

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	<b>11</b>
Report No	<b>HP/26/23</b>

**Committee:** Housing & Property Committee

**Date:** 9 November 2023

**Report Title:** Highland Housing Register Allocations Annual Monitoring Report 2022/23

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Housing & Property

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the annual performance review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy for 2022/2023. It provides information on the need for social rented housing and describes how those needs are met through the policy.

## 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.

## 3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** - 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, Rural & Island)** - Quality, low-cost affordable housing is key driver for reducing and preventing poverty. The Allocation Policy enables equitable access based on evidence of each applicant's need for housing.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - There are no specific implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Risk** - There are no specific implications arising from this report.

3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no specific implications from this report.

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

## 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 21,000 households across Highland. Compared to Scotland, Highland has proportionally less social rented housing. Social rented housing made up around 18% of all housing in Highland while the national average is around 23%
- 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 2022/23 is set out in **Appendix 1** and is summarised here.

## 5. Housing Demand

- 5.1 There were a total of 8,951 'Housing' and 'Transfer' List applications on the Housing Register at the end of 2022/23 compared to 9,416 in 2021/2022. In 2019/20 before Covid-19, the total number stood at 7,785. Of all applications held at the end of last year, 71.5% are not currently a tenant of a Highland Housing Register landlord. Just over half of these applicants are privately renting or living with family. Around 1 in 10 households are living in temporary 'homeless' accommodation or are 'homeless at home'.
- 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 36.5% of all applicants has selected as their First Choice), followed by Ross and Cromarty (24.5%) and Lochaber (10.7%).
- 5.4 However, whilst nearly half of applicants are seeking housing in the Inverness area, the lack of housing availability means under a third (29.8%) 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 Wester Ross, followed by, Badenoch & Strathspey, Nairn, Inverness, Lochaber and Skye & Lochalsh. Housing pressure in these six areas is 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.

5.7 Efforts to increase the supply of affordable rented properties have been considered as part of the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028. The Strategic Housing Investment Programme 2023-2028 was approved at this Committee on 27 April 2023. It committed to the delivery of an average of 660 new affordable homes per annum of which approximately 70% will be for affordable rent and 30% for intermediate affordable housing (e.g., low-cost home ownership or mid-market rent), in line with the overall Scottish Government targets.

## **6. Meeting Demand**

6.1 Across Highland, 1,962 households were housed in 2022/2023. This represents a decrease on last year's number which stood at 2,033.

6.2 The majority of lets continue to be into Council housing (69% of lets, an increase from 62%), followed by Albyn HS (14%); Cairn HA (9%); Lochalsh & Skye HA (4%); Lochaber HA (3%) and Caledonia (1%).

6.3 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.

6.4 The HHR partners are continuing to meet their duties to house households who are homeless. Across Highland 925 lets – 47.1% of all lets - went to households with points which reflected their homeless status. This is a 2% increase from last year and reflects a 11% increase in homelessness presentations in Highland in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.

6.5 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 Inverness (64.8%), Nairn (63%), Skye & Lochalsh (54.1%), Badenoch and Strathspey (52.2%) and Mid-Ross (51.1%).

6.6 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.

6.7 As well as approaches directly from applicants, HHR partners are committed to assisting with other policy priorities. A total of 14 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, 29 care-experienced young people were housed through the Highland Protocol which supports our Corporate Parenting commitments and duties.

6.8 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.

6.9 We monitor equalities to make sure we are providing equality of access and no discrimination. In line with the previous year, 74% of applicants described themselves as White Scottish. This group accounted for 75% of those housed applicants; 20% of lets went to non-British/White households; and around 1% 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). Not all applicants provide this information as it is not mandatory.

- 6.10 Highland's social housing providers remain committed to working with the Scottish and UK Government in delivering services to refugees and displaced persons. In 2022/23, 5 secure tenancies were allocated to Ukrainian Displaced Persons and indications are that this number will be higher in 2023/24 (10 secure tenancies have been allocated in 2023/24 as at 1 October 2024).

## **7. Highland Housing Register Allocation Policy**

- 7.1 The Highland Housing Register Policy undertook a review to take account of:
- 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 focused on potential changes to ensure we are allocating to applicants in the greatest housing need. This includes:
- 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 The new HHR Allocation Policy was approved by the Housing and Property Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and is currently being implemented on a phased basis. This will involve changes to the HHR application form, points categories and staff operational guidance. Applicants will be contacted in writing if there is any change to their points award.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 The annual report indicates that demand for social housing in Highland 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 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 implementation 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 & Property

