

Agenda Item	<b>11.</b>
Report No	<b>HP/12/22</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Housing and Property

**Date:** 31 August 2022

**Report Title:** Annual Monitoring Report 2021/2022: Highland Housing Register

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property

### 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the annual performance review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy for 2021/2022. It provides information on the need for social rented housing and describes how those needs are met through the policy. The report also provides updates on the policy context, issues for policy review and associated consultation.

### 2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to: -

- (i) **NOTE** the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on housing allocations which demonstrates that the policy is achieving its objectives;
- (ii) **NOTE** the main issues being considered as part of the HHR Allocation Policy review which will be reported to a future Committee.

### 3 Implications

3.1 **Resources:** There are no specific implications arising from this report.

3.2 **Legal:** There are no specific implications arising from this report.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** Quality, low-cost affordable housing is a key driver for reducing and preventing poverty. The Allocation Policy enables equitable access based on evidence of each applicant's need for housing. An Equalities Impact Assessment is informing the Policy review.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** No implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Gaelic:** Housing applications and related published material about access to housing meet the Council's standards in relation to Gaelic.

3.6 **Risk:** There are no specific implications arising from this report.

## 4 Background

- 4.1 This annual report on Highland Housing Register activity supports policy monitoring, illustrates pressures and indicates where changes may be needed. It helps to raise awareness of how the process operates, provides transparency and contributes to highlighting the importance of affordable housing in supporting strong communities and local economies.
- 4.2 Social rented housing provides affordable homes for over 20,000 households across Highland. Compared to Scotland, Highland has proportionally less social rented housing: 23% compared to 31% (the 8th lowest in Scotland).
- 4.3 The process for allocating social rented housing is bound by legal duties and informed by statutory guidance, including from the: Housing (Scotland) Act 1987; Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Council's statutory homelessness duties.
- 4.4 The Highland Housing Register (HHR) Partnership has developed and maintains a shared single Allocation Policy. This has streamlined and simplified the process of accessing social rented housing in Highland. The analysis and data for 2021/2022 is set out in **Appendix 1** and is summarised here.
- 4.5 It should be noted that Caledonia Housing Association formally joined the Highland Housing Register partnership from 1 April 2021 and details of allocations involving Caledonia begin from this date.
- 4.6 It should be further noted that Pentland Housing Association merged with Cairn Housing Association on the 1 April 2022. This has reduced the number of HHR Partners to six.
- 4.7 The coronavirus pandemic had a major impact on housing allocations and since restrictions have been lifted, the HHR has overall, returned to pre-pandemic trends. This will be detailed further in the report.

## 5 Housing Demand

- 5.1 There were a total of 9,416 'Housing' and 'Transfer' List applications on the Housing Register at the end of 2021/2022 compared to 9,623 in 2020/2021. In 2019/20 before Covid-19, the total number stood at 7,785. Of all applications held at the end of last year, 72.6% are not currently the tenant of a Highland Housing Register landlord. Just over half of these applicants are privately renting or living with family. Almost 1,000 households are living in temporary 'homeless' accommodation or are 'homeless at home'. Many of these homeless households, particularly in Inverness, are young people or families with children.
- 5.2 The continuing need for smaller sized properties is clear. Half of all applicants are single people and 10% are couples, although these figures vary across Highland.
- 5.3 The highest demand for housing in terms of the number of applications remains Inverness (where 47.5% of all applicants expressed a wish to be housed), followed by Ross and Cromarty (15.6%) and Lochaber (12.7%). Inverness has seen a near 10% increase in demand from last year.
- 5.4 However, whilst nearly half of applicants are seeking housing in the Inverness area, the lack of housing availability means just over a third (35%) of lets are made there.

- 5.5 The pressure on housing varies across Highland. This means that applicants whose need for housing is less acute can receive offers of housing more quickly in some areas than applicants with more acute housing needs in other areas. Analysis of the number applying for each house being let indicates that the pressure on social rented housing is greatest in Badenoch & Strathspey, followed by, respectively, West Ross, Nairn, Lochaber and Inverness. Housing pressure in those five areas are greater than the Highland average.
- 5.6 Information and advice are available to help applicants increase their prospects of a housing offer. Information gathered through applications indicates that there would be benefits in increasing the promotion of the other options such as low-cost home ownership; mid-market rent, mutual exchange and private renting.

## **6 Meeting Demand**

- 6.1 Across Highland, 2,033 households were housed in 2021/2022. This represents a marked increase on last year's number which stood at 1,292. This reflects the impact of lifting pandemic restrictions on void works and re-letting activities.
- 6.2 Around 20% of offers were refused which is 1% lower than the previous year. Operational procedures have been adapted to reduce the total number of refusals. For example, applicants who are near the top of the housing list are being contacted for a pre-offer discussion to ensure their application is up to date in terms of letting areas and change of circumstances.
- 6.3 The majority of lets continue to be into Council housing (61.5% of lets, a decrease from 70%), followed by Albyn HS (18.2%); Cairn HA (8.8%); Lochalsh & Skye HA (3.8%); Lochaber HA (3.1%); Pentland HA (2.4%); and Caledonia (2.2%).
- 6.4 Social rented housing providers have a legal duty to give a 'reasonable preference' to priority groups when allocating housing. This includes households who have nowhere safe and secure that they can reasonably stay and so are homeless, and households who are living under unsatisfactory conditions and who have unmet housing needs.
- 6.5 The HHR partners are continuing to meet their duties to house households who are homeless. Across Highland 911 lets – 44.8% of all lets - went to households with points which reflected their homeless status.
- 6.6 In areas where there is a greater demand for housing, homeless points play a more significant role in leading to a let. For example, over 50% of all lets were to homeless households in Skye & Lochalsh (60.1%), Inverness (58.6%), Nairn (56.4%) and Badenoch & Strathspey (53.2%).
- 6.7 Analysis of the proportion of lets to the other various housing needs groups, compared to demand from applicants with those needs, shows that the HHR Allocations Policy is largely meeting its objectives to provide housing to those with the greatest needs. Just under a third of those who were housed had been living in housing which was unsuitable due to their health needs. A quarter had been living in overcrowded housing.
- 6.8 As well as approaches directly from applicants, HHR partners are committed to assisting with other policy priorities. A total of 39 households were helped to move into their first 'independent living' tenancy, many via our Protocol with NHS Highland, for clients with complex continuing health care and support needs. In addition, 21 care-experienced young people were housed through the Highland Protocol which supports our Corporate Parenting commitments and duties.

