating the problem of fuel poverty.

Fuel Poverty figures for Scotland and Falkirk are published in the Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS). The most up to date figures are from the SHCS published in December 2019.

At this time, the levels of Fuel Poverty in Scotland were 24% and 22% for Falkirk. A breakdown by tenure can be seen below: -

Table 8.4: Fuel poverty

Tenure	Scotland	Falkirk
Owner Occupied – Fuel Poverty	16%	16%
Social Housing - Fuel Poverty	38%	32%
Extreme Fuel Poverty	12%	10%
Owner Occupied – Extreme Fuel Poverty	9%	8%
Social Housing – Extreme Fuel Poverty	14%	12%

Source: SHCS

However, these figures will have increased due to the current increase in energy prices which have risen sharply due to Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The next SHCS will have more up to date information on the current levels but may not provide the whole picture as the survey was carried out before fuel prices started to increase. Data published by the Scottish Government ahead of the October price cap estimated that Fuel Poverty levels for Scotland would be 906,000 or 36% based on the Ofgem price cap of £2,800.

Scottish Government's (Tackling Fuel Poverty in Scotland – A strategic approach) report compared the differences in characteristics between fuel poor households living in homes below EPC Band C to those considered not fuel poor in similarly inefficient homes. The findings highlight that fuel poor households are:

- More likely to have a low income.
- Less likely to live in the owner-occupied sector (75% vs 45%) and more likely to be in the rental sector (20% vs 11% Private Rented and 35% vs 14% Social Rented)
- More likely to live in the lowest council tax bands A & B (58% vs 27%)
- Less likely to live in a detached or semi-detached dwelling (40% vs 52%) and more likely to live in a flat (Tenement Type) (22% vs 14%)
- More likely to live in rural areas (15% vs 23%)

Fuel Poverty often correlates with low levels of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

However, it is important to note that Fuel Poverty can still exist in affluent areas. Multiple deprivation encompasses various domains including income, employment, health, education, access, crime, and housing. By considering these factors together, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the deprivation within a particular area. According to the latest published data in 2020:

- 35 data zones in the worst 20% in Scotland, an increase of 2 from 2016
- 15% (24,575) of Falkirk residents live in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland.
- 5 data zones in the worst 5% - one more than 2016
- 9 data zones in the worst 6-10% - one less than 2016
- 11 data zones in the worst 16-20% - two more than 2016
- Falkirk Town Centre & Callendar Park is ranked 1 in the Income domain.

SIMD areas have been used in previous years to prioritise energy improvement projects thus assisting residents to live in warm, energy efficient homes.

The Council's Debt Team and Welfare Benefits Team continue to support residents in maximizing their income and up to date information on the various forms of financial help is available on the Council's web site¹².

There has been a sharp increase in the number of clients approaching the Debt Team regarding energy costs and arrears assistance with 57 clients seeking help in 2021/22 compared with 138 in 2022/23. The Welfare Benefits Team also assisted 74 clients in 2021/22 regarding energy grants and financial assistance compared with 238 in 2023/23.

Staff members from both teams' attribute this increase to the Cost-of-Living Crisis, particularly the soaring energy expenses. Clients are faced with the difficult choice between heating their homes or meeting basic needs, and this situation is not expected to improve in the near future. Most clients have minimal disposable income and rely on a week-to-week basis, typically seeking assistance only when they are in crisis.

To address these challenges, over 200 frontline staff have received training from Home Energy Scotland (HES). Training has also been given to Staff within the Social Care Housing Partnership. This training equips staff with the skills to identify fuel poverty, provide basic energy efficiency advice, and refer clients to other organizations for financial aid. The training is also available to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) staff and third sector organisations.

The Support for People Team administers the Household Support Fund¹³ which aims to provide financial assistance directly to qualifying residents to alleviate the cost-of-living burden. Payments range from £100 for a single adult to £580 for a couple with five children. Strict eligibility criteria are in place, and residents can either self-refer or be referred by a trusted partner.

The Falkirk Council web site provides a whole range of information for residents including energy efficiency advice, financial support advice and signposts residents to other organisations for help and assistance.

Partnership Working

The Council collaborates with internal and external partners to address prominent issues such as Fuel Poverty, energy efficiency, and Climate Change. To stay informed about the latest developments in Fuel Poverty, a biannual online Fuel Poverty Forum is organized, inviting speakers, and facilitating discussions on supporting clients. Participants include frontline staff from Housing, Welfare Benefits and Debt teams, Home Energy Scotland, Energy Suppliers, Citizens Advice staff, RSLs, and Third Sector Organizations.

Additionally, the Council maintains its partnership with HES, which conducts training sessions for staff on Fuel Poverty, Electric Heating, and Air Source Heat Pumps. Staff members refer their clients to HES through a secure online portal or a toll-free telephone number. Notably, Falkirk Council ranks third in terms of referring clients to HES through the online portal, ensuring that residents receive the most current advice and financial assistance available to them.

In 2022/23 HES reported the following interactions with households with Falkirk Council area: -

- 2755 unique household interactions (2152 in 2021/22)
- 292 interactions from low-income households with a child under 16 (233 in 2021/22)
- 519 interactions from households with a child under 16 (455 in 2021/22)
- 386 interactions with households 65 and over (293 in 2021/22)

- 265 households referred for a Fuel Voucher (173 in 2021/22)
- 561 households referred to HES via their online portal (524 in 2021/22)

It can clearly be seen that there have been more interactions between Falkirk Council residents and HES this year compared to last year. Reflecting the same experience as the Debt Team and the Welfare Benefits Team.

Stakeholder Engagement

A Fuel Poverty Survey available between January-March 2023, requesting feedback on energy cost concerns, grant/support awareness and cost mitigation action was sent to members of the Fuel Poverty Forum and front-line Housing staff. This allowed energy companies, RSLs, Citizens Advice, third sector organisations and internal front-line staff to be consulted Fuel Poverty related issues. Results from the survey highlighted that concerns around increased energy costs were common amongst tenants and clients. It noted that other household necessities were regularly being cut back on, including heating systems not being used at all to keep costs down.

Survey responses indicated that by offering training to staff, providing accessible information and advice, and simplifying the grant application process, Falkirk Council can play a vital role in helping its community save money, reduce fuel poverty, and reduce their carbon footprint.

Consultation

The LHS consultation survey highlighted the following issues were very important or important to respondents:

- Provide advice on how to save energy in the home (86%)
- Provide information to help people get grants and loans to improve energy efficiency (87%)
- Train staff to identify people struggling to meet energy costs and reduce bills (86%)
- Find ways to reduce carbon emissions (77%)

Consultation highlighted that the impact of climate change on housing is becoming increasingly apparent, participants raised concerns about the need to reduce the carbon footprint of housing in Falkirk. Respondents noted the need to reduce emissions from energy use, as well as considering the impact of climate change on housing design and construction.

Stakeholders have called for greater investment in renewable energy sources, the promotion of energy-efficient homes, and the use of sustainable building materials in housing construction. Energy Costs and Fuel Poverty were also noted as key issues.

Key issues and challenges

Housing has a crucial role in helping the Scottish Government's net zero objectives in several ways Key issues include.

- **Renewable Energy & Efficiency:** Encouraging the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and heat pumps, in homes can help to reduce emissions and generate clean energy. Improving the energy efficiency of homes will also significantly reduce emissions and costs.
- **Social Housing:** Providing high-quality, energy efficient social housing can help to tackle reducing emissions. Ensuring homes are resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as

flooding and heatwaves, can help to protect communities and reduce the costs associated with adaptation.

- **Low-Carbon Materials:** The use of low-carbon materials, such as sustainably sourced timber in the construction of homes can help to reduce emissions and conserve resources.
- **Affordable Warmth Schemes:** Implementing affordable warmth schemes to provide financial support and advice to vulnerable households to help with fuel costs.
- **Home Energy & Fuel Poverty Advice:** Providing free, impartial home energy advice to help households reduce energy use and costs.
- **Partnership Working:** Developing partnerships with other organisations and agencies to identify and support households in fuel poverty.
- **External Funding Opportunities:** Working with Scottish Government, energy companies and other organisations to access funding that delivers energy efficiency measures to low-income and vulnerable households.

Key Actions

1. Falkirk Council will reduce emissions from Council owned properties and buildings and support residents to be net zero carbon emission ready. We will use the Local Climate Impacts Profile to prepare for the impacts of climate change.
2. Completion of the Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy will allow the Council to plan the reduction of carbon emissions from heat across the whole council area. Focus points include energy efficiency and heat networks.
3. Improve insulation for all Council properties with non-traditional construction where technically feasible.
4. Install cavity wall and loft insulation to remaining Council properties where technically feasible.
5. Explore energy efficient heating for properties with older electric or solid fuel heating.
6. Increase the number of properties connected to the Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system in Callendar Park.
7. Develop a renewable package of heating including solar pv and battery storage for properties in the areas that cannot be connected to the gas network.
8. Extend the gas pipeline to Avonbridge, California, Letham, Slamannan and Whitecross.
9. Develop projects to utilise Scottish Government Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland: Area Based Scheme (HEEPS: ABS) funding.
10. Work with RSLs to apply for HEEPS: ABS funding to improve the energy efficiency of Owners homes within their projects.
11. Energy efficiency to be included in the Private Landlord Forum and the private sector newsletters for landlords/ tenants.
12. Tackle energy efficiency and its impact on fuel poverty
13. Front line staff are trained to identify Fuel Poverty and confidently signpost clients for further advice.
14. Regularly update fuel poverty advice on the Council website.
15. Assist those in fuel poverty to access fuel vouchers and cost of living support from Home Energy Scotland and Falkirk Council.
16. Hold 2 Fuel Forum's with front line staff, energy companies and third sector organisations to discuss Fuel Poverty and assistance for clients.
17. We will carry out and monitor a pilot around the Internet of Things (IoT) mould sensor technology.

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18. We will continue to invest in energy efficient appliances (Solar, ASHP) and lighting (CFL, LED) in social rented housing.
19. We will provide cash first support to help with essential costs via our Household Support Fund.

Section 9 LHS priority 6 improving housing conditions

Outcome

We ensure stock conditions meet statutory requirements.

Contributes to the following national outcomes:

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We are healthy and active
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- We are open, connected and make a contribution internationally
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

In 2021, the Scottish Government issued Housing to 2040 the first long-term national housing strategy. Its aim is for everyone to have a safe, high-quality home that is affordable and meets their needs in the place they want to be. Following consultation, the strategy confirms the introduction of a new, tenure-neutral, Housing Standard. The following actions plan to support the repair and maintenance of homes:

- Support proactive approaches to repairs and maintenance.
- Develop a new Help to Improve policy.
- Review enforcement provisions.

The Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) provides details on local and national conditions across tenures. The table below compares local conditions to the national averages for disrepair, tolerable standard, central heating and dampness. When below is compared to the information recorded in the LHS 2017-2022, house conditions have worsened. Previously one factor (central heating) was better than the national average in updated information this is no longer the case.

Table 9.1: Overview on all tenure housing conditions

Variable	Local comparison to national average	Comment
Disrepair	Similar	Around 73% of dwellings in Falkirk have some element of disrepair, estimated at 53, 000 households, this is not statistically different from the proportion of all dwellings nationally (74%)
Tolerable standard	Similar	Around 2% of dwellings in Falkirk are below tolerable standard, estimated at 2,000 households, this is not statistically different from the proportion of all dwellings nationally (2%)
Central heating	Similar	Around 97% of dwelling, estimated at 70, 000 dwellings in Falkirk have full central heating which is not statistically different from the Scottish figure (96%)
Damp	Similar	Around 3% of all dwellings in Falkirk have some evidence of damp, estimated at 2,000 dwellings, which is not statistically different from the proportion of all dwellings Scotland (3%)

Source SHCS 2017-2019

Private Sector

Consideration of house conditions data indicates that properties in Falkirk are generally in worse condition than the national figure, however the results are only statistically significant in relation to urgent repair to critical elements. This is the case irrespective of tenure, age, type or size. Although the sample size for the private rented sector is too small to provide a reliable estimate, it is assumed that conditions are worst in this tenure locally.

This assumption is consistent with the national picture. Assuming the national average of 3% of private rented dwellings being BTS, this could reflect a figure between 170 properties (SHCS national average) and 189 (based on the number of private rented properties registered at the end of 2022/23).

Table 9.2: Stock condition in the private sector

Survey Element	Falkirk All Tenure	Falkirk Owner Occupied Sector	Falkirk Private Rented Sector	Scotland All Tenure	Scotland Owner Occupied Sector	Scotland Private Rented Sector
BTS	2%	*	*	2%	1%	3%
Disrepair (any)	73%	63%	*	71%	67%	80%
Disrepair (critical elements)	54%	44%	*	53%	49%	65%
Disrepair (extensive)	7%	7%	*	6%	5%	9%
Disrepair (urgent)	40%	35%	*	28%	26%	38%
Dampness	3%	*	*	3%	2%	5%
Have central heating	97%	97%	*	96%	96%	91%

Source: Scottish House Conditions Survey 2017-2019, * sample size too small to give a reliable estimate

This view is generally supported by Private Sector Team (PST) who work to improve property conditions on a case-by-case basis.