Date: 5 October 2023

Author: Brian Cameron, Interim Head of Housing & Building Maintenance

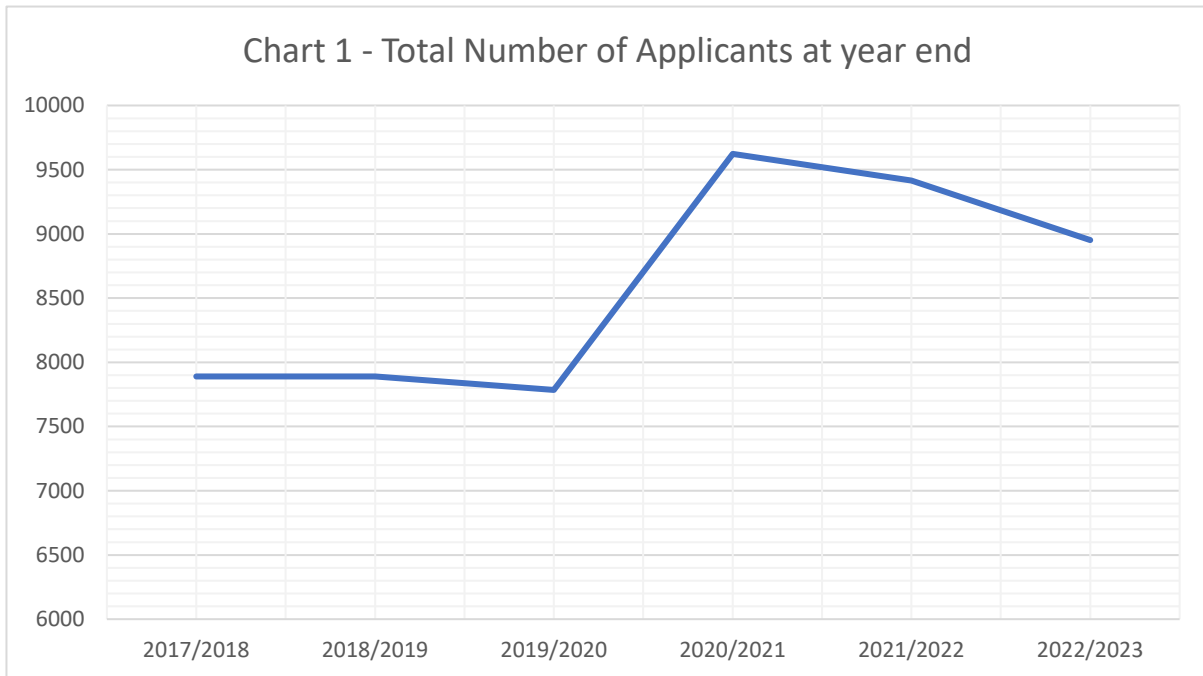
Appendices: Appendix 1 – HHR Annual Allocation Report

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report contains monitoring information and commentary on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocation Policy in 2022–2023. The analysis helps to identify 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 June 2021, National Records Scotland estimated that the Highlands had a population of nearly 238,000 who live in 110,700 households. Based on last Housing Need and Demand Assessment, social rented housing made up around 18% of all housing in Highland. The proportion of occupied housing that is social rented in Highland is lower than national average which sits at around 23%. As of April 2023, there were over 21,100 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).
- 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 while at the same time as a reduction in allocations because of the various restrictions on re-letting works. Following the end of Covid-19 restrictions, allocations and applications 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 will be completed in 2024.