- 6.9 Over 8 out of 10 applicants housed had additional points which recognised they had a particular 'Need to Reside' in that community either because they work or are already established there; or are providing or receiving family care or support.
- 6.10 We monitor equalities to make sure we are providing equality of access and no discrimination. In line with the previous year, 76% of applicants described themselves as White Scottish. This group accounted for 78% of those housed applicants; 9% of lets went to non-British/White households; and around 2% of lets went to other ethnic minorities. The proportion of lets to households describing themselves as disabled was balanced with proportion of applicants in this category (13% of lets and 14% of applicants).

## **7 Review of Highland Housing Register Allocation Policy**

- 7.1 The Highland Housing Register Policy review is underway to take account of:
- the passing of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill in March 2021;
  - new legislation arising from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014;
  - changes in the national and local policy context;
  - Highland's Rapid Rehousing Plan commitment to significantly reduce homelessness; and
  - to ensure that the process delivers the objectives agreed by the Partnership.
- 7.2 The policy review has focused on potential changes to ensure we are allocating to applicants in the greatest housing need. This includes:-
- Ensuring that the needs of victims of domestic abuse are being addressed in line with best practice and the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill 2021 ;
  - Ensuring that our accessible housing process meets the needs of people who require specialist accommodation; and
  - Reviewing the points allocated for different housing needs.
- 7.3 One of the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 is a legal duty on social landlords to consult with service users on proposed amendments to allocation policies. This was carried out in late 2020 via a well-promoted and widely accessible online survey (with a paper-based option for those without digital access). It found that members of the public and partner stakeholders were broadly in favour of proposed changes to the HHR policy.

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The annual report indicates that demand for social housing remains high and, in many areas, the available housing available for let cannot meet demand. This continues to place additional pressure on the many households living in accommodation that does not meet their current needs. This is considered to be due to a shortage of available housing rather than any issues with the operation of the allocations policy itself.
- 8.2 Overall, the HHR is still performing well in meeting housing need and continues to play an important role in supporting good health, strong communities, and local economies.
- 8.3 The HHR policy review currently under way will ensure the Highland Housing Register continues to support those with unmet housing need across Highland and address some of the particular challenges highlighted in annual report attached at **Appendix 1**.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property  
Date: 5 August 2022  
Author: Aodhan Byrne - Housing Policy Officer

## Appendix 1: Highland Housing Register Annual Report 2021/2022

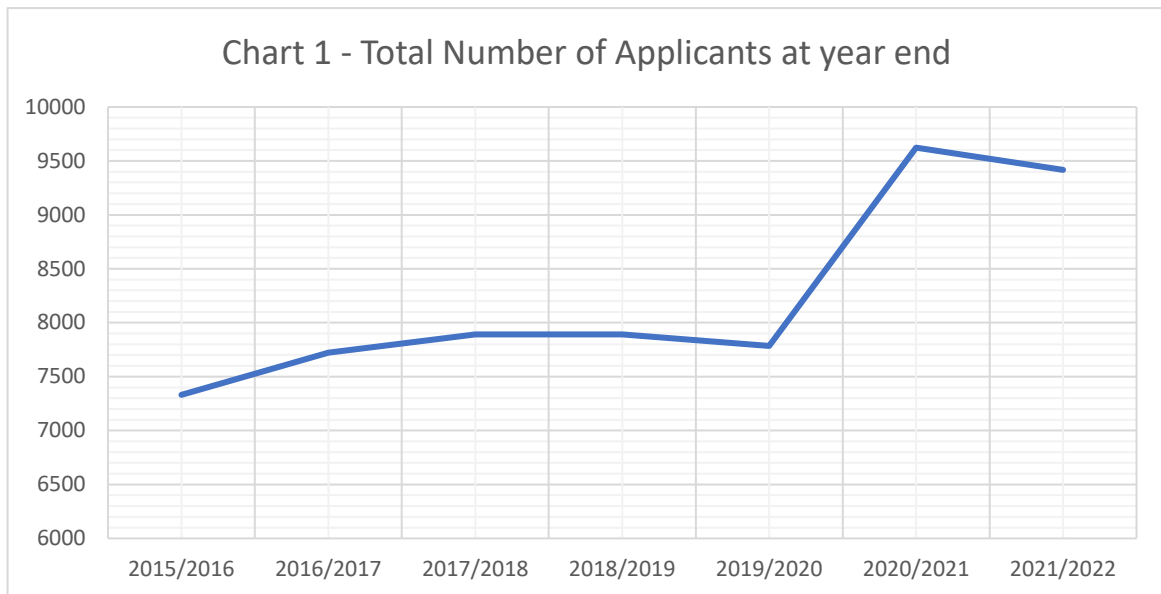
### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report contains monitoring information and commentary on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocation Policy in 2021-2022. The analysis helps to identify possible improvements in meeting housing needs and aspirations in Highland.
- 1.2 The Housing Register is required to comply with the various Housing (Scotland) Acts (1987, 2001 and 2014), homelessness duties and statutory guidance.
- 1.3 The aims of the [Highland Housing Register \(HHR\) Allocations Policy](#) are:
- To provide housing to those in the greatest need, dependant on individual circumstances
  - To help to prevent and deal with homelessness
  - To help create and maintain strong and economically viable communities
  - To work with our partners to provide suitable housing for those with special needs
  - To make the best use of the housing available
  - To give applicants a range of choices of housing
  - To help applicants move within the Highland area, and from other parts of the UK
  - To inform the Highland Council's planning processes.
- 1.4 The figures relate to the HHR partners - Albyn Housing Society, Caledonia Housing Association, Cairn Housing Association, Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association, Lochaber Housing Association and the Highland Council.
- 1.5 In terms of the local context, the HHR Policy operates across a variety of housing markets and communities. In 2020, National Records Scotland estimated that the Highlands had a population of nearly 236,000 who live in 110,000 households. Based on last Housing Need and Demand Assessment, social rented housing made up 20.4% of all housing in Highland. The proportion of occupied housing that is social rented in Highland is lower than national average which sits at 25.8%. As of April 2022, there were over 20,900 social rented properties.
- 1.6 Differences in supply means that it is important for applicants to understand that their specific choices affect their likelihood of being made an offer. They are encouraged to use a web-based tool (Housing Prospects) to understand availability in different communities and encourage them to maximise their choices. The tool is held here: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/925/council\\_housing/244/apply\\_for\\_a\\_house/5](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/925/council_housing/244/apply_for_a_house/5)
- 1.7 Social landlords are required to prioritise households with 'unmet' housing needs (i.e. households who are unable to meet their own needs). Other households can benefit from the increasing supply of alternative options: mid-market renting; and low-cost homeownership (e.g. via open market purchase or new build shared equity models). The HHR partners' websites include details on these options and officers can advise. HHR applicants have priority access to alternative options.
- 1.8 Covid-19 had a major impact on housing and the Highland Housing Register. During the pandemic there was a significant rise in HHR applications at the same time as a reduction in allocations as a result of the various restrictions on re-letting works. Following the end of Covid-19 restrictions, allocations and applications have returned to pre-pandemic quarterly averages.
- 1.9 HHR Partners are currently undertaking a major upgrade of the online application experience for members of the public. Once completed, members of the public will be able complete, view

and amend their HHR housing application online. The project is expected to be completed in Autumn 2022.