The PST offers property condition assistance and support to landlord and tenants. During 2022/23, they assisted enquiries (1,138), issued information (1,021), carried out property visits (56), provided practical assistance (24) and made referrals to other teams/ organisations (345) to support private sector property conditions.

If property condition issues are identified and the tenant is considered able, they are encouraged to directly apply to the Housing Property Chamber (HPC). During 2022/23 two tenant applications were accepted by the HPC. In 2023/24, we created a database to record all properties with identified issues. This will allow us gather, analyse, better understand and report on private rented sector property conditions.

Where safety certification or smoke and heat detection is missing, or the tenant is considered vulnerable, an action plan is created to ensure that the issue is resolved. The PST aims to work with landlords to resolve issues voluntarily: action plans can be complex and may span more than one year. 101 Action Plans were closed in 2022/23; 21 cases were carried forward to 2023/24.

Where the landlord does not engage or, where reasonable progress is delayed, the PST will raise a case with the HPC on a third-party basis. 27 cases were referred to the HPC in 2022/23, with 17 cases carried forward to 2023/24. In addition, 9 applications were withdrawn due to compliance and 5 applications were pending.

Referrals made will include information on all repairing standard failures within the property: The table below shows the multiple categories highlighted in the applications.

Table 9.3: Repairing Standard application categories, with an HPC, for cases which were live/ closed during 2022/23

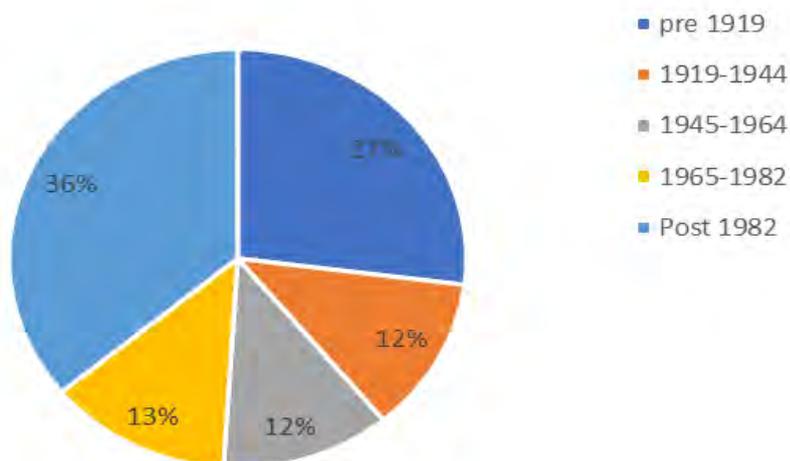
Repairing Standard category	% of total (HPC decision)
S13 (a): Wind & watertight	24%
S13 (b): Structure & exterior	15%
S13 (c): Installations	64%
S13 (d): Fixtures, fittings, appliances	42%
S13 (e): Furnishings	9%
S13 (f): Fire detection/ warning	61%
S13 (g): Carbon monoxide warning	45%
S13 (h): Meets tolerable standard	39%

Source: Analysis of Private Sector Team Enforcement Spreadsheet 2022/23 (findings sourced from HPC decisions)

From 1/2/22, the “meets tolerable standard” category, also includes fire detection and warning, carbon monoxide warning and Electrical Installation Condition Reporting (section 19): some cases pre-dated this change. All applications were upheld. Some categories were not found to be failing, due to compliance before the arranged property inspection.

The following chart shows that 36% of private stock was built pre-1944, 64% was built post-1945. We recognise this data from the all-tenure house condition survey carried out in 2009 is older and care needs to be taken however, the general impressions from the PST are that this is consistent with the current situation.

Chart 9.1: Age of Private Rented Stock



Source: Falkirk Council All Tenure House Conditions Survey 2009 data

House type and age information highlights the wide range the properties being let. Large numbers of flatted/ terraced accommodation and high levels of older stock highlights the potential challenges faced to progressing repairs, common repairs as well as meeting the forthcoming energy regulations.

Below tolerable standard (BTS)

Consideration of house conditions data highlights that 2% of dwellings locally are below the tolerable standard, this equates to between to circa 2,000 households. This is the same percentage as the national figure. Although sample sizes are too small to estimate by tenure, it is assumed that Falkirk does not deviate from the national figures in that most below tolerable standard properties are in the private sector. The following table shows the number of properties designated as BTS over the last 5 years:

Table 9.4: BTS figures 2016/17 – 2020/21

Year	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
BTS Figures	1	1	6	3	0

Source: SOA

We have a BTS Strategy however as there has been no significant changes this has not been revised. Our Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) are responsible for identifying and classifying properties as BTS. Information is shared with Housing annually to monitor BTS numbers across Falkirk. We will liaise with the EPU, utilise the available evidence, to review the BTS Strategy by 2025/26, taking into consideration prevalence, assistance offered and available actions. We will also take account of resources available in the current financial climate. Information gathered will inform our review of the Scheme of Assistance (SoA) which is discussed later in this section.

Table 9.5: Properties Below Tolerable Standard

Key Condition Indicators (BTS)	Owner Occupier	Social Housing	Private Rented	All Stock
Falkirk	*	*	*	2%
Scotland	1%	1%	3%	2%

Source: Scottish House Conditions Survey 2017-2019, * sample size too small to give a reliable estimate

The following table shows Scotland PRS information:

Table 9.6: BTS, Any, Urgent and Extensive Disrepair and Urgent Disrepair to Critical Element in Scotland by Tenure

Key Condition Indicators	BTS	Any Disrepair	Urgent Disrepair	Any Urgent Disrepair to Critical Elements	Extensive Disrepair
Private Rented Scotland	3%	80%	38%	30%	9%

Source: Extracted from Scottish House Conditions Survey 2017-2019, * sample size too small to give a reliable estimate

The following table shows the available information for Falkirk, presented by age and house type. Comparison with information for Scotland shows that conditions in Falkirk are worse in all but one category. It is reasonable to assume that this trend also applies to PRS stock.

There are no BTS properties in the Council sector as per Falkirk Council Housing Investment Plan. BTS is therefore an issue which is much more significant in the private sector. The council's PST and Environmental Health Officers work together to reduce and prevent BTS housing through a combination of information and advice. Engagement with owners and landlords is the main focus of activity to improve standards but enforcement action may also be taken as a last resort.

Table 9.7: BTS, Any, Urgent and Extensive Disrepair and Urgent Disrepair to Critical Element in Falkirk Compared to Scotland by Age of Dwelling and House Type

	BTS	Any Disrepair	Urgent Disrepair	Any Urgent Disrepair to Critical Elements	Extensive Disrepair
Pre 1945 Falkirk	9%	88%	53%	50%	14%
Post 1945 Falkirk	0%	69%	37%	30%	5%
Flat Falkirk	5%	84%	38%	31%	5%
House Falkirk	*	69%	48%	44%	12%
All Stock Falkirk	2%	73%	40%	34%	7%

Source: Extracted from Scottish House Conditions Survey 2017-2019, * sample size too small to give a reliable estimate

Housing Renewal Areas (HRA)

The 1987 and 2006 Housing (Scotland) Acts give local authorities a range of discretionary powers which they can use to ensure properties meet the Tolerable Standard and are free from serious disrepair. This includes the ability to require works and to declare a Housing Renewal Area (HRA) where a significant number of homes in an area are substandard, or where the appearance or state of repair of those homes are adversely affecting the amenity of the area. Where an HRA is declared, the authority must set out an Action Plan for addressing the identified issues. When appropriate, the council will use all of the available powers to address substandard housing and environmental issues within an area, including the use of HRAs. The council however will only consider designating an HRA where owner engagement has been exhausted and the use of other powers would be unsuitable or ineffective in tackling the issues within an area.

We have an HRA Policy however acknowledge the need to review within the period of this Local Housing Strategy. No areas within Falkirk have been identified as a concern since our HRA policy has been published.

Scheme of Assistance (SoA)

The 2006 Housing (Scotland) Act also introduced a new requirement for local authorities to prepare a Scheme of Assistance, setting out how it will advise and assist owners in their areas to repair and maintain their homes. The Scheme of Assistance outlines the assistance offered in relation to properties identified within both the BTS Strategy and HRA Policy. Our Scheme of Assistance (Strategy) was last revised in 2019.

In relation to property conditions, we offer a range of online information, general advice, signposting and practical support. Priority is given to vulnerable clients and work falling within our property condition priorities, where resources permit. In relation to non-financial advice the following table sets out details on advice given. The PST are increasing information available online. Results from the consultation surveys indicate PRS tenants and landlords/ letting agents are comfortable with digital technology: it is presumed this also true of homeowners.

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Table 9.8: All non-financial advice cases

Year	Website Hits	Leaflets Issued	Telephone Advice	Pro-Active Visits	Provided by Housing Team	Referrals	Total
2020-21	1,522	1,839	3,414	52	183	65	7,105
2019-20	3,479	1,464	7,460	462	892	129	13,886
2018-19	6,197	403	7,083	780	498	33	14,994
2017-18	6,006	1,055	7,044	901	594	32	15,632
2016-17	1,977	7,165	7,730	1,143	727	712	19,454

Source: Scheme of Assistance data from Scottish Government, 2016-2021

The PST have a small budget for repair grants. Access is restricted to priority works (priorities 1 – 3 in our scheme of assistance) which relate to below tolerable standard, sub-standard properties and lead pipe replacement works. Works require to be verified and supported by our Environmental Protection Unit. A maximum grant of £500 is available (£80 is currently deducted to register conditions against the property title).

The following table highlights that the amount spent through the SoA has fallen since 2017/18. The spend on disabled adaptations has fallen by around 51% since its highest point in 2018/19. Only one repair grant was issued in 2020/1, anecdotal information indicates that homeowners feel the grant level is too low to progress.

Table 9.9: Scheme of Assistance 2016/7 -2021/22, amount spent.

Year	Disabled adaptations	% of total	Assistance for work under notice	% of total	Other Assistance	% of total	Admin	% of total	Total amount spent
	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%	£
2021-22	£178,230	44%	£0	0%	£500	0.10%	£226,309	56%	£404,539
2020-21	£122,577	39%	£0	0%	£0	0%	£193,168	61%	£316,195
2019-20	£189,189	46%	£0	0%	£0	0%	£218,851	54%	£408,040
2018-19	£362,462	61%	£0	0%	£0	0%	£234,771	39%	£597,233
2017-18	£255,704	42%	£0	0%	£0	0%	£351,153	58%	£606,857
2016-17	£319,273	58%	£0	0%	£0	0%	£234,067	42%	£553,340

Source: SOA

Assistance may also be available for tenemental common repairs where Falkirk Council proposes the work, oversees it and the cost to the owner is over £10,000 (priority 4). In these circumstances, where there are concerns about repayment and, depending on the individual circumstances, repayment options can be discussed: no interest is applied to the cost of the works.

Our LHS consultation involved consulting on our Scheme of Assistance (2022/23), to help us review the assistance we provide. Low feedback limited the changes we could make therefore we plan build on the feedback received and undertake a Phase 2 Engagement exercise during 2024. The combined findings should allow us to carry out an informed review of our Scheme of Assistance by 2024/25, targeting available assistance to identified (property condition) priorities and continue to deliver private sector disabled adaptations.

In addition to our current promotion of Under One Roof, the PST are also exploring the introduction of an online app (Novoville), to remove barriers, help homeowners to co-ordinate common repairs and improve property conditions.

National standards

When the percentage of stock failing the SHQS is compared to the last HNDA which used the 2011/13 SHCS, the amount of overall stock failing has fallen from 44% to 36%. When tenure is looked at, the amount of owner-occupied stock failing has fallen from 42% to 30% and social rented housing has fallen from 52% to 41% property conditions are falling.

Covid-19 has impacted significantly on the delivery of the 2021/22 Housing Investment Programme. An underspend of £12.9m is projected due to a variety of factors including:

- Material supply issues and labour shortages.
- Restriction on accessing properties where tenants/occupiers have a positive Covid result.

Where necessary, all projects delayed by Covid 19 have been carried forward and will now be delivered and resourced as part of the new 5-year Housing Investment Programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27.

Table 9.10: Percentage of Stock Failing the overall SHQS by age, type, and tenure.