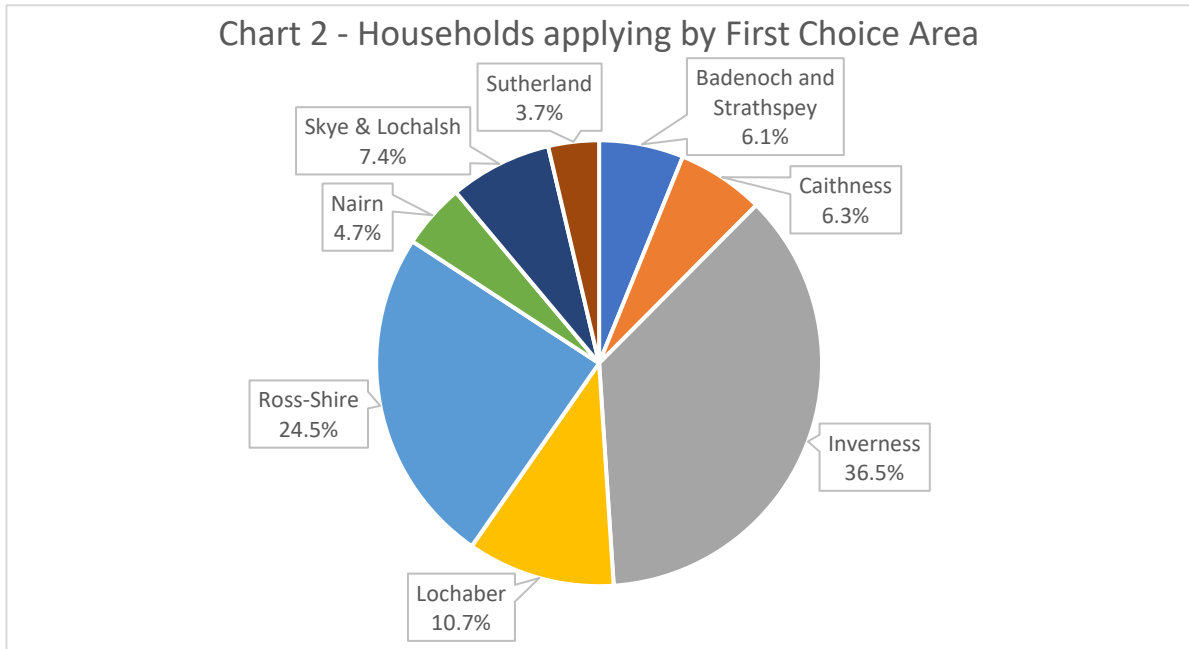
## 2. Applications

- 2.1 The number of households applying for housing was 8,951 on 31 March 2023. This is a 4.9% decrease from 9,416 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. 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.

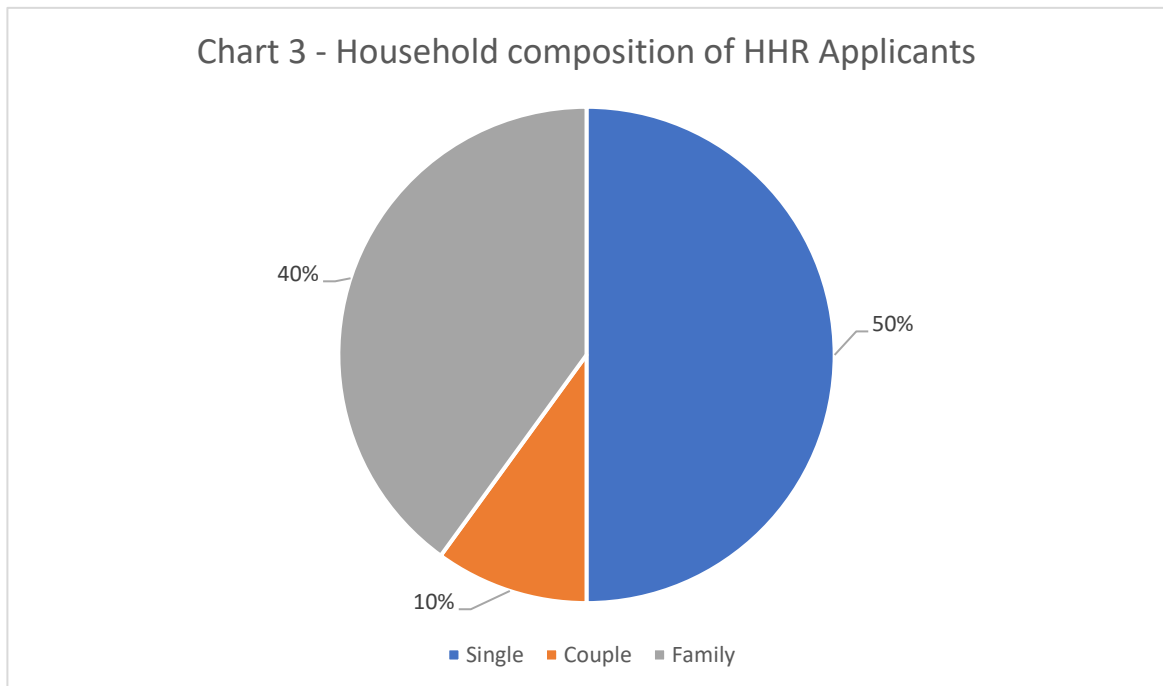


- 2.2 The increase in applications between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 was largely a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Scottish Government restrictions on moving to a new home and re-let works meant fewer than average allocations took place.
- 2.3 In addition, to ensure that applicants were not disadvantaged during the pandemic the HHR partners agreed to pause re-registration and cancellation processes until February 2021.
- 2.4 Since these restrictions were lifted, the total number of HHR applicants has steadily decreased which suggests that housing demand may continue to decrease until it reaches pre-Covid levels.
- 2.5 Over 1 in 4 applicants (28.5%, 2,548) are existing tenants of Highland Housing Register landlords applying for a transfer to another home. This is an increase of 1.1% from last year. Most households are applying to the 'Housing List' and are looking to move in as 'new' tenants (71.5%, 6,403). 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 (6.9%) are currently homeowners. These figures follow last year's trends.
- 2.6 Housing demand for specific letting areas can be measured in two ways. Either by reviewing an applicant's First Choice preference (i.e. where they most want to live) or All Demand (i.e. all the letting areas that an applicant is willing to reside in). Where appropriate, this report will provide demand as both First and All. This allows the report to reflect on where an applicant would ideally like to reside and what the overall demand across Highland's letting areas are.
- 2.7 In terms of First Choice Demand, most applicants (36.5%, 3,267 households) are looking to be housed in Inverness followed by Ross and Cromarty (24.5%, 2,195 households) and then Lochaber, (10.7%, 960). Broadly similar numbers of households are seeking housing in