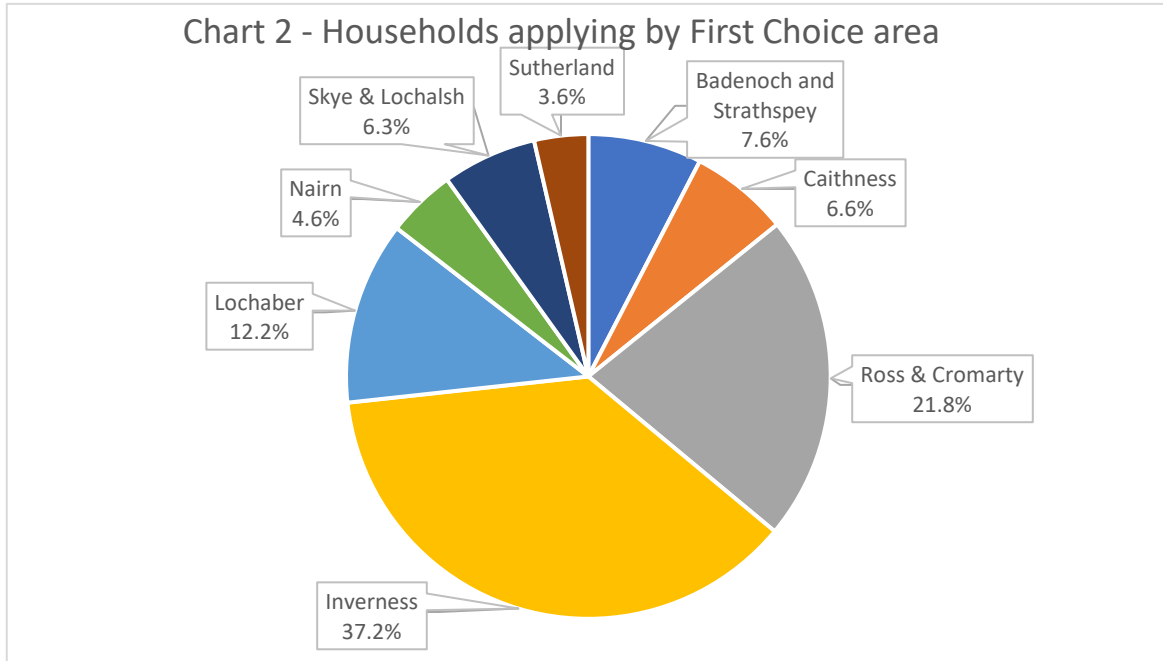
## 2. Application

- 2.1 The number of households applying for housing was 9,416 on 31 March 2022. This is a 2.2% decrease from 9,623 in 2020/2021. In 2019/20 before Covid-19, the total number stood at 7,785. The chart below highlights the total number of applicants held over the last six years

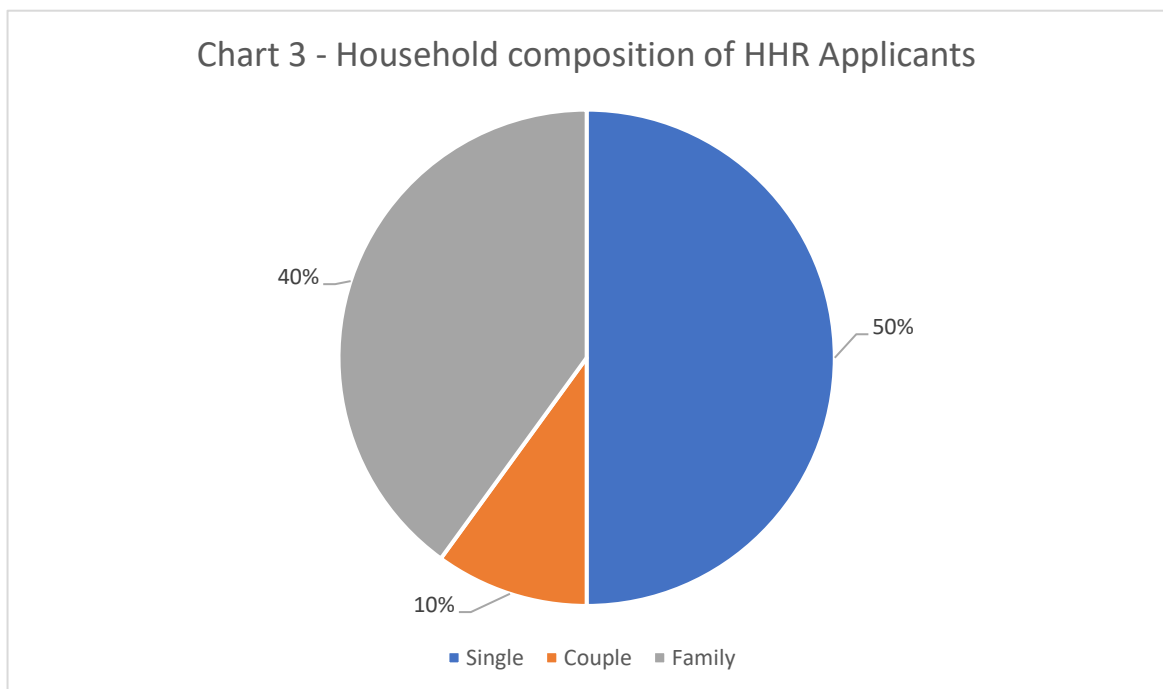


- 2.2 The increase in applications from last year was largely a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Scottish Government restrictions on moving to a new home and re-let works meant fewer than average allocations took place.
- 2.3 In addition, to ensure that applicants were not disadvantaged during the pandemic the HHR partners agreed to pause re-registration and cancellation processes until February 2021.
- 2.4 Around 1 in 4 applicants (27.4%, 2,580) are existing tenants of Highland Housing Register landlords applying for a transfer to another home. This is an increase of 1.4% from last year. Most households are applying to the 'Housing List' looking to move in as 'new' tenants (72.6%, 6,836). Just over half of all housing list applicants are privately renting or living with parents/relatives; over 1 in 10 are in temporary homeless accommodation and under 1 in 10 are currently homeowners. These figures follow last year's trends.