Tenure Type	Falkirk No.	Falkirk %	Scotland No.	Scotland %
% of LA	26,000	36	1,027,000	41
Pre-1945	10,000	60	390,000	52
Post 1945	16,000	29	637,000	37
Flats	11,000	55	402,000	45
Houses	15,000	28	625,000	39
Owner-occupied	14,000	30	625,000	41
Social Housing	8,000	41	241,000	38
Private Rented	*	*	161,000	52

Source: Scottish House Conditions 2017-2019, * The sample in Falkirk is too small for a reliable estimate

Social rented landlords % stock meeting SHQS

As of 31st March 2023, 70% of the Council's housing stock met the SHQS criteria. The reduction in performance is due to a change from a 10-year Electrical Inspection Condition Report (EICR) to a 5-year cycle. EICR checks that were not undertaken during 2021/22 have been prioritised for completion in 2022/23. Discussions with RSLs indicate a similar situation and figures.

In general properties do not meet the SHQS for the following reasons: smoke alarms, door entry systems, tenants refusing work e.g., new windows.

When existing council tenants refuse to take part in repairs contracts, this is progressed when the property is next relet. In relation to owners, Falkirk Council are exploring options which will highlight when the property changes ownership. If successful, this will enable Falkirk Council to make contact with the new owner and invite them to take part in the work and supports a pro-active approach. Discussions with RSLs show a similar approach is being adopted across social landlords in recognition of the importance of maintaining our stock conditions.

Whilst there are financial issues with some contracts there is the capacity to reprogramme work for future years in the Falkirk Council HIP to meet the SHQS in future years.

For Council and two RSLs, buyback programmes have been used as a tool to help meet property standards. This has allowed landlords to purchase properties advertised for sale where the owner previously refused to take part in repairs work. In addition to the council buyback programme, Paragon make use of buybacks annually. Link Housing Association have taken over Weslo and used a buyback programme to purchase properties in poor repair and carried out the necessary works.

Table 9.11: Scottish Housing Regulator properties meeting SHQS 2020

Landlord name	Stock as at Oct 2019	Stock meeting the SHQS 2020)	% SHQS
Ark	1	1	100%
Barony	1	0	0%
Bield	155	154	99%
Blackwood	37	37	100%
Cairn	56	54	96%
Castle Rock Edinvar	95	86	90%
Hanover	196	196	100%
Horizon	89	89	100%
Key	71	71	100%
Kingdom	48	48	100%
Link	1,418	1,423	100%
Loretto	131	131	100%
Paragon	847	727	86%
Weslo ²⁷	473	434	92%
Total	19,997	19,592	98%

Source: Scottish Housing Regulator 2019

Damp and Mould

In response to the growing concern regarding rising energy costs and the way people heat their home resources were appointed to explore how we could reduce instances of mould forming, ascertain if this was hazardous, respond promptly to concerns and offer guidance, advice and reassurance.

Falkirk Council plan to appoint an officer whose remit will focus on damp and mould. They will make referrals relating to property conditions causing damp and mould. They will also be able to explore with tenants a range of factors such as life style and poverty along with their potential impact and make referrals to relevant agencies for assistance.

Current progress and activities

The following table sets out Falkirk Council's planned housing quality standard work in the Housing Investment Programme 2023/4 to 2027/8.

²⁷ Weslo now part of the Link Group

Table 9.11: Housing Quality Standard Work from 2023/24 - 2027/8

Housing Quality Standard Work	2023/4 to 2027/8
Elemental Maintenance & Improvements	£35,000 million
External Fabric Improvements (incl. fees)	£75,000m
Windows & Doors Replacement (Incl. Fees)	£16,000 m
Kitchen Renewal	£4,125m
Bathroom Renewal	£12,500m
Electrical Works	£142,625m

Source: Falkirk Council Housing Investment Plan 2023

Social rented landlords continue to have a significant number of properties that are in abeyance, tenant refusals for repair/improvement work, no access etc. Falkirk Council's approach is not to force access for these types of work, properties being upgraded once void and brought up to the relet standard. In relation to private properties social rented landlords generally monitor the changes in ownership to establish if the new owners are agreeable to the work being carried out. Estimates are that this applies to around 90 blocks. Falkirk Council are currently exploring options on how to routinely identify change of ownership and make contact with the new owner directly and ask them to participate in works contracts.

Falkirk Council recognises the need to update / refresh their asset data base. Also bring various contracts online e.g., Combined Heat and Power, Voids, kitchens and bathrooms, lifts to ensure standards are maintained. Section 11 sets out resources from the FC housing investment plan.

Consultation

LHS consultation focus group members raised concerns about the quality and standards of affordable housing. Maintaining current stock and ensuring that good housing conditions were seen to be very important, especially to families.

We circulated a survey to inform a review of our SOA as part of our LHS consultation. However, this survey only had a limited response (29). Based on the limited responses we have therefore identified a need for a more intensive consultation exercise to be carried out to review the SOA in 2024/5. We have consulted with colleagues in community planning and are developing plans for a more intensive consultation exercise.

The LHS survey highlighted the following issues are very important or important to respondents. Issues relation to the private rented sector are considered in the following section.

- Improve housing conditions (93%)
- Provide information on tenant's rights (81%)
- Provide information on Landlords / Owners responsibilities (85%)
- Take action against Private landlords who do not maintain their properties (93%)

Actions

1. Social rented housing providers will work towards meeting regulatory standards for properties conditions.
2. We will work to improve conditions in mixed tenure properties.
3. We will explore digital technology to assist owners improve property conditions.
4. We will engage with owners to raise awareness about repair and maintenance.
5. We will review the SOA in 2024/5
6. We will review the BTS Strategy in 2025/26
7. We will review the HRA in 2026/27

Appendix 1

8. We will explore selling single properties in a block owned by FC when the tenancy ends in cases where improvements have been blocked repeatedly over a period of years by private owners. The sum raised being invested to improve the current council housing stock.

Section 10 - LHS Priority 7 A Sustainable Private Rented Sector

Outcome

We will make the best use of the private rented sector locally.

Contributes to the following national outcomes:

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We are healthy and active
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

National Context

The private rented sector (PRS) has grown considerably in the last 20 years, with renting trends being heavily influenced by lifestyle choices and challenges in other parts of the housing system. This can be seen by reduced numbers of available social rented housing as a result of the right to buy. Up until 2008, house prices rose at a higher rate than income, making homeownership increasingly unaffordable. Since then, stagnating wage rises, mortgage lending restrictions and deposit constraints has been seen to restrict homeownership as a housing option for younger households. Population increases, reducing household sizes have also been observed along with increasing numbers of buy to let mortgages.

In 2013, [A Place to Stay, A Place to Call Home](#), the Strategy for the PRS in Scotland was issued by the Scottish Government with the vision:

"A private rented sector that provides good quality homes and high management standards, inspires consumer confidence, and encourages growth through attracting increased investment."

The three aims to achieve the vision are:

1. Improve Quality
2. Deliver for Tenants and Landlords
3. Enable Growth, Investment and help increase overall housing supply.

This section explains how we are meeting the aims of the current national Private Rented Sector Strategy.

Recent legislation impacting on the PRS includes:

1. Tenancy Deposit Schemes
2. New Private Residential Tenancy
3. Expansion of the First Tier Tribunal for Scotland
4. Letting Agent Regulation
5. Heat and Smoke Detection
6. Prescribed Information checks
7. Rent Pressure Zones introduced.
8. Increased Landlord Registration Fees
9. Changes to eviction rules during COVID Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 (temporary)
10. Rent and Eviction freeze.
11. Short-Term lets

The following are planned:

- Changes to the Repairing Standard
- Planned minimum EPC standards.

The previously mentioned Scottish Government [Housing to 2040](#) has committed to the development of a new Rented Sector Strategy: we look forward to the planned consultation.

In addition to [Housing to 2040](#) and Scottish Legislation there are policy issues decided by the UK government which impact on PRS including taxation, mortgage finance and welfare benefits. Changes to each of these areas impact on the PRS in relation to landlord's ability to claim tax relief on mortgage interest, changes to Buy to Let lending restrictions and enabling tenants to pay PRS market rents through Housing Benefit.

It is perceived the following is impacting on the sector, this view is supported by stakeholder feedback (private Landlord and Letting Agent Forum (21/6/23)):

- Landlords are taxed on their full rental income with no automatic right to claim depreciation.
- They pay a 3% additional dwelling supplement when purchasing property to rent and are likely to pay Capital Gains tax when leaving the sector.
- Buy to Let borrowing criteria is now stricter, limiting the amount landlords can borrow.
- The introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) now limits the amount of benefit paid in the PRS to 30% of all market rents in the broad rental market area.
- Single people under 35 years can only access the shared room rate.
- LHA has also been periodically frozen at the 2015 rate between 2015-2020 and at the 2020 rate to date.
- The cost-of-living increases (2022 and 2023) and higher Buy to Let interest rate are also impacting on PRS growth.
- Emergency rent cap and eviction pause.

Local Context

The PRS represented 8% of Falkirk's housing market in 2011²⁸ and has increased since the last Census. A large percent of local landlords locally let only one or two properties which shows that most landlords do not let as a business or profession, instead, letting to supplement income/pension or have found themselves with an additional property and may not want to sell at a possible loss.

Recently there has been a reduction in available PRS properties. The perception from stakeholders (Private Sector Team (PST), private Landlord and Letting Agent Forum) is that rising house prices (late 2022/ early 2023), mortgage/ savings rates, current restrictions and future planned changes to the sector are impacting on landlords, some are deciding to leave the sector. The average landlord age in Falkirk is 54: coupled with the above, this may be contributing to reducing property numbers.

We are now starting to see increasing rental costs across Falkirk. Increasing costs may make the PRS less accessible for some households.

The PRS plays an important role in providing rented accommodation across Falkirk. It is home to and helps meet the needs of a wide range of residents (young professionals, students, families, and

²⁸ Based on 2011 Census Information

those looking for short-term lets) at different stages of their life: providing flexibility and choice. The new Private Residential Tenancy has increased the security of renting in the PRS making it a more attractive housing option. It is essential that the PRS continues to be sustainable and affordable.

To support and ensure the sector operates well:

- Our PST provides specific support to the PRS by working in partnership to:
 - support landlords and letting agents through enquiry management, providing online information, emails, annual forums and newsletters.
 - support landlords to address property condition issues and, where necessary, take enforcement action.
 - help to make the PRS a level playing field for landlords and fair for tenants.
- Online information for both landlords and private tenants:
 - helping to raise awareness about letting advert information, landlord registration, minimum property standards as well as support and enforcement.
 - links to a range of sources of information and support.
- Through our Private Rented Database (PRD) we:
 - collect a range of information from private rented property adverts enabling us to monitor and enforce compliance with landlord registration.
 - help to highlight property condition issues.
 - identify changes across the PRS in relation to rent, size, property type and location. This informs strategic planning to inform how we can better work with the sector to improve property conditions and tenants' rights.

Extent and location

The PRS locally has been growing steadily since 2003 when it represented 3% of all housing in Falkirk. In 2011, Census information recorded 5,655 properties, representing 8% of the housing market. As the most recent census data is not available, comparison has been made to the private landlord register which recorded 6,616 properties in 2021/22 owned by 5,052 landlords. This reflects an increase of 17% in properties let in the PRS over 10 years.

Table 10.1: Private rented sector 2003-2022

	2003	2011	2022	Change 2011-2021	Change 2021/22 - Dec 2022
Number of properties	2,152	5,655	6,616	+17%	-4.1%

Source: 2003 LHS 2004-09 (Appendix A), 2011 Census, 2022 Landlord Register

However, by December 2022/23 there were 6,344 properties owned by 4,832 landlords. This reflects a 4.4% decrease in landlords and 4.1% decrease in properties. PRS properties are still reducing month on month. We currently estimate the PRS to have increased slightly overall, since 2011, to 9%.

According to the census, the majority of PRS properties are located within Falkirk submarket area, with the remainder evenly distributed across the other housing market areas. In relation to property types, the majority of properties for rent are flats (57%). Property size information shows that properties are generally 1 and 2 bedroom (61%).

Affordability

The following table highlights that private sector rent levels locally increased over the period of the last LHS and in particular in 2021-22.

Table 10.2: Average Monthly Rent by Bedroom Size 2017-2022

Bedroom Size	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% change 2017 – 2022	% change 2021-2022
1 Bed	£376	£389	£402	£411	£434	£487	29%	12%
2 Bed	£479	£465	£510	£541	£584	£646	35%	10%
3 Bed	£619	£584	£637	£679	£726	£824	39%	19%
4 Bed	£866	£908	£879	£901	£1,028	£1,324	54%	30%
5 Bed	£1,329	£1,500	£1,306	£1,400	-	£1,775	34%	-
Total	£489	£481	£520	£530	£576	£644	33%	13%

Source: Falkirk Council Private Rent Database

The following table highlights that price increases apply to all sub areas however it is important to caveat that in some sub areas there were fewer properties we have identified as advertised to let therefore the sample size was smaller (Bo'ness).