2.5 Most applicants (37.2%, 3,507 households) are looking to be housed in Inverness followed by Ross and Cromarty (21.8%, 2,052 households), then Lochaber, (12.2%, 1,151). Broadly similar numbers of households are seeking housing in Badenoch & Strathspey, Caithness, Nairn and Skye & Lochalsh. There is very little change from 2020/2021 in terms of percentage share. Chart 2 illustrates this split across Highland.



2.6 Chart 3 sets out the household composition of housing applicants. The demand for small properties is clear. Half of all HHR applicants are single people; 10% are couples and 40% are families. This has not changed from 2020/2021. Pressure on smaller properties is greater in some areas – for example, in Skye 69% of applicants require an one bedroom property.



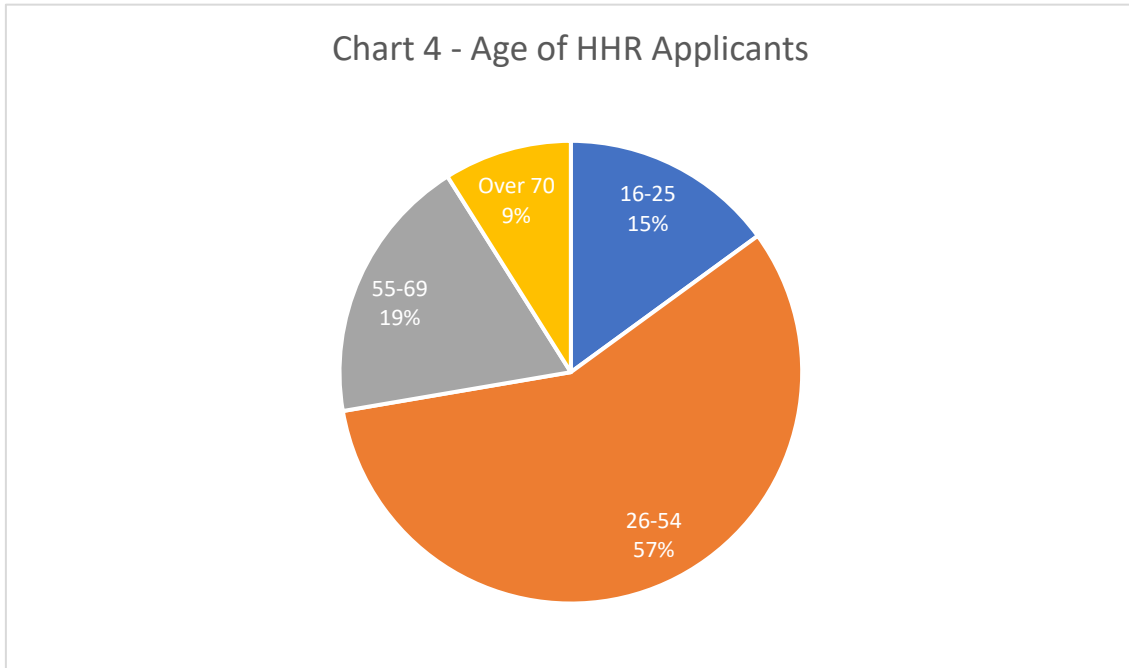
- 2.7 In order to re-house single and couple households, HHR landlords need to allocate more two-bedroom properties to these households. New build development will also need to focus on reducing the large gap between demand and supply.
- 2.8 While only constituting 1.8% of overall need, 174 households require 5 bedrooms or more and they may have to wait a considerable time to be allocated this size of property.

**Table 1 - Number of Bedrooms Applicants Require**  
*Applications counted in their '1<sup>st</sup> preference' area,*

Area	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5+	%	Apps/ stock
Badenoch & Strathspey	446	62%	139	19%	91	13%	33	5%	10	1%	719
Available Stock	242	27%	465	51%	172	19%	19	2%	5	1%	903
Caithness	396	64%	130	21%	50	8%	32	5%	14	>1%	622
Available Stock	731	26%	1149	42%	767	28%	116	4%	4	>1%	2767
Inverness	2092	60%	774	22%	430	12%	162	5%	49	1%	3507
Available Stock	1928	29%	2928	44%	1602	24%	157	2%	14	>1%	6629
Lochaber	682	59%	276	24%	124	11%	52	5%	17	2%	1151
Available Stock	572	17%	1537	47%	1045	32%	146	4%	0	0%	3300
Nairn	267	62%	76	18%	59	14%	24	6%	4	1%	430
Available Stock	317	33%	390	40%	231	24%	31	3%	5	1%	974
Ross & Cromarty	1196	59%	477	24%	248	12%	92	5%	39	2%	2022
Available Stock	1066	20%	2105	39%	1909	36%	214	4%	39	1%	5333
Skye & Lochalsh	407	69%	106	18%	49	8%	24	4%	6	1%	592
Available Stock	306	26%	517	44%	323	27%	37	3%	1	0%	1184
Sutherland	224	66%	72	21%	30	9%	9	3%	7	2%	342
Available Stock	352	31%	418	37%	344	31%	6	1%	2	>1%	1122
<b>Highland</b>	<b>5711</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>2050</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>1081</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>9416</b>
<b>Available Stock</b>	<b>5162</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>9091</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>6000</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>&gt;1%</b>	<b>20,969</b>



2.9 Chart 4 illustrates the different age groups of HHR applicants. The bulk of applicants are aged between 25 and 60 (57.3%) with under a third of applicants (27.9%) aged over 55 years.



2.10 Table 2 focuses on the current circumstances of young applicants. Young applicants aged 16-25 are far more likely than other age groups to be in homeless accommodation/Homeless at Home (19.4% of young applicants).