Table 10.3: Average monthly rent by housing submarket area 2017-2022

Sub area	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% change 2017-2022	% change 2021-22
Bo'ness	£475	£443	£518	£490	£497	£597	26%	20%
Denny & Bonnybridge	£528	£453	£533	£666	£584	£728	38%	25%
Falkirk	£465	£445	£504	£496	£563	£627	35%	11%
Grangemouth	£447	£650	£478	£524	£544	£677	51%	24%
Braes & Rural South	£545	£528	£553	£566	£636	£687	26%	8%
Stenhousemuir, Larbert & Rural North	£563	£547	£593	£637	£658	£677	20%	3%
Total	£489	£481	£520	£530	£576	£649	33%	13%

Source: Falkirk Council Private Rent Database

In contrast, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels across Forth Valley remained the same between 2017-2019 (except for the shared rate which saw an increase in 2019/20) and have remained at the same level since 2020/21.

The table below, shows the difference between LHA levels and private rental information.

Table 10.4: Private Rents Compared to LHA Rates

Property Type	2022/23 Monthly LHA Rates	2022/23 Falkirk Council PRD (average)	Difference	Difference %
Shared	£296.48	-	-	-
1 Bedroom	£363.60	£486	£122.40	+34%
2 Bedroom	£460.28	£654	£193.72	+42%
3 Bedroom	£598.36	£862	£263.64	+44%
4 Bedroom	£874.52	£1,331	£456.48	+52%
5 Bedroom	£874.52	£1,775	£900.48	+103%

Source: Falkirk Council Private Rent Database, Scottish Government (Rent Service Scotland)

We have used the following table to compare rents and incomes at sub area level. This indicates that there are sub areas where private renting is more affordable but again this needs to be caveated in relation to sample sizes in some areas.

Table 10.5: Affordability of renting for Lower Income Households by Housing Submarket Areas (2020/2021)

Area	Average Rent per Month	Average rent per Year	LQ Income	% LQ income to housing costs
Braes & Rural South	£566	£6,792	£19,760	34%
Falkirk	£496	£5,952	£14,560	41%
Denny & Bonnybridge	£666	£7,992	£15,080	53%
Bo'ness	£490	£5,880	£17,680	33%
Grangemouth	£524	£6,288	£13,000	48%
Stenhousemuir Larbert & Rural North	£637	£7,644	£19,760	39%
Overall	£530	£6,360	£16,640	38%

Source: Falkirk Private rented database, HNDA Tool

The available evidence does not meet the criteria for a *Rent Pressure Zone* designation. We will continue to monitor rents and the associated pressures over the period of this LHS and, where necessary, progress this option.

We will continue to promote the PRS as a housing option where appropriate. Until the relaunch of our Private Rented Access Service, individuals and families will be helped to access the PRS via discretionary housing payments towards upfront costs: this is identified through Housing Options assessments.

Landlord Registration

The PST take a proactive approach. To help us better understand our PRS housing market, we collect a range of information from private rented property adverts on an ongoing basis in our Private Rented Database (PRD): this includes size, location, rents, deposits, EPC rates as well as checking on each Landlord Registration status. This also allows us to identify changes across the PRS market, monitor and enforce compliance in the PRS: allowing us check that advertised properties and landlords are registered and the required advertised information is given.

The PST actively contact landlords leading up to renewal by letter, email or phone. This supports landlords not to miss the renewal date and incur a late fee. Where necessary, Rent Penalty Notices are issued where a landlord refuses or delays registration/ re-registration. In 2022/23, 1 notice was issued: this was not enforced, as the landlord complied.

As part of the registration process, PST spot check Prescribed Information responses (231 in 2022/23): this helps us ensure compliance. Evidence from 2023 suggests that around 34% of certificates are obtained after the request for copies is made. We have also recently started collecting information from landlords cancelling or not renewing their registrations to help us understand why they are leaving the market.

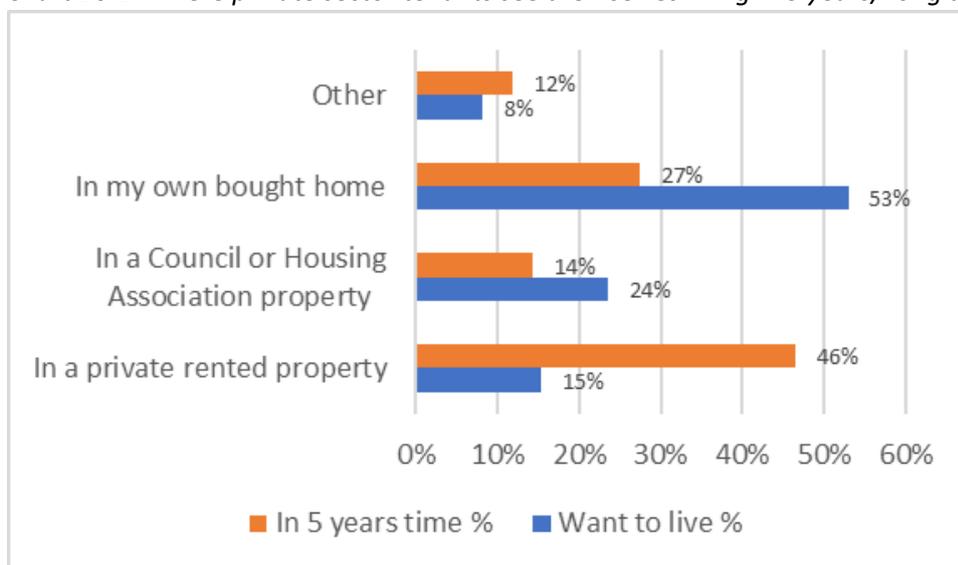
As a last resort, the PST require agents to be appointed and will revoke landlord registrations. However, the last registration revoked was in 2021/22 highlighting the benefits of the PST engaging early with landlords.

Our actions help regulate the PRS, endeavouring to safeguard tenants.

Demand and Supply

The following chart is based on LHS consultation survey to private rented tenants and shows that a representation of current private sector tenants see themselves living in the PRS in 5 years' time (45%). Over a longer period, they see themselves moving into home ownership (53%) or social housing (24%). This reinforces the understanding that PRS accommodates residents at different stages of their life: that for most it acts as a steppingstone. As such demand for PRS accommodation will naturally rise and fall.

Chart 10.1: Where private sector tenants see themselves living in 5 years/ long term



Source: Private Sector Tenants survey results 2023

Landlord and Letting Agent survey findings suggest that over the next 5 years, over 58% of landlords who responded, plan to continue letting in some form, with just over 32% planning to stop. The increasing regulations, tax changes, financial and eviction restrictions are likely to affect decisions to remain or leave.

Losing landlords from the PRS is likely to result in some properties being lost, through a mixture of sales into homeownership and onto other landlords, this will further increase the current pressures on Falkirk's PRS.

Our PRD experience and stakeholder feedback (landlord and letting agent) has highlighted a recent increasing turnover of property adverts and a heightened demand on advertised lets, with adverts being removed early to manage demand. Stakeholder feedback also suggests more households moving into the Falkirk market than before.

Analysis of **BUILD TO RENT** characteristics shows a lack of evidence (age demographic, employment categories and rent levels) to support investment in/ development of this model within Falkirk at this time. We will continue to monitor and explore build to rent, as a development option, over this LHS period and provide further comment in LHS annual updates.

Mid-Market Renting

There are a few examples of mid-marketing renting within Falkirk. These have involved subsidiaries of Housing Associations letting accommodation through the Private Residential Tenancy. Although they are not able to register as a Private Landlord, their tenants are afforded the same legislative protection and are able to seek recourse via the First Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber). As of June 2023, we are aware of 82 mid-market properties.

Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO)

HMOs exist in the private rented sector and can play a role in accommodating household types such as young working people, students, lower income households, economic migrants and those who are at risk of homelessness. The number of houses in multiple occupancy in Falkirk as of 31st March each year is shown below highlighting numbers falling steadily over the last 10 years with a 49% fall in total.

Table 10.6: Number of HMO Licenses at the end of March 2010-2023

2010	41
2011	43
2012	40
2013	35
2014	34
2015	34
2016	29
2017	26
2018	29
2019	21
2020	21
2021	20
2022	28
2023	28

Source: Scottish Government Housing Statistics Annual Return of HMO (2010-2021), Licensing Section data (2022 & 2023)

National information shows fluctuations with increases seen in university cities. Information from the Licensing Section shows a slight increase during 2022 and 2023.

Looking at 2023 local authority information, there are 22 HMO's which are let as flats and houses, the rest are hostel accommodation (5) or housing for older people (1). Anecdotal evidence suggests that reducing HMO numbers has been due to changes in business management/ practices and property sales.

A reduction in the number of HMOs reduces the housing options for people on lower incomes. We will continue to monitor HMO numbers to see if pressures on the PRS impacts on future need and demand for this housing option.

Short-term Lets

Research on the use of short term lets in Scotland found that the number increased dramatically from 2016²⁹. Falkirk had one of the lowest number of listings in May 2019 at 113.

Table 10.7: Short term let listings for Falkirk in May 2019

Council Area	Entire home/apt	Private room	Shared room	Total (May 2019)	% Of Total
Falkirk	71	42	0	113	0.35

Source: Research into the impact of short-term lets on communities across Scotland, Scottish Government, 2019

All local authorities were required to establish a short-term let licensing scheme by October 2022. Existing hosts and operators now have until 1 October 2023 to apply for a licence for each property that they operate as a short-term let. This may have an impact on the number of short-term lets in Falkirk in the future with owners reverting to long term renting. The table below indicates the number of applications received and licences issued as of April 2023. Short term lets require to meet the Repairing Standard, which extends minimum enforceable property conditions across the PRS.

Table 10.8: Short-term applications and issued licenses (as of April 2023)

Accepted Applications	Licences Issued
8	2

Source: Licensing Section, Falkirk Council

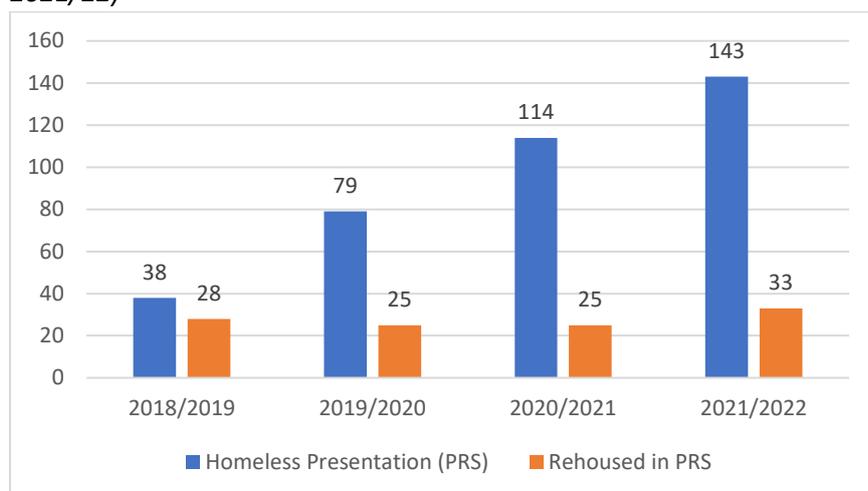
Homelessness

The following table indicates there has been a steadily increasing trend of homeless presentations from the PRS, representing a 276% increase between 2018/19 and 2021/22. During the same period, the number of presentations overall increased by 13% and the number rehoused in the PRS increased by 18%.

Homeless presentation from Falkirk Council, other Registered Social Landlords and homeowners, for the same period, all increased at a higher rate. From discussions with stakeholders (PST and housing needs teams), it is perceived this relates to the implications of the covid pandemic and landlords leaving the private rented market. Further discussions are ongoing.

²⁹ Research into the impact of short-term lets on communities across Scotland, Scottish Government, 2019

Chart 10.2: Homeless Presentations from and Rehoused in Private Rented Sector (2018/19 – 2021/22)



Source: HL1 return information

Falkirk Council (FC) Homeless Prevention Team offers a range of assistance to help maintain private sector tenancies, this can include accessing Discretionary Housing Payments and tenancy sustainment to alleviate the threat of homelessness.

FC Leasing Scheme (PSL) helps to provide temporary homeless accommodation. We will review our PSL scheme during this LHS period, with the aim of making the scheme more attractive to landlords and increasing the number of private sector properties participating in the scheme.

Property Conditions

The size of our PRS and the sample sizes of the Scottish House Condition Survey mean that property condition information and the levels and extent of disrepair for Falkirk's PRS is unavailable.

We know there are a few areas of higher PRS concentration, and the PST actions help to highlight any geographic concentrations of property issues.

Private Rented survey results shows that 73% of private sector tenants and around 99% of landlords rated the condition of PRS properties as good/ very good. This indicates that property conditions locally are reasonable and that poor property condition issues may be confined to a limited number of lets.

The PST take a pre-emptive approach which allows them to address unregistered landlords and properties across Falkirk. During 2022/23, 376 adverts highlighted through the PRD were forwarded on to the PST for investigation. As a result, 15 unregistered landlords and 81 unregistered properties were discovered. This approach takes account of feedback made at our private Landlord and Letting Agent Forums.

In addition to spot checking prescribed information responses, the PST enforce property standards by seeking voluntary engagement with landlords around raised condition issues (242 Action Plans raised in 2022/23) and support/ pursue enforcement action as appropriate to ensure that all property conditions issues are satisfactorily addressed (27, including 3rd party referrals made to Housing and Property Chamber in 2022/23). Collecting information on issues raised helps inform the PST's understanding of property conditions issues within the PRS. The PST plan to introduce a

Private Tenant Engagement pilot in 2023/24. This will allow them to raise awareness of PRS property requirements, become aware of and help address ongoing property condition issues.

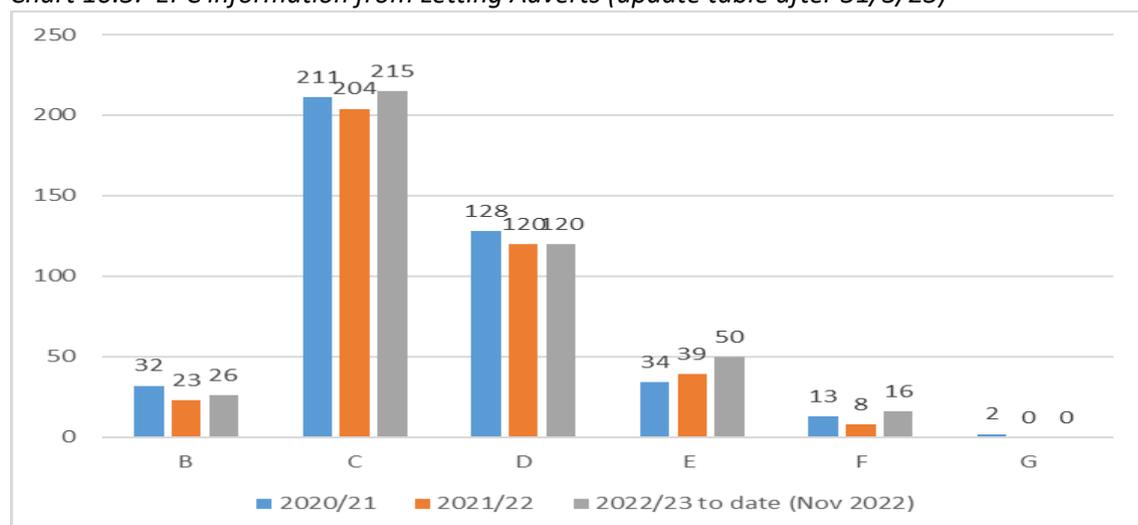
The awareness of tenancy rights and protections are essential to a well operating PRS. Through this survey, the PST also hope to collect tenant contact information. This will help us to develop a tenants stakeholder database: we plan to use this database to share a range of renting information directly to private sector tenants and for future engagement activities, where permission is granted. This will help us raise awareness about tenants' rights, how to get tenancy help and other sources of assistance.

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

The Scottish Government currently plans to publish legislation at the end of 2023 about energy efficiency standards in the PRS. It is anticipated that Private Rented Sector properties will require to have a minimum EPC rating of C from 2025 when the tenancy changes where it is feasible and cost effective, with all PRS properties requiring to reach this 2028.

The following table represents EPC information sourced from the PRD which indicates that there has been little improvement in the EPC ratings within the Private Sector over the last 3 years.

Chart 10.3: EPC information from Letting Adverts (update table after 31/3/23)



Source: Private Rented Database (2020/21 - 2022/23)

Age of stock is an important indicator of energy efficiency. Older properties are less energy efficient than newly constructed properties, are more likely to be in a poorer condition and cost more to meet the planned energy standards. With 39% of PRS stock pre-dating 1944 and only 36% built after 1982, this may raise issues throughout the LHS period as landlords try to meet the planned standards: currently 56% compliant and 44% non-compliant.

This is similar to Energy Savings Trust, Home Analytics information (2021) for Falkirk which shows 48% of PRS properties as currently compliant and 52% as not.

To improve property conditions across Falkirk, we will continue to secure funding through Home Energy Efficiency Programme: Area Based Scheme (HEEPS: ABS), raise awareness around future projects to address energy efficiency in private sector properties, promote Home Energy Scotland

assistance and loans available to landlords through our private Landlord and Letting Agent Forums, Renting Matters in Falkirk e-newsletter and private sector webpages.

LHS Consultation

To build on our understanding of the PRS, we issued a Private Sector Tenants survey and a Landlord & Letting Agents survey (October 2022 to January 2023), receiving 85 and 81 responses respectively. Both represented a response rate of under 2%. The findings were triangulated with the day-to-day experience of our PST, we shared a findings summary with our established stakeholder group in our May 2023 Renting Matters in Falkirk newsletter and during our private Landlord and Letting Agent Forum held on 21/6/23. The feedback received was consistent with the findings expressed in LHS consultation.

As there is not currently an established private sector tenant stakeholder group to engage with, summary reports of both surveys were added to our [Private Sector](#) webpages. This gave allowed feedback to be shared more widely.

Collaboration with these PRS groups has helped the PST develop our first ever PRS LHS section. It has also helped, on an ongoing basis, to support a sustainable PRS within Falkirk. The private Landlord and Letting Agent Forum believe partnership working is essential to the continued development and sustainability of the PRS.

Key Issues and Challenges

1. Improve communication with private rented tenants to increase awareness of regulations, rights/ responsibilities, where to get help as well as opportunities to feedback on their experiences to inform understanding of and help shape the PRS.
2. Build on the working partnership with landlords and letting agents to increase regulation and assistance awareness, reducing non-compliance with registration and property conditions.
3. Lack of available PRS property condition information
4. Increased regulation, renting/ eviction restrictions and cost of living are making PRS unattractive for landlords, with survey evidence suggesting that 1/3 of landlords intend to leave sector in the next 5 years.
5. The reducing numbers of properties, increasing PRS rental costs and stagnant LHA rates reduce PRS affordability for some households.

Actions

1. We will continue to engage with private tenants and landlords annually.
2. We will increase opportunities for engagement with private rented tenants.
3. We will introduce a pilot private tenant engagement survey by 2024/25
4. We will review the pilot private tenant engagement survey.
5. We will introduce a biennial private rented sector tenant survey.
6. We will monitor private rented sector complaints quarterly.
7. We will monitor the number of HMO licences and short term let licences annually.
8. We will aim to reduce the number of people who present as homeless from the private rented sector.
9. We will continue to review our private sector leasing scheme during 2023/24
10. We will continue to explore the opportunities to increase the number of private sector leased properties.
11. We will aim to increase private tenant satisfaction biennially.

Appendix 1

12. We will provide information, monitor and take enforcement action, where necessary, against private landlords who fail to meet statutory requirements.
13. We will monitor the need for rent pressure zones.

Section 11 Resources

11.1_Overview

In the LHS resources are defined as finance, land, and staff. Financial resources are set out in the following sections.

This LHS highlighted falling property conditions and the necessity to provide advice and information across tenures. This requires staff resources with suitable expertise and or a digital alternative. In relation to staffing an ageing workforce is a key risk to delivering the LHS.

Land supply is set out in the LDP with the housing land audit carried out annually by planning colleagues. There are increasing number of sites coming under the AHP requiring partnership working with the private sector. Effective partnership working relies on staff expertise across housing and planning.

11.2 Financial Resources

Housing Revenue Account

In 2023 we introduced our first Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to define our vision for housing for the next 50 years, including our commitment to best value and prudent financial management of the Housing Revenue Account. 88% of our income comes from tenants’ rents with the remainder being from grant sources.

Table 11.1 below shows the Housing Revenue Account income and expenditure as reported to elected members in February 2023 HRA February 2023. This set out (appendix 1) that the 2022/3 revenue budget is broken down as follows capital finance (32%), maintenance and improvements (38%), supervision and management (24%), other (7%). The table below sets out future years.

*Table 11.1: HRA expenditure and income 2022/3 to 2027/8**

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Employee Expenses	8,907	9,170	9,394	9,625	9,900	10,182
Property Expenses	27,810	28,347	28,936	29,647	30,409	31,202
Transport Expenses	33	33	34	35	35	35
Supplies & Services	4,606	4,712	4,768	4,824	4,879	4,937
Third Party Payments	2,489	2,677	2,678	2,678	2,678	2,678
Support Services	5,099	5,052	5,052	5,052	5,052	5,052
Loans Charges	22,027	22,880	25,590	26,878	28,922	33,257
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	70,971	72,871	76,452	78,739	81,875	87,343
Financed By: House Rents	62,359	62,647	64,281	67,480	70,593	73,908
Other Income	8,001	8,888	8,758	8,776	8,832	8,890
Use of Reserves	611	-120	397	-669	-834	1,121
TOTAL INCOME	70,971	71,415	73,436	75,587	78,591	83,919
Shortfall to be financed by rent increase	0	1,456	3,016	3,152	3,284	3,424
Estimated Housing Stock	16,358	16,486	16,641	16,794	16,889	17,000
Annual Rent Increase	£74.88	£76.24	£155.50	£161.72	£168.48	£174.72
Weekly Rent Increase (£)	£1.44	£1.47	£2.99	£3.11	£3.24	£3.36
Weekly Rent Increase (%)	2.0%	2.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%

Appendix 1

Weekly Rent	73	75	78	81	84	88
HRA Reserves						
Opening Balance	7,228	6,617	6,737	6,340	7,009	7,843
Surplus/(Deficit) above	(611)	120	(397)	669	834	(1, 121)
Closing Reserve Balance	6,617	6,737	6,340	7,009	7,843	6,722

Source HRA report to elected members -* NOTE Figures for 2024/25 to 2027/28 are indicative only

Risks and impacts

Rent arrears continue to be higher than in previous years. This is a concern for social rented landlords. The financial challenges faced by some tenants due to rising living costs and poverty has impacted on rental income. Long-term financial modelling has also been carried out by Falkirk Council to consider financial implications of future housing investment, whilst maintaining a viable HRA, coupled with affordable rent levels.

Falkirk Council have applied the Rent Affordability Tool provided by Housemark Scotland to assess affordability for tenants. Given the potential for changes in tenants' incomes the Service also reviews this information annually to assess any changes in affordability. Findings from the Affordability Tool shows that the 2% increase for rent charges during 2023/24 and the projected 4% increase for 2024/25 are afford for FC tenants.

To help address poverty and reduce the risk of homelessness Falkirk Council introduced a "Rent Matching Scheme as part of the Income Maximisation Strategy in 2023 with an initial budget allocation of £250,000.

Falkirk Council Housing Investment Programme

The following table sets out FC's housing investment programme for 2023/4 to 2027/8, including housing quality standard work (£184,173 million) and non-housing quality standard (£143,828 million) therefore in total expenditure of £328, 013 million HIP report February 2023. Anticipated income over the period comes to £49,269 million which means reliance on prudential borrowing of £278,744 million.

Table 11.2: Falkirk Council Housing Investment Programme 2023/4 to 2027/8

Item	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Totals
Housing Quality Standard Work	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Elemental Maintenance and Improvements	£28,525	£28,525	£28,525	£28,525	£28,525	£142,625
Energy Efficiency works	£8,050	£6,850	£3,300	£3,300	£3,300	£24,800
Estate Improvements	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£15,000
Health and Safety	£350	£350	£350	£350	£350	£1,750
TOTAL HQS WORK	£39,925	£38,725	£35,175	£35,175	£35,175	£184,175
Non housing quality standard work	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Council new build housing	£26,945	£11,692	£3,975	£19,603	£34,123	£96,338

Appendix 1

Property Buy-Backs	£8,500	£8,500	£8,500	£8,500	£8,500	£42,500
Other Works	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£5,000
TOTAL NON HQS WORK	£36,445	£21,192	£13,475	£29,103	£43,623	£143,838
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£76,370	£59,917	£48,650	£64,278	£78,798	£328,013

Source: Falkirk Council HIP report to council

11.3: Resources – Prudential Borrowing

Item	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Totals
SG Grant** - New Build (SHIP)	£6,119	£4,788	£446	£6,100	£11,840	£29,293
New Build - Other funding Source	£0	£1,000	£0	£0	£0	£1,000
SG Grant - Buy Backs (SHIP)	£3,600	£3,600	£3,600	£3,600	£3,600	£18,000
SG Grant - Energy Efficiency	£976	£0	£0	£0	£0	£976
TOTAL INCOME	£10,695	£9,388	£4,046	£9,700	£15,440	£49,269
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£76,370	£59,917	£48,650	£64,278	£78,798	£328,013
Prudential Borrowing	£65,675	£50,529	£44,604	£54,578	£63,358	£278,744

Source: Falkirk Council HIP report to council

Risks and impacts

The risks to the Housing Investment Programme include economic volatility and uncertainty experienced during 2022/23 and it is anticipated much of this will continue into 2023/24 and beyond.

The HIP has been adversely affected by increased costs due to rising inflation, affecting the viability of some projects and a shortage in materials and labour. These are influenced by external factors such as the economic impact of the war in Ukraine, Brexit, and the downturn in the UK economy.