**Table 2 - Applicants Aged 16-25 Showing Current Circumstances**

Current Tenure	Couple	Family	Single	Total	%
Homeless at home	7	5	26	<b>38</b>	3.1%
Hostel resident	0	0	7	<b>7</b>	0.6%
Living in caravan	3	2	6	<b>11</b>	0.9%
Living or lodging with friends	2	9	52	<b>63</b>	5.1%
Living with parents/relatives/	101	94	471	<b>666</b>	54.4%
Long term stay in hospital	0	0	3	<b>3</b>	0.2%
Other council tenant	4	14	8	<b>26</b>	2.1%
Other housing association tenant	5	18	6	<b>29</b>	2.4%
Other supported accommodation	0	0	13	<b>13</b>	1.1%
Owner occupier/shared owner	1	4	0	<b>5</b>	0.4%
Prison	0	0	1	<b>1</b>	0.1%
Residential care/throughcare	0	1	18	<b>19</b>	1.6%
Temporary homeless accommodation	14	18	167	<b>199</b>	16.3%
Tenant of a property leased by council	2	7	4	<b>13</b>	1.1%
Tenant of private/residential landlord	31	46	48	<b>125</b>	10.2%
Tied tenant	1	1	4	<b>6</b>	0.5%
<b>Total Each Household Type 16-25yrs</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>1224</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Percentage of Household Type</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>68.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

- 2.11 Housing applicants who require a one-bedroom property will continue to be a priority if we are to make progress in achieving rapid rehousing of homeless people, but this is limited by the number of one-bedroom properties available to let.

### Housing Options

- 2.12 Table 3 shows the number of applicants expressing an interest in alternative housing options:

**Table 3 – Interest in alternative Housing Options**

Alternative Housing Options	Number of Applicants Expressing Interest
Mutual exchange	1,668
Mid-market rent (MMR)	2,033
Renting a private property	1,923
Buying a house or flat (e.g. via Low Cost Home Own)	1,102
Building own home with a rural home ownership grant	532
Having home adapted to meet your daily living needs	311

- 2.13 Mutual Exchanges can help tenants to meet their needs and aspirations to move (especially if their points are low). 147 tenants used this method to move into an HHR tenancy (either from within Highland or out with). This represents an increase from 83 in the previous year. As with last year, most mutual exchanges took place in Inverness. The increase in mutual exchanges is a consequence of the end of Covid-19 restrictions.
- 2.14 These options may present a better opportunity to access housing in a preferred community. There is value in assisting applicants with accessing these options and assessing outcomes.
- 2.15 In addition to ongoing professional development for Council Housing Options staff, HHR Partner staff have been given training and guidance on Mid-Market Rent and Low-Cost Home Ownership to increased awareness of these options.

### HHR Suspension

- 2.16 HHR applicants may have their application suspended from receiving an offer of housing. The HHR Allocation policy sets out several reasons when this may happen. If the applicant has
- Ongoing rent arrears on their HHR tenancy
  - Poor housing condition at their HHR tenancy
  - A history of anti-social behaviour
  - Provided false or misleading behaviour
  - Refused a second offer
  - Complex needs and requires an NHS housing solution
  - Requested their application to be suspended
- 2.17 As of 31 March 2022, 116 applicants were suspended. This is a decrease from last year which stood at 176. Suspensions for rent arrears, interim accommodation and NHS Housing Solutions represented the largest drop. This suggests Housing Officers are providing greater support and assistance to applicants in arrears and with complex needs to help achieve a housing allocation. Of the current suspension cases, 71 are owing arrears to a social housing

landlord and failing to maintain a reasonable repayment arrangement, nine for refusing two reasonable offers and four for having poor housing condition in their social housing tenancy.

### Pressures Across Highland

- 2.18 Table 4 indicates relative pressure on housing by illustrating how many 'first choice' applicants there are for each house let. It shows that the pressure in Badenoch & Strathspey, Inverness, Nairn, West Ross and Lochaber is greater than the Highland average. In Badenoch & Strathspey, for every let, there are 15.3 applicants compared to a Highland average of 4.6 applicants per let.

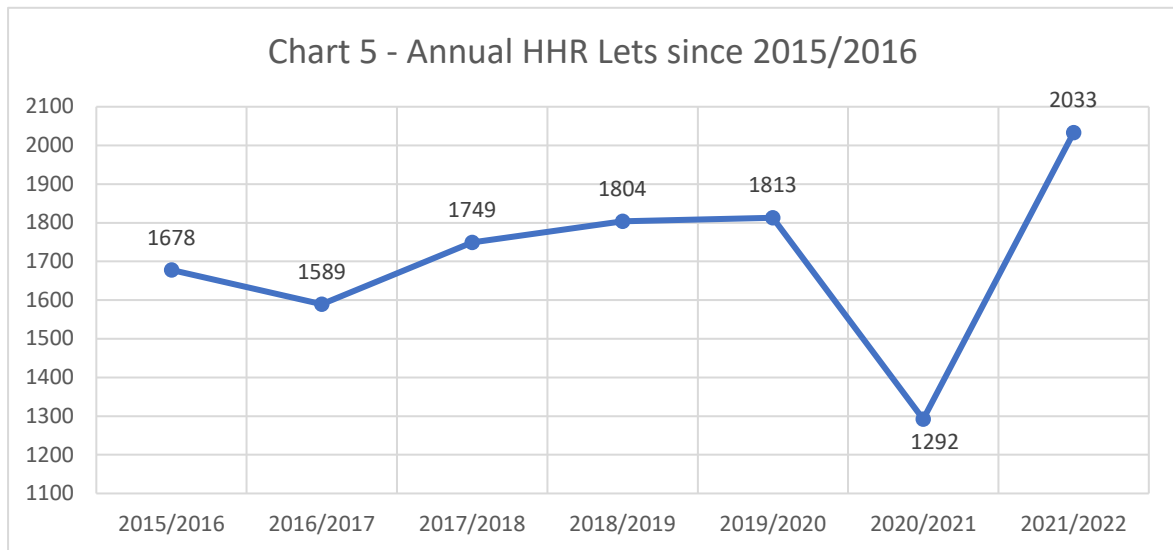
**Table 4 - Relative Pressure – First Choice HHR Applicants per HHR Let 21-22**

Area	Lets During Year	First Choice applicants	Pressure – applicants per let
Badenoch & Strathspey	47	719	15.3
Caithness	285	622	2.2
Inverness	713	3507	4.9
Lochaber	173	1151	6.7
Nairn	55	430	7.8
East Ross	294	856	2.9
Mid Ross	215	930	4.3
West Ross	22	266	12.1
Skye & Lochalsh	132	592	4.5
Sutherland	97	342	3.5
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2033</b>	<b>9416</b>	<b>4.6</b>