Indicative future year rent levels will be revisited during 2023/24 with reports presented to elected Members as appropriate. Mitigation measures are set out in the previous section.

Strategic Housing Investment Plan

The following table sets out resource planning assumptions (RPA) for Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant, projected grant spend and annual spend by year.

Risks and impacts

Grant allocation not spent in one financial year cannot be rolled over to the next year. Scottish Government have a national target to deliver 110,000 new affordable homes nationally over the course of the Scottish Parliament therefore grant not used in one local authority area will be allocated to another local authority area. Locally this is a risk to delivering affordable housing.

The Scottish Government SHIP guidance states that the Council is expected to produce a balanced and realistic development programme, based on RPA +25%, to help ensure that the targets for

spend and unit numbers are delivered. We have developed a 'shadow' programme of sites which have some capacity to progress should planned project timescales slip.

Table 11.4: Affordable Housing Supply Programme Grant

Year	RPA	Projected Grant spend	Actual spend
2020-21	£12.882m	-	£11.142m
2021-22	£14.601m	-	£6.976m
2022-23	£12.586m	-	£15.324m
2023-24	£12.550m	£16.738m	-
2024-25	£12.594m	£18.282m	-
2025-26	£12.802m	£18.866m	-
2026-27	Tbc	£19.800m	-
2027-28	Tbc	£20.310m	

Source SHIP 2023/28

Affordable Housing Policy commuted sums.

As set out in the SHIP 2023 there was £1, 580, 587 available as Affordable Housing Policy Commuted sums as of 31st August 2023. The Scottish Government's planning guidance Circular 3/2012 (updated 2020) sets out tight rules for spending this money, which should be on affordable housing in the local area of the relevant development, used within a specified period and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Development Plan's Supplementary Guidance. As such, the commuted sums received to date require to be spent on affordable housing within the area of Bo'ness circa £500k with the remainder in Denny and Bonnybridge.

There is provision in the SHIP to allocate £0.5m to an Affordable Housing Policy site in Bo'ness, and there are several other developments proposed in the 2023-28 SHIP which would meet the criteria. The commuted sums budget will be used to support the Programme when the annual AHSP/RPA is fully committed.

Risks and impacts

The Planning obligations group monitors spent on development contributions include AHP commuted sums. The risk being if funds are not spent, they must be returned to the developer.

Over the coming months we will explore potential for buying properties off shelf.

2nd homes council tax

In 2023/4, the balance in this fund was £905, 336.

Falkirk Council's Housing Investment Programme is funded mainly from rents and borrowing. This is repaid over several years by the Housing Revenue Account as loans charges. A sum of £250k was transferred from 2009 /10 to 2021/22 used for CNB loan charges. A report to Policy and Resources Committee on New Affordable Housing in 2012 set out that £173k would be transferred to Kingdom Housing Association for their Overton project. Over the course of this LHS (2017-2022) £1,250 million was allocated to CNB and 3,250,000 in total since 2009.

In relation to RSLs, £388,000 has also been provided to 2 RSL developments over the course of LHS 2017-2022.

Risk and impact

The second homes council tax budget has fallen from £1,137, 317 as at 14/09 2009 to £905, 336 in 2023.

The number of new second homes over recent years has been around 700, the target annually is to bring into use 10% or 70.

Empty Homes debt recovered.

The following table sets out the number of empty homes brought back into use and debt recovered. Both have fallen over LHS 2017-2022.

Table 11.5: Number of properties brought back into use and debt recovered 2013-2023

Year	No. Brought Back	Debt recovered
2013/14-2016/17	627	£352, 936
2017-2018	50	£34,338
2018-2019	57	£37,925
2019-2020	65	£10,752
2020-2021	52	£35,159
2021-2022	38	£47,746
2022-2023	63	£51,239
Total	627	£352,936

Source Empty homes Database

Risks and impacts

Risk factors to delivering actions priority 2 relate to difficulties identifying ownership, encouraging owners to engage and challenges for owners to pay for and source skilled labour to carry out improvement works. Although the council tax levy can encourage owners to bring empty properties into use, it can also add to financial pressures for those trying to carry out improvement works.

One possible mitigation could be repairs grant budget for owners which is currently being explored.

Housing Infrastructure Fund

The Scottish Government Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) is available to deliver housing sites where infrastructure costs would prevent the site from being supported through affordable housing supply programme grant.

Falkirk Council submitted a funding application for 3 sites in Banknock and Dennyloanhead. The number of units delivered at these sites was constrained due to development works being required at Junction 7 of the M80. The Scottish Government offered grant of up to £1.543m in May 2018 to facilitate the junction improvements.

The cost of the infrastructure works increased, and after consideration by technical officers at Scottish Government the grant was increased to £2.544m.

Colleagues in Place Services advise work is ongoing around drainage issues, the project will be retendered, and the necessary agreements will then be sought with Transport Scotland and the other funding partners. This is currently being explored in detail by Scottish Government.

Risk and impacts

The HIF will assist to unlock housing sites. Delays in unlocking the HIF sites impacts on the numbers of new properties including affordable properties.

Energy funding

The HEEPS: ABS scheme is part of the Scottish Government's wider strategy to tackle climate change and improve energy efficiency in Scotland. It aims to help households reduce their energy bills, improve their thermal comfort and health, and support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The Council has been successful in securing circa £3.8m funding over the period of the last LHS.

Risks and impacts

The impacts of the above energy funding are that it has assisted householders with energy costs. However, risks relate to any reduction in Scottish Government funding through HEEPS: ABS.

Disabled adaptations and property conditions

Council disabled adaptations

The HRA passes funding of £1.2m per annum to the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) for HRA aids and adaptations. The Falkirk Council Housing Revenue and Council Rents report from February 2023 suggested a £0.250m reduction in HRA funding. The rationale for this reduction is that the budget in previous years has been underspent. This report indicates, it is projected that the IJB will have approximately £1m in a ring-fenced reserve for aids and adaptations to HRA properties. Should demand for aids and adaptations for HRA properties increase during the financial year, this position could be revised.

Scheme of Assistance

As outlined in table 9.9 section 6 spending through the scheme of assistance was £404, 539 in 2021/2 (currently latest data available from Scottish Government) although this has increased since covid it is lower than the highpoint of £606, 857 in 2017/18.

Risks and impacts

Risks to services through the SOA relate delays administering and carrying out work. This can relate to difficulties accessing skilled trades, householders' reservations around the upheaval, limited staffing resources to assess and administer work.

The impact of not delivering the SOA include properties falling further into disrepair and vulnerable people waiting longer for adaptations. These impact on health and delays in hospital.

Mitigating factors include accessing reliable information and advice and assistance through the process by Care and Repair staff.

Household Support fund

The above is for people who are struggling to pay for things such as energy and water bills, food and essential items.

Appendix 1

The Falkirk Council Household Support Fund has made 3,723 payments to low-income households supporting 4,333 The total available budget for this round of the Household Support Fund is £758,263 including the £190k funding allocated from Covid funding to support people experiencing financial insecurity and the £250k from the Non-Profit Distributing Organisations Rebate. 4, 3366 adults and 3,009 children have benefited from the Housing Support Fund. The total cost of these payments is £661,240 (03 March 2023). Further funding was recently allocated to the Household Support Fund as follows:

- £250k from the Housing Revenue Account (Housing Revenue Account and Council House Rents 2023/24 – 2027/28)
- £250k from reserves (Revenue Budget 2023-24 and Financial Strategy report section 5.13.6)

This additional funding, along with the reallocated funding mentioned means we have £1.004m to support a further round of the Household Support Fund over winter 2023/24.

12 LHS Options Appraisal

When developing the monitoring and evaluation framework we considered the following:

- HNDA
- LHS consultation
- Previously agreed priorities, strategies and plans for example the Falkirk Plan, HCS, LDP and actions in the LHS 2017-2022
- Scottish Government guidance and policy

Key issues and actions have been drafted. As part of the second stage consultation, we will have further discussion with lead officers and give detailed consideration to financial resources outlined. This will allow the monitoring and evaluation framework to be further revised and consideration given to resources as per the risks and impacts previously set out.

The creation of sustainable communities requires consideration to be given to wider community engagement across tenures to be carried out in parallel with capital investment in property.

Section 13 Monitoring and evaluation

There are 7 LHS priorities and 11 outcomes as set out below.

Priority 1 Increasing housing supply

- Outcome 1 - We will increase the supply of housing across tenures.
- Outcome 2 - We will increase the supply of affordable housing.

Priority 2 Creating sustainable communities.

- Outcome 3 – Our communities are connected and empowered, to make decisions about their area and the services in it.

Priority 3 Access to housing

- Outcome 4- Prevent homelessness whenever it is possible to do so.
- Outcome 5 - Our Service will aim to achieve the principles of Rapid Rehousing for all those approaching us as homeless.

Priority 4 Providing housing and support to vulnerable groups.

- Outcome 6: We have a range of housing and support options promoting independence for vulnerable people.

Priority 5 Tackling Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

- Outcome 7- We will focus on tackling climate change.
- Outcome 8 - We will work to improve energy efficiency.
- Outcome 9 –We will work to assist those experiencing fuel poverty.

Priority 6 Improving housing conditions.

- Outcome 10 – We will work to improve property conditions.

Priority 7 A sustainable private rented sector.

- Outcome 11 – We have a sustainable private rented sector.

The monitoring and evaluation framework (appendix 2) sets out the following for each priority.

1. Actions, milestones, timescale, lead officer
2. Indicators, target, baseline, frequency, data source and partners

As with our 2 previous LHS the monitoring and evaluation framework is reported annually to elected members and partners in the Strategic Housing Group.

The annual LHS Update sets out any significant changes to the full LHS. This is reported to Executive and forwarded to Scottish Government. For the LHS 2017-2022, changes took account of Scottish Government policy for example the introduction of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and Housing First.

The annual LHS Update is available on the Council's website along with all supporting evidence.

The data sources to update the LHS come from local and independent published national information including (but not limited to) Housing Statistics For Scotland, Scottish Housing Condition Survey, Scottish Housing Regulator information, Annual Council Homeless Reports (HL1, HL3, Prevent 1) and NRS Scotland demographic data.

Private property prices are provided by Scottish Government Centre of Housing Market Analysis. Number of sales and average prices are analysed annually.

Private rented properties advertised are collated on an ongoing basis on our private landlord database. We address concerns on an ongoing basis. For example, properties advertised without being registered. We collate and analyse average private rents and numbers of properties advertised on an annual basis and report on the Council website.

Conclusion

We recognise that the unique times we live in have highlighted the importance of our homes and places for our health and wellbeing. Challenges we face include the climate emergency, recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and the current economic downturn. All impacting on increasing homelessness and poverty. Housing and related services play a crucial role in social and economic recovery. We believe by creating a synergy between communities, public, private, and voluntary sectors we can combine our resources and efforts to maximise what we can achieve together.

Glossary of Terms:

1. **Accessible Home:** A property that is suitable for someone with mobility difficulties.
2. **Affordable Housing:** Housing that is available to individuals and families whose income is below a certain threshold, making it accessible to those who may not afford market-rate housing.
3. **Affordable Housing Policy:** A planning policy which aims to increase the supply of affordable housing. In Falkirk Council area all sites with more than 20 properties must provide affordable housing or make a financial contribution to the provision of affordable housing.
4. **Annual Charter Return (ARC)** – A mandatory annual report submitted by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to the Scottish Housing Regulator, providing information on housing services, performance, and compliance with regulatory standards.
5. **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):** Actions that disrupt the peace and well-being of a community, including vandalism, noise disturbances, and harassment.
6. **Below Market Housing:** Properties that are available at prices below the prevailing market rates, often intended to increase affordability for individuals or families with lower incomes.
7. **Below Tolerable Standard (BTS):** Basic level of repair which a property must meet to make it fit for someone to live in.
8. **Brownfield Site:** Previously developed land or sites that have been used for industrial, commercial, or residential purposes.
9. **Care and Repair:** A service which aims to help and support homeowners and tenants of private landlords to adapt, maintain, repair or improve their home. This service is available to people over 60 or those with a disability.
10. **Common Housing Register (CHR):** A centralised system that allows individuals to apply for several types of social housing, including council and housing association properties, using a single application process.
11. **Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO):** A legal process that grants a public authority the power to acquire privately owned land or property for a public purpose, typically after negotiation and payment of compensation to the owner.
12. **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP):** Financial assistance which people may receive from their local authorities if they rent their home and get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit but still cannot afford their housing costs.
13. **Empty Homes Plan:** A comprehensive plan to address the issue of properties that remain unoccupied for extended periods, aiming to make them available for occupation.
14. **Energy Savings Trust (EST):** An organisation that promotes energy efficiency and sustainability by offering advice, information, and support.
15. **Energy Performance Certificate (EPC):** A document that rates the energy efficiency of a building on a scale from A to G, providing information about energy consumption, CO2 emissions, and potential improvements to increase energy efficiency.
16. **Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH):** Sets energy efficiency targets for social rented housing in Scotland, aiming to improve the energy performance of homes, reduce fuel poverty, and contribute to environmental goals.
17. **Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA):** An assessment of the impacts of proposed new or revised practice as compared to the needs relevant to a public authority's obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

18. **Fuel Poverty:** A situation where a household has difficulty affording adequate heating to maintain a comfortable and healthy living environment, often spending a disproportionate amount of their income on energy bills.
19. **Greenfield Site:** Land that has not been previously developed or built upon, typically located in rural or undeveloped areas.
20. **Heat in Buildings (HIB):** A comprehensive plan outlining the steps and policies to achieve efficient heating systems in buildings, reduce energy consumption, and promote sustainability in line with environmental goals.
21. **Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland: Area Based Schemes (HEEPS ABS):** A program in Scotland that provides funding and support for improving the energy efficiency of homes within specific areas to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.
22. **Home Energy Scotland (HES):** A service provided by the Scottish Government to offer advice, information, and support to individuals and households on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and reducing energy costs.
23. **Housing Association (HA):** A organisation that provides affordable housing options, ranging from social rented housing to shared ownership schemes. As known as Registered Social Landlord.
24. **Housing Contribution Statement (HCS):** a bridge between a Local Housing Strategy and the Health and Social Care Strategic Plan. The purpose being to outline how the housing sector's contribution will help meet housing and social care priorities.
25. **Housing First:** A housing approach that prioritises providing stable and permanent housing to individuals experiencing homelessness, often those with complex needs.
26. **Housing Land Requirements (HLR):** The estimated amount of land needed to meet the demand for new housing developments.
27. **Housing Market Analysis:** An assessment of the supply, demand, pricing, and trends in the housing market
28. **Housing Need:** The demand for suitable housing, considering factors such as household size, income, disability, and location preferences.
29. **Housing Options:** A process of evaluating available housing solutions and support services to match individuals and families with appropriate housing options.
30. **Housing Renewal Area (HRA):** An area where local authorities focus on improving the condition, appearance, and functionality of housing stock through renovation, regeneration.
31. **Housing Supply Target (HST):** The numerical goal for the construction of new build housing units, to address housing demand and population growth.
32. **Income Maximisation:** The process of identifying and accessing all available sources of income and financial support for individuals or households, ensuring they receive the maximum financial assistance for which they are eligible.
33. **Landlord Registration:** The legal requirement for landlords to register with the local council, ensuring that rental properties meet certain standards and management practices.
34. **Local Housing Energy Efficiency Scheme (LHEES):** Plans developed by local authorities to address heat and energy efficiency challenges within their region.
35. **Local Development Plan (LDP):** A strategic document created by the local authority that outlines land use policies, development guidelines, and infrastructure plans for the area.
36. **Mainstream Housing** - Housing that is commonly available and suitable for the general population, including individuals and families with varying needs and income levels.

37. **Mid-Market Renting (MMR):** A housing arrangement that offers rental properties at a level between social housing and market rents, providing affordable options for individuals and families.
38. **Mixed Tenure:** A housing development that includes a diverse range of housing types, catering to different income levels and housing needs.
39. **Open Market Shared Equity (OMSE):** A housing scheme available to people who cannot afford the full price of a property for sale. Available to first time buyers and other priority groups set by Scottish Government. Locally operated by the Link Group.
40. **Private Rented Sector (PRS):** Properties are owned by private individuals or companies and are rented out to tenants in exchange for monthly rent payments.
41. **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP):** A plan developed by local authorities and partner organisations to address homelessness and support individuals and families in swiftly moving from temporary accommodation to permanent housing.
42. **Registered Social Landlord (RSL):** An organisation, usually a nonprofit, which provides and manages affordable and social rented housing that is registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator.
43. **Renewable Technology:** Energy technologies that harness naturally replenishing resources, such as solar power, wind power to generate heat or electricity, contributing to increased energy efficiency and reduced environmental impact.
44. **Right to Buy (RTB):** Ended in Scotland in 2016. This was a scheme which had allowed social rented tenants to buy their home at a discounted price.
45. **Scheme of Assistance (SOA):** A system of financial and non-financial help that local authorities can provide for private housing which is in disrepair or below the tolerable standard OR needs to be adapted because a person is disabled.
46. **Scottish Housing Condition Survey (SCHS):** A comprehensive survey conducted by the Scottish Government to assess the condition and quality of housing across Scotland.
47. **Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS):** A set of minimum standards established by the Scottish Government to ensure that all social rented housing in Scotland is of good quality, energy-efficient, and well-maintained.
48. **Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD):** A tool used by the Scottish Government to measure and rank areas in Scotland based on multiple dimensions of deprivation, including income, employment, health, education, and housing.
49. **Self-Build:** A housing approach where individuals or groups are directly involved in the design, construction, or assembly of their own homes.
50. **Social rented housing:** Housing that is owned and managed by a local authority or nonprofit organisations, such as housing associations. Social rented housing is typically provided at affordable rents to individuals and families with housing need.
51. **Statutory Homelessness:** The legally defined status of being homeless, which triggers a responsibility for local authorities to aid and support.
52. **Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP):** A plan developed by local authorities to outline their priorities and investments in housing over a specified period. The plan identifies housing needs, targets, funding allocations, and partnerships to guide housing development and improve housing conditions.
53. **Sustainable Communities:** Residential areas that promote well-being, environmental responsibility, and economic growth through thoughtful urban planning and community engagement.
54. **Tenancy Agreement:** A legally binding contract between a landlord and tenant, stipulating the terms and conditions of the rental arrangement.

55. **Tenancy Sustainment:** Support and assistance provided to tenants to help them maintain their tenancies successfully. This support may include financial advice, conflict resolution, and access to community services to ensure stable and secure housing arrangements. An assessment is carried out to establish if someone is eligible.
56. **Universal Credit:** A Welfare payment system that replaced existing benefits with a single monthly payment. Universal Credit is designed to provide financial support to individuals and families on low incomes, including housing costs, as well as additional allowances for specific needs.

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00339 (Version 1)

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Service & Division:	Corporate & Housing Services Housing & Communities	Lead Officer Name:	Ross Allan
		Team:	Strategy
		Tel:	01324 590387
		Email:	Ross.Allan@Falkirk.gov.uk
Proposal:	The Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028 (LHS) is the overarching strategic document for housing. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to produce an LHS setting out the strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing related services.	Reference No:	

What is the Proposal?	Budget & Other Financial Decision	Policy (New or Change)	HR Policy & Practice	Change to Service Delivery / Service Design
	No	Yes	No	No

Who does the Proposal affect?	Service Users	Members of the Public	Employees	Job Applicants
	Yes	Yes	No	No

Other, please specify:

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):

10/08/2022	The purpose of the LHS is to set out the strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and housing related service in the Falkirk Council area over a five year period (2023 – 2028).
03/11/2022	The purpose of the EPIA is to ensure the LHS has been developed with consideration of the Equality Act 2010 and the public duty which all public authority bodies must ensure they adhere to.
03/11/2022	Continuous monitoring of the outcome and actions written in LHS is carried out on a yearly basis over the 5 year period to ensure actions are progressing towards meeting the outcomes. This is considered good practice by the Scottish Government and is presented to Executive prior to being published on the Council website.

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):

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SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:		Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average	
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:		
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:		
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:		
If this is a change to a charge or concession please complete.	Current Annual Income Total:		
	Expected Annual Income Total:		
If this is a budget decision, when will the saving be achieved?	Start Date:		
	End Date (if any):		

SECTION THREE: EVIDENCE

Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EPIA. (This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups.)

A - Quantitative Evidence

This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.

Consideration has been given to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, particularly around evidence on the specialist requirements of local populations. Age, disability, sex and ethnicity have been considered as these are the main protected characteristics which have an impact on housing need and demand. Information has been taken from the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2022 (HNDA).

Information has been taken from multiple data sources including but not limited to various Falkirk Council Services, Census Data and National Records of Scotland.

- Falkirk has an increasing population; this has been the case since the mid-1990s. The National Records Scotland 2018 population projections indicate a rise of 6% between 2018 and 2043 which will result in a population estimate of 169,962 by 2043.
- The population is ageing with the majority of age groups between 0-59 years expected to see a fall between 2018 and 2043, with the largest fall expected to be in the 5-11 age group at 14%. There will however in stark contrast be a substantial increase in the 75-84 and the 85+ age group at 76% and 92% respectively, this compares to 66% and 84% nationally. The population of Falkirk is expected to age at a higher rate than the national average
- Single person households are the largest household category in Falkirk, and this is expected to increase as there is a projected to be a 7% fall in household size from 2.20 to 2.05 people per household and from 2.15 to 2.03 in Scotland in the next 25 years.
- 74% of households who live in properties with disrepair are pensioners, 28% of households in fuel poverty are pensioners
- An estimated number of 2,598 people are living with dementia
- 7000 households whose home limits their day-to-day activity equates to circa 4000 social rented and circa 2000 owners
- 392 Falkirk Council applicants for accessible properties
- There continues to be an increasing need for disabled adaptations, 3% circa 2,000 households report requiring disabled adaptations. Although need for wheelchair housing greater for older people, need is across all age groups. Of those with a disability, 19% of children, 41% of working age adults and 68% of those above retirement age where the disability is due to mobility.
- Average of 1,109 homeless applications per year annually over the last 10 years. Largest group single people.
- Single males represented 47.5% of all homeless applications in 2020-21
- There are 51 people with severe and multiple disadvantage who would benefit from a Housing First approach - Housing First supports vulnerable people with complex needs to get into settled accommodation.
- 92.32% of LHS survey respondents had broadband access at home, with a further 73.99% being able to access the internet via mobile phone data. Indeed, overwhelmingly, the preferred device to use for internet access is a mobile phone (91.64%), followed by laptops (66.04%) and tablets (62.26).
- the percentage of respondents with internet declines with age. For example, 97% of tenants between the ages of 16 and 34 had internet access, while only 25% of respondents over 65 had internet access. The elderly (60+) comprises 23.8% of Falkirk's 35,900 households.

B - Qualitative Evidence

This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g. some information provided as part of performance reporting.

Social - case studies; personal / group feedback / other

Age, disability, sex and ethnicity have been identified as the main protected characteristics which have an impact on housing need and demand. Priorities, actions and indicators detailed in the LHS along with consultation on the needs of these specific groups have been designed to ensure adequate housing and support services are in place to meet the continuous demand for affordable housing, specialist housing options and support services in the local area.

Best Judgement:

Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	No
Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?	
What gaps in data / information were identified?	
Is further research necessary?	No
If NO, please state why.	Extensive consultation was carried out across the local area to determine the priorities, actions and indicators.

SECTION FOUR: ENGAGEMENT**Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the policy or proposal must take place**

Has the proposal / policy / project been subject to engagement or consultation with service users taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status?	Yes	
If YES, please state who was engagement with.	<p>A survey was made available for people to complete via online and in paper form across the local area. The survey was promoted online via the Council's social media platforms and was shared with Local Community and Support Groups. Physical copies were also distributed across the area via local groups.</p> <p>Extensive engagement was carried out during the development of the LHS including face to face consultation with Asylum Seekers, Young people, Homeless assessment centre residents, Older People's Group, Community Café and Food Pantry service users as well as Community Learning & Development's Young parent's group.</p> <p>Opportunities to participate were also given to those resident in the Travelling Persons Site and service users of the Sensory Centre, Falkirk & Linlithgow Autism Support and LGBT Falkirk.</p>	
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.		
How was the engagement carried out?	What were the results from the engagement? Please list...	
Focus Group	Yes	Participants across the eight focus groups held highlighted a desire to see more social and affordable housing provided by Falkirk Council & Partners. The importance of Housing Options was highlighted as was the provision and promotion of adaptations services
Survey	Yes	82% of respondents noted that it was Very Important or Important to build more affordable housing. 86% responded that building more home that meet people's changing needs was a priority. 93% want to see empty homes back in use. 88% places an importance on preventing homelessness, 81% thought it to be important to signpost clients to services to maximise income and benefits. 87% placed an importance on providing advice on housing adaptations 90% saw it important to promote technology (e.g., MECS, Home Safety Monitoring) to stay at home for longer. 83% noted that the providing advice on how to save energy at home was very important or important.
Display / Exhibitions	No	
User Panels	No	
Public Event	No	

Other: please specify	Details regarding the consultation was shared online via Falkirk Council's social media platform. Information was also shared via the local newspaper's social media outlets. Details of the survey and its availability were sent directly to Registered Tenants Organisations and Falkirk Council's People's Panel. Details were also sent directly to those who had previously taken part in Housing related consultation and had indicated a willingness to take part again.
Has the proposal / policy/ project been reviewed / changed as a result of the engagement?	No
Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	Yes
Is further engagement recommended?	Yes / No

SECTION FIVE: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Equality Protected Characteristics: What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposal / policy / project? This section allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. poverty, health inequalities, community justice, carers etc.