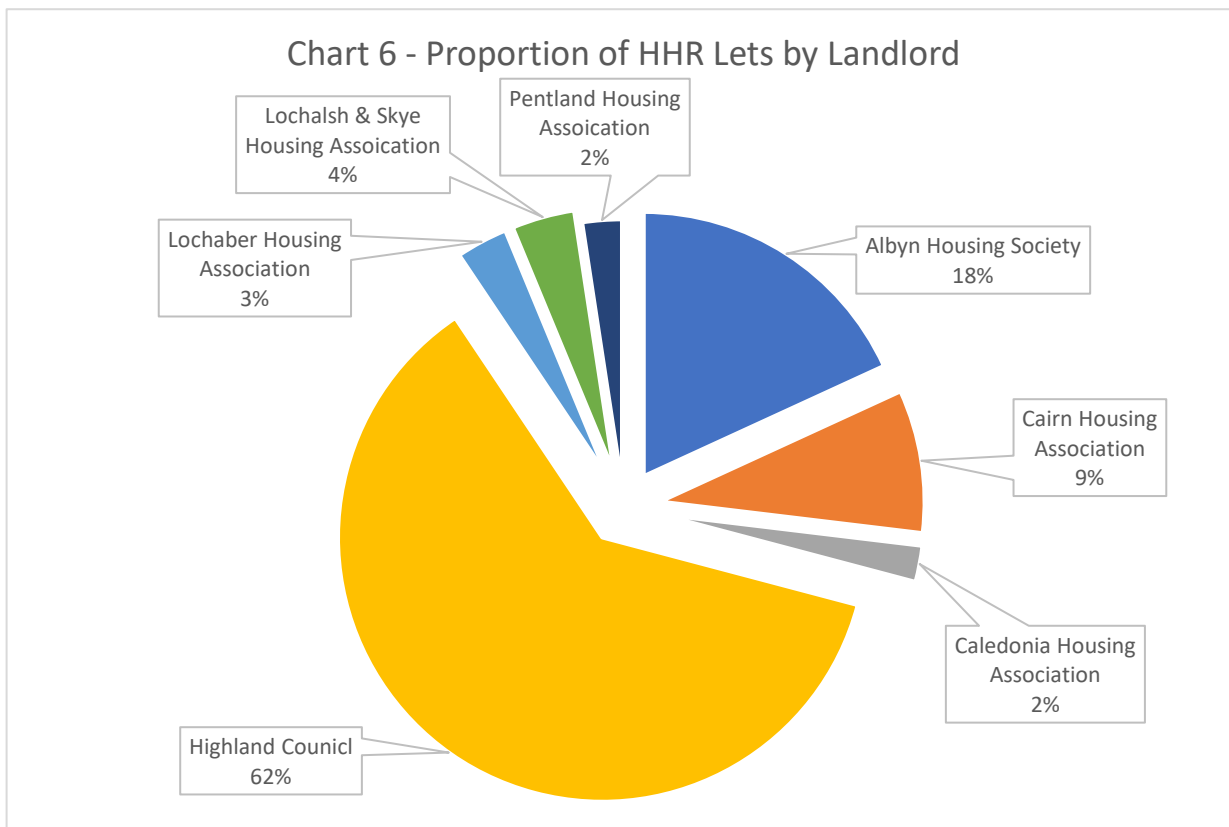
### 3 Allocations

- 3.1 Letting activity has recovered from its significant drop during the pandemic with a total of 2,033 lets taking place in 2021/2022. This is an increase of 1,292. This large increase is directly linked to an end to Covid-19 restrictions on allocations and new build completions.

3.2 Chart 5 highlights that the long-term trend of HHR lets is increasing because of the new build development programme. This also enables HHR partners to provide more affordable, quality self-contained temporary accommodation for those who find themselves homeless. Temporary lets are not reflected in Chart 5.



3.3 Chart 6 shows the proportion of allocations by HHR Partners. While the proportion has been consistent in recent years, 2020/2021 saw the Highland Council proportion increase from 62% to 70%. This year, the Highland Council's proportion has fallen back to 62%. This most likely reflects the normalisation of allocation since the pandemic restrictions were lifted and more new build completions by other HHR Partners.



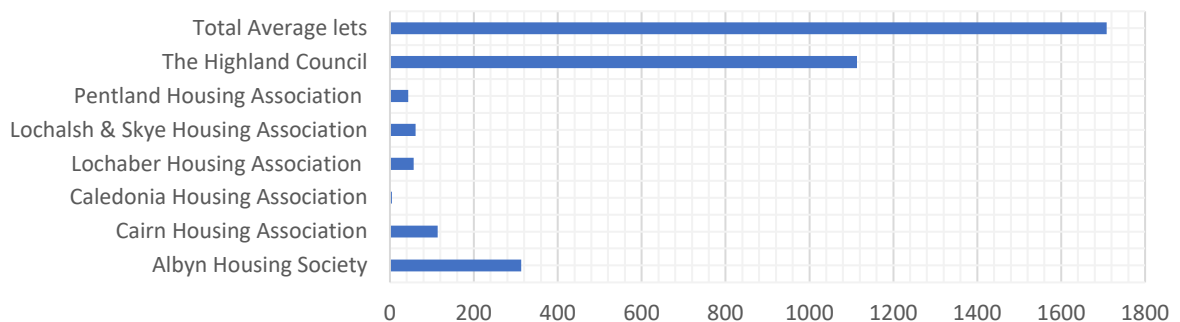
3.4 Looking at demand alongside supply illustrates the different pressures across Highland. Table 5 shows that Badenoch & Strathspey, Lochaber and Inverness have a higher percentage of applicants across the HHR than they have being allocated properties. While Caithness, Sutherland and Ross-Shire, for example, have a lower percentage of applicants across the HHR than they have being allocated properties.

**Table 5 - Households Applying to Live in an Area Compared to Lets 2021/22**

	Applicants	Percentage of Applicants within the HHR	Total Lets	Percentage of Lets within the HHR
<b>Badenoch&amp; Strathspey</b>	719	7.6%	47	2.3%
<b>Caithness</b>	622	6.6%	285	14.0%
<b>Inverness</b>	3507	37.2%	713	35.1%
<b>Lochaber</b>	1151	12.2%	173	8.5%
<b>Nairn</b>	430	4.6%	55	2.7%
<b>East Ross</b>	856	9.1%	294	14.5%
<b>Mid Ross</b>	930	9.9%	215	10.6%
<b>West Ross</b>	266	2.8%	22	1.1%
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	592	6.3%	132	6.5%
<b>Sutherland</b>	342	3.6%	97	4.8%
<b>Highland</b>	<b>9416</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2033</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.5 Chart 7 illustrates the trend in HHR lets by each landlord. Please note that this is Caledonia's second year as a member of the HHR Partnership.

Chart 7 - Average Annual Lets per landlord 2015/2016 - 2021/2022



	Albyn Housing Society	Cairn Housing Association	Caledonia Housing Association	Lochaber Housing Association	Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association	Pentland Housing Association	The Highland Council	Total Average lets
Average lets	313	114	5	57	61	43	1113	1708

3.6 Participating landlords (Trust Housing, Blackwood Homes, Abbeyfield, Hanover Housing and Key Housing) have around 700 social rented properties in Highland. Whilst these landlords may seek nominations from the Highland Housing Register (HHR), several hold their own lists which they allocate directly from. HHR officers are encouraged to assist applicants to apply direct to these. In 2021/2022, two HHR applicants were housed by these landlords via HHR nominations.

- 3.7 Allocating housing to a transferring tenant is a useful tool for freeing properties for another applicant. Across Highland, the trends in this split were maintained with the majority of lets to those on the Housing List (72%, 1449) and over a quarter (29%, 584) going to transferring tenants. A split of around 70% to 30% is set out in our HHR policy. Table 6 highlights the breakdown of allocations in each area.

**Table 6 – Breakdown of lets by housing list and housing area**

Area	Lets During Year		
	Transfer Lets	Waiting List Lets	Total Lets
Badenoch & Strathspey	12	35	47
Caithness	71	214	285
Inverness	221	492	713
Lochaber	48	125	173
Nairn	14	41	55
East Ross	98	196	294
Mid Ross	62	153	215
West Ross	6	16	22
Skye & Lochalsh	35	97	132
Sutherland	17	80	97
<b>Highland</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>1449</b>	<b>2033</b>

- 3.8 In line with national guidance, housing applicants can refuse offers of housing. In 2021/2022, 584 offers of housing were refused. This represents roughly 20% of all housing offers being refused.
- 3.9 Of the 584 refusals, 361 (61.8%) were deemed as an unreasonable refusal and 223 (38.2%) were deemed a reasonable refusal. A reasonable refusal could be, for example, if the property is unsuitable for the applicant's medical needs following reassessment. Examples of an unreasonable refusal are refusing a property because it has too small a garden or an unspecified unwillingness to move to a particular area.
- 3.10 If an applicant refuses two reasonable offers, their housing application will be suspended for six months.
- 3.11 HHR staff have received training on how to minimise refusals, including more frequent reviews of applicants choices and circumstances. This will be a continuous piece of staff development.

### **Homelessness**

- 3.12 Social housing landlord are legally required to give reasonable preference to households who have particular needs including those in greatest housing need. Table 7 shows to the extent to which allocations met urgent needs arising from homelessness.
- 3.13 As of the 31 March 2022, the HHR contained 804 households assessed as homeless. This is a decrease from 920 in 2020/21. In terms of percentage of all applicants, there has been a 1% drop in homeless applicants compared to last year.
- 3.14 The vast majority of homeless households (732 households) were living in temporary homeless accommodation provided by the Council. Over 100 households were classed as 'homeless at home'. Highland Council policy allows homeless households to temporarily

reside at a family home instead of our temporary accommodation and still occur 'Time spent in temporary accommodation' points.

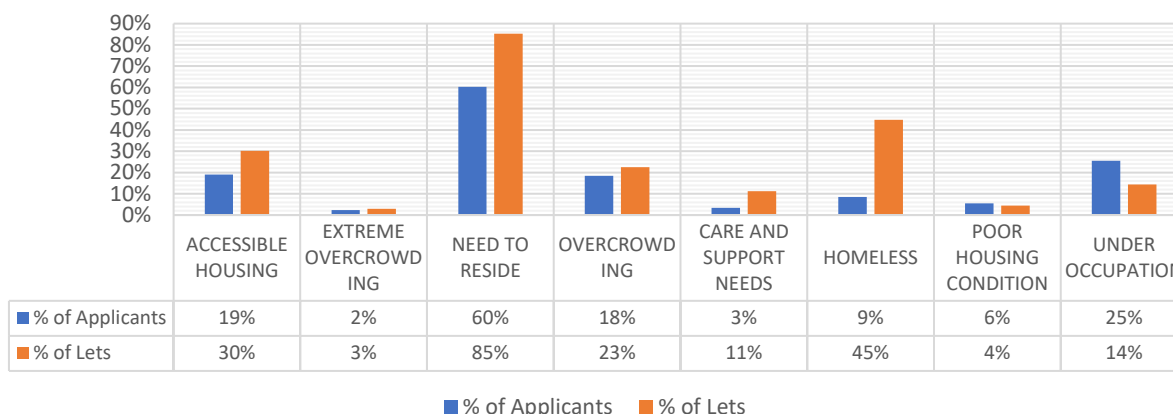
- 3.15 The table below shows the percentage split between homeless and other applicants housed on the through Housing List.

**Table 7 – HHR Homeless Lets as a Percentage of All (and Housing List applicant) Lets**

Area	Number of Apps with Homeless Points	Percentage of Housing List Apps	All HHR Lets 21-22	Lets to Homeless Households		
				No. of Lets to Apps with Homeless Points	Percentage of Housing & Transfer Lets	Percentage of Housing List Lets only
<b>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>	64	11.2%	47	25	53.2%	71.4%
<b>Caithness</b>	16	4.4%	285	42	14.7%	19.6%
<b>Inverness</b>	417	16.3%	713	418	58.6%	85%
<b>Lochaber</b>	65	7.3%	173	68	39.3%	54.4%
<b>Nairn</b>	23	7.4%	55	31	56.4%	75.6%
<b>East Ross</b>	55	10.6%	294	115	39.1%	58.7%
<b>West Ross</b>	16	6.9%	22	6	27.3%	37.5%
<b>Mid Ross</b>	86	13.5%	215	103	47.9%	67.3%
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	50	10.3%	132	80	60.6%	82.5%
<b>Sutherland</b>	9	3.6%	97	23	23.7%	28.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>2033</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>62.9%</b>

- 3.16 As the cost of living crisis continues, there are concerns that there will be an increase in homelessness from private renters and homeowners. The Highland Council will continue to provide homeless prevention services and advice to help prevent homelessness.
- 3.17 Chart 8 shows the percentage of applicants awarded points for the various housing need categories set out in the HHR Allocation Policy compared to the percentage housed with these points. It shows, in line with HHR Policy objectives, that generally applicants who, due to their circumstances, have the greatest need for re-housing are more likely to be housed.