Protected Characteristic	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic.
Age		✓		<p>Between 2018 and 2028, the population of Falkirk is projected to increase from 160,340 to 165,462. This is an increase of 3.2%, which compares to a projected increase of 1.8% for Scotland as a whole.</p> <p>Falkirk is projected to have the 11th highest population out of the 32 council areas in Scotland in 2028</p> <p>The average age of the population of Falkirk is projected to increase as the baby boomer generation ages and more people are expected to live longer. An increase of 13.5% (2308) in the 65-74 age group and a 29% (3755) expected to be noted in the 75+ age group.</p> <p>This is likely to have implications for social care, health, housing and leisure services. It will also mean demand for purpose-built housing to meet the needs of the aging population. It is likely that most older people wish to remain in their own home for as long as possible. It will also mean an increase in the demand for adaptations to be made to existing housing.</p> <p>The New LHS will have a commitment to supplying new homes that will be future proof and will meet the changing needs of people. Consultation results highlighted the importance of this amongst those aged 65+.The significance of providing specialist housing advice for those within the same age group with disabilities was also noted.</p> <p>Younger people (16-24) are often difficult to engage with, but two focus groups were held at the Link Academy facility and with Community Learning's Young Parents group to obtain their views on housing in Falkirk. The main issues raised were affordability, cost of living and the availability of Social Housing and appropriate housing options.</p>

Public Sector Equality Duty: Scottish Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations. Scottish specific duties include:

				<p>Falkirk Council's increasing digitisation of services, ensuring the elderly can still access services is a major challenge Falkirk Council must overcome.</p> <p>Also, Some individuals may lack the necessary proficiency or assurance to navigate the web or operate electronic devices. Older households tend to be less equipped with broadband services. This is believed to stem from a preference among older individuals to utilise traditional methods of communication and obtaining information/services.</p>
Disability		✓		<p>The LHS is committed to ensure that all new builds are designed to meet the standard of varying needs thus ensuring that new builds are suitably designed for people as they more through life.</p> <p>The LHS is committed to building adapted/wheelchair accessible properties during the course of LHS4</p> <p>To coincide with the aging population, it is estimated that an increase in demand on the adaptation services is inevitable and will lead to people being able to live at home comfortably and for longer.</p>
Sex	✓			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics</p> <p>HL1 statistics show that single males are overrepresented in homeless applications. Falkirk Councils current Housing Options are equipped to provide advice and information on each applicant's personal circumstances.</p>

Ethnicity	✓			<p>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 no result in any negative impact on these protected characteristic.</p> <p>Overall the LHS is designed to benefit all protected characteristics and it is anticipated there will be neutral impact for the protected characteristics listed above</p>
Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing and improve services in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics</p>
Sexual Orientation	✓			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing and improve services in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics.</p>
Transgender	✓			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing and improve services in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics</p>
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing and improve services in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics</p>
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing and improve services in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics</p>
Poverty		✓		<p>The Cost of Living, poverty and increased energy costs were a concern noted throughout the consultation process.</p> <p>The LHS is committed to reducing fuel poverty and increasing the energy efficiency of homes in the Falkirk Council area. The initiatives and resources available are targeted towards households identified in fuel poverty hotspots detailed in the LHS.</p> <p>This commitment will benefit households by providing the necessary advice, grants and initiatives to reduce bills, improve the warmth of their accommodation and lift residents out of fuel poverty.</p> <p>Low-income households are more prone to struggle with paying for a broadband connection, signing a contract, and acquiring the necessary equipment for internet access.</p>

<p>Care Experienced</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing and improve services in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics</p>
<p>Other, health, community justice, carers etc.</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>Commitments to increasing the number of affordable housing and improve the quality of homes and services in the Falkirk area will benefits all protected characteristics</p>
<p>Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)</p>	<p>The LHS is designed to make available affordable housing and increase housing options for people in the local area.</p> <p>The Cost-of-Living Crising and Covid-19 pandemic and recovery have all had an impact on the residents of the Council area in particular the local economy, jobs and household finances which has a direct impact on housing.</p>			
		<p>Evidence of Due Regard</p>		
<p>Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):</p>				
<p>Advance Equality of Opportunity:</p>	<p>Actions to target specific groups to raise awareness of services e.g. Fuel Poverty assistance, Adaptations services</p>			
<p>Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):</p>				

SECTION SIX: PARTNERS / OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposal / policy / project?		Describe the interest / affect.
Business	Yes	Important to ensure there is a good choice of various all tenure housing options available to make Falkirk Council a more attractive place for people to want to reside and work
Councils	Yes	Insight into the challenges facing Councils and how they are tackling them
Education Sector	No	
Fire	No	
NHS	Yes	The NHS is represented in the IJB which is responsible for planning, resourcing and the operational oversight of a wide range of health and social care services which overlap with housing
Integration Joint Board	Yes	The NHS is represented in the IJB which is responsible for planning, resourcing and the operational oversight of a wide range of health and social care services which overlap with housing
Police	No	
Third Sector	Yes	<p>Many different types of organisations from the Third Sector are involved in the delivery of housing and support services to people so that people have choice in the services that can support them to maintain independent living. It is important the third sector is an equal partner in the development of the LHS and that effective partnership across health, social care and the third sector is embedded and sustained into the future to provide the right advice and support to enable people to make informed decisions about their housing as they age or their circumstance change.</p> <p>Registered Social Landlords (RSL) Housing Services Third Sector Private Developers Health and Social Care Reform Private Sector Scottish Government</p> <p>There is 16 RSLs in the Falkirk area with amenity, sheltered or very sheltered housing stock covering approximately 500 properties and 3,500 mainstream properties. Our partnership working with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) contributes to the joint funding of projects in the SHIP and determining the number of new builds. This partnership is necessary to ensure that any future housing developments include a variety of house types and sizes, reflecting local community needs</p>

while encourage new models of housing that enable older people to maintain their independence in the community and are fully adaptable to meet the changing life needs of tenants.

The Council's Housing Services in currently provides a wide range of Housing Options to anyone with a housing issue/need. Accessing high quality information and advice services will be vital to ensuring people of all ages have access to the right housing and support.

It is crucial Private Developers liaise with the Council to ensure that they build homes which are suited to the changing needs of households. Developers should be encouraged to build to the Lifetime Homes standard to ensure that properties are flexible and adaptable. Lifetime Homes are designed to create and encourage better living environments for everyone from raising small children to coping with illness or dealing with reduced mobility in later life.

The Private Sector Housing is committed to ensuring better communication with tenants and landlords, robust enforcement procedures, effective repairs and maintenance solutions in order to drive up standards in the private sector to encourage peoples to consider the private rental sector as a viable option.

Private Developers ensure new builds can accommodate the variety of needs across the lifetime of the occupants as evidence suggests people want to remain in their homes as they age and want to remain as independent as possible.

Partnership involves local authorities and housing associations, as well as private and voluntary sector providers. All have a vested interest in LHS to ensure older people have choice in the services that can support them to maintain independent living. Most elderly people prefer to live independently in their own home, rather than entering institutional or hospital care, and the Scottish Government wishes to deliver health and social care in the community. This suggests there will be a growing demand for appropriate servicing and adaptation of the existing housing stock to incorporate wheelchair friendly and other facilities to allow this.

Planning has a role to play in regards to LHS as they are responsible for developing the Local Development Plan (LDP) which is used to identify suitable land for new builds and grant planning applications. Planning will also look at potential projects to make sure there are no issues with sites, for example flooding, reduction in open space, building restrictions, listed buildings which may be renovated and impact on wildlife.

	<p>The Scottish Government need to be satisfied that each Local Authority are addressing the issues, concerns and demand for housing within their communities linking their LHS with SOA and overall strategic aims of the Scottish Government.</p>
<p>Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact.</p>	<p>Additional advice and support services will assist in progressing some of the priorities and actions to provide advice and assistance relating to specialist housing options and support.</p>

SECTION SEVEN: ACTION PLANNING

Mitigating Actions: If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section 5 please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes
The EPIA demonstrates the proposal is robust; there is no potential for discrimination and opportunities to promote equality have been taken. All priorities, outcomes and actions in the LHS are designed to contribute towards improving the communities for everyone.	N/A	N/A	N/A	06/09/2022	N/A

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes
<p>The New LHS will have a commitment to supplying new homes that will be future proof and will meet the changing needs of people. Consultation results highlighted the importance of this amongst those aged 65+.The significance of providing specialist housing advice for those within the same age group with disabilities was also noted.</p> <p>There is also a need to raise awareness of adaptations and streamline the process for applying for disabled adaptations whilst also reducing timescales. Raising awareness will also help to support people living in their homes for longer, increasing suitability</p>	<p>Older people or those who require adaptations to existing homes</p>	<p>LHS Priority 4 - Housing & Support for vulnerable groups. LHS Priority 6 Improving Housing Conditions. All relevant actions are listed within the LHS</p>	<p>Disabled Adaptations are carried out for the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) by the housing service. The costs being transferred to the Integration Joint Board's budget from Falkirk Council's housing revenue account</p>	<p>09/03/2023</p>	<p>Local Housing Strategy, Strategic Housing Investment Plan, Local Development Plan</p>

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes
<p>Initiatives and resources available are targeted towards households identified in fuel poverty hotspots detailed in the LHS.</p> <p>This commitment will benefit households by providing the necessary advice, grants and initiatives to reduce bills, improve the warmth of their accommodation and lift residents out of fuel poverty.</p>	Poverty/Fuel Poor	LHS Priority 5 - Tackling Climate Change, Energy Efficiency & Fuel Poverty. All relevant actions are listed within the LHS	Natalie Moore Young & Paul McLay and Carole Glass	09/03/2023	Local Housing Strategy, Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy, Climate Change Strategy
Raising awareness of housing options and increasing the number of affordable housing and sustainable private sector options will increase choices for all including single male homeless applicants.	Homeless applicants or those threatened with homelessness	LHS Priority 3 - Improving Access To Housing, LHS Priority 7 - Creating a sustainable Private rented sector. All relevant actions are listed within the LHS	Laura Smith & Natalie Moore Young and Gail Lucas/Lesley Scaif	09/03/2023	Local Housing Strategy, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
New build developments that are of qualifying size (20 or more new homes) will include a % of affordable properties.	First time buyers. Young Buyers	LHS Priority 1 - Housing Delivery. Plans will ensure the delivery of both market and affordable housing	Natalie Moore Young	28/03/2023	Local Housing Strategy, Local Development Plan

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes
Digital Inclusion - Develop and implement digital skills training programs for older residents or for those experiencing poverty or live in noted areas of deprivation. Explore opportunities to provide low cost equipment and training to develop, gain confidence and promote digital device use.	All who require internet access and/or skills development.	LHS Priority 4 - Support for vulnerable people, LHS priority 2 creating sustainable communities	Alan Christie,	28/03/2023	Digital Housing Strategy, Local Housing Strategy, Tenant Participation Strategy. Digital Inclusion Strategy

No Mitigating Actions

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposals.

Are actions being reported to Members?	Yes
If yes when and how ?	Committee report being provided to Members, highlighting the outcomes of consultation and the mechanism in place via the LHS i.e Affordable Housing Options, Housing Supply Targets (All Tenure) and Specialist Housing Advice, Reducing Fuel Poverty.

SECTION EIGHT: ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposal / policy / project. Please select one and provide your reasons.

No major change required	Yes	Increasing affordable housing, ensuring the correct support is available to all people who require it, providing up to date specialist housing options information, tackling climate change and fuel poverty, driving up housing standards in both the social and private sector whilst also improving our estates will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics.
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups	No	
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups	No	
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation	No	

SECTION NINE: LEAD OFFICER SIGN OFF

Lead Officer:

Signature:		Date:	07/03/2023
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SECTION TEN: EPIA TASK GROUP ONLY

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EPIA:	Has the EPIA demonstrated the use of data, appropriate engagement, identified mitigating actions as well as ownership and appropriate review of actions to confidently demonstrate compliance with the general and public sector equality duties?	Yes
ASSESSMENT FINDINGS If YES, use this box to highlight evidence in support of the assessment of the EPIA If NO, use this box to highlight actions needed to improve the EPIA	Qualitative and Quantitative assessments and survey.	
Where adverse impact on diverse communities has been identified and it is intended to continue with the proposal / policy / project, has justification for continuing <u>without making changes been made</u>?	Yes	If YES, please describe: The assessment demonstrates that relevant actions are in place within the LHS to address the impacts highlighted.

LEVEL OF IMPACT: The EPIA Task Group has agreed the following level of impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted within the EPIA

LEVEL		COMMENTS
HIGH	Yes / No	
MEDIUM	Yes / No	
LOW	Yes	

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

Director / Head of Service:

Signature:		Date:	01/09/2023
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