Chart 8 - Proportion of Allocations & Lets by Points Categories  
2021/2022



- 3.18 Across Highland, over 8 out of 10 of those housed had additional points which recognised their 'need to reside' in a particular community within the Highlands. This is because they already live or work there or because they are giving or receiving care and support there (e.g. from family). In areas with more pressure on its housing (i.e. far more applicants than supply), a greater proportion of lets went to those with these points. For example, in Badenoch & Strathspey and Lochaber, over 96% of all housed applicants had 'need to reside' points.
- 3.19 Table 8 provides the number of applications from people outwith Highland. Around 18% of HHR applicants had an application address out with Highland as of 31 March 2022.

**Table 8 - Percentage of HHR applicants with application addresses from outwith Highland**

Housing Area	Percentage of HHR applicants with application addresses from outwith Highland
<b>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>	27%
<b>Caithness</b>	16%
<b>Inverness</b>	12%
<b>Lochaber</b>	25%
<b>Nairn</b>	22%
<b>East Ross</b>	11%
<b>West Ross</b>	32%
<b>Mid Ross</b>	13%
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	31%
<b>Sutherland</b>	24%
<b>Average Percentage</b>	21%

- 3.20 Highland supports the Armed Forces including through the Covenant which recognises the particular needs of this group. In 2021/22 there were 24 applications from serving members and 30 applications from former members of the British Armed Forces.
- 3.21 We gather information on ethnic origin of housing applicants for monitoring purposes. Provision of this information is optional for applicants. Table 9 provides a breakdown of the returns received.



**Table 9 - HHR Demand and Lets by Ethnic Origin**

<b>Ethnic Origin*</b>	<b>Applications**</b>	<b>Housed Applicants</b>
(i) (a) White Scottish	2,516	458
(i) (b) White Other British / Irish	406	71
(i) (d) White Gypsy/Traveller	3	4
(i) (e) White Polish	114	19
(i) (f) White Other	169	27
(ii) Mixed or Multiple Ethnic	15	4
Other Non-white	57	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,790</b>	<b>590</b>

\* Other Non-White is broken down into several categories but individually are less than a percentage

\*\* Note that not all applicants provide this information

- 3.22 Information on applicants identifying as disabled is monitored. The policy appears to be meeting such needs with a similar number of disabled applicants being housed to who are applying for housing (13% of lets and 14% of all applicants are disabled – 1,416 applicants and 268 lets). This should be expected as disabled households are more likely to have high points due to Accessible Housing and Care & Support points categories. Disability information is taken from the Equal Opportunities Form which is not compulsory.

#### 4 Particular Housing Needs

- 4.1 Special Allocation Status (SAS) points are part of the HHR policy. An applicant can receive these points if they have evidenced needs which are not recognised by the other categories of housing need in the policy. In 2021/22, 129 applicants were housed with SAS points.

**Table 10 – Reason SAS for given to a re-housed applicant\***

<b>Reason for SAS award</b>	<b>Total Number</b>
Housed Through Care After Care Young Person	9
Housed Domestic Abuse Victim	4
Housed due to Anti-Social Behaviour	11
Housed due to Health	12
Housed due to Housing development or major refurbishment	11
Housed for another reason	6

\*Reason was not always given, and some applicants had more than one reason given

- 4.2 HHR partners continue to work closely with partners to meet the housing needs of clients. In 2021/22, 39 households were helped to move into their first independent living tenancy, mostly through the protocol with NHS Highland for people with complex care and support needs or leaving homeless supported accommodation. In addition, 21 young people were housed in their first tenancy through the Care Leavers Protocol.
- 4.3 Table 11 shows the number of applicants who require 'wheelchair-user' housing or 'level-access' housing (i.e. housing on one level which is suitable for people with significant mobility needs). An applicant's accessible property requirements are determined by the NHS Accessible Housing Assessment. The table also shows how many of those properties were let over the year. It highlights that there is a relatively large unmet need, with over 100 applicants requiring housing suitable for wheelchair users. This remains unchanged from last year.

**Table 11 – Demand and Lets for Wheelchair & Level Access Housing**

	<b>Apps Requiring Wheelchair housing</b>	<b>Lets to Wheelchair applicants</b>		<b>Apps Requiring Level Access</b>	<b>Lets to Apps Requiring Level Access</b>
<b>Badenoch &amp; Strath.</b>	3	1		37	4
<b>Caithness</b>	8	3		49	18
<b>Inverness</b>	40	18		237	78
<b>Lochaber</b>	15	10		86	29
<b>Nairn</b>	5	2		27	14
<b>East Ross</b>	20	13		78	45
<b>Mid Ross</b>	15	8		87	39
<b>West Ross</b>	2	0		16	2
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	8	1		28	13
<b>Sutherland</b>	4	0		35	11
<b>Highland</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>56</b>		<b>680</b>	<b>253</b>

- 4.4 Across Highland, 56 households who required wheelchair housing had their needs met. This is an increase from 17 in 2020/2021. Across Highland, the proportion of lets to wheelchair housing generally reflected the proportion of this type of demand in an area.
- 4.5 Highland is continuing to adopt proactive approaches to overcome supply issues. Tenants in adapted properties are encouraged to transfer to another property when no household members require the specialist features. The Council's Housing Development Team also continue to factor in adaptations into the design of new build developments and through individual property purchases. Further analysis will be undertaken during the review of the Local Housing Strategy which will take place in Autumn 2022.

#### **Sheltered housing**

- 4.6 There were 53 lets into the Council's sheltered housing during the year - 32% were HHR transferring tenants; 30% homeless lets and 38% were from the housing list. Sheltered housing continues to play an important role in helping people with mobility or other health needs move into suitable housing. 6 out of 10 sheltered housing lets were to applicants with 'accessible housing' (i.e. health / medical rehousing priority) points. Of the 60 lets, 13 households had an urgent need to move due to their health-related housing issues.

## **5 Conclusion**

- 5.1 The annual report indicates that demand for social housing in Highland remains high. This demand continues to put additional pressure on housing and associated support services.
- 5.2 Overall, the HHR continues to meet housing need and continues to play an important role in supporting good health, strong communities, and local economies. However, there are significant housing needs that are not resolved quickly as a result of the limited supply of housing.

5.3 The HHR policy review is focusing on these particular challenges and how best to increase the support for those with unmet housing need across Highland.

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