Badenoch & Strathspey, Caithness, Nairn and Skye & Lochalsh. Chart 2 illustrates this detail across Highland.



2.8 Chart 3 sets out how many applicants are waiting for each property size against the available stock in the area. Demand for small properties is clear. Half of all HHR applicants are single people; 10% are couples and 40% are families. Pressure on smaller properties is greater in some areas – for example, in Skye 70% of applicants require an one-bedroom property.



2.9 Table 1 outlines the number of bedrooms applicants require by their First Choice. This data highlights the significant contrast between demand and supply for one-bedroom properties and 5+ bedroom properties.

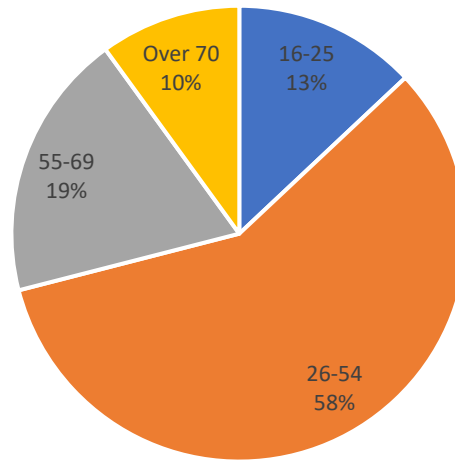
**Table 1 - Number of Bedrooms Applicants Require**  
*Applications counted in their '1<sup>st</sup> preference' area,*

Area	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5+	%	Apps/ stock
Badenoch & Strathspey Demand	320	58%	125	23%	75	14%	20	4%	8	1%	548
Available Stock	245	26%	466	51%	182	20%	20	2%	5	>1%	918
Caithness Demand	358	63%	122	22%	55	10%	23	4%	8	1%	566
Available Stock	735	27%	712	41%	1147	28%	116	4%	4	>1%	2770
Inverness Demand	1906	58%	787	24%	367	11%	153	5%	53	2%	3267
Available Stock	1946	29%	2899	44%	1599	24%	153	2%	13	>1%	6610
Lochaber Demand	567	59%	236	25%	89	9%	52	5%	16	2%	960
Available Stock	248	11%	1150	54%	675	31%	71	3%	1	>1%	2145
Nairn Demand	243	58%	85	20%	66	16%	19	5%	8	2%	421
Available Stock	328	33%	393	40%	231	23%	31	3%	5	>1%	988
Ross & Cromarty Demand	1288	59%	505	23%	273	12%	89	4%	42	2%	2195
Available Stock	1098	20%	2152	40%	1938	36%	219	4%	39	>1%	5446
Skye & Lochalsh Demand	468	70%	114	17%	48	7%	26	4%	8	1%	664
Available Stock	312	26%	529	44%	330	27%	37	3%	1	>1%	1209
Sutherland Demand	207	63%	72	22%	31	18%	11	2%	8	1%	285
Available Stock	351	31%	420	37%	344	31%	7	1%	2	>1%	1124
<b>Highland Demand</b>	<b>5357</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>2046</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>1004</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>8951</b>
<b>Available Stock</b>	<b>5263</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>9156</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>6067</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>&gt;1%</b>	<b>21211</b>

2.10 Chart 4 illustrates the different age groups of HHR applicants. The bulk of applicants are aged between 25 and 60 (57.7%) with under a third of applicants (28.8%) aged over 55 years.



Chart 4 - Age of HHR Applicants



2.11 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 (22.1% of young applicants). This is an increase of nearly 3% from the previous year.

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

Current Tenure	Couple	Family	Single	Total	%
Tenant of a HHR Landlord	13	108	47	168	13.8%
Homeless at home	3	13	29	45	3.7%
Hostel resident	0	3	1	4	0.3%
Living in caravan	2	2	7	11	0.9%
Living or lodging with friends	4	9	37	50	4.1%
Living with parents/relatives/	77	62	379	518	42.5%
Long term stay in hospital	0	0	3	3	0.2%
Other council tenant	3	10	5	18	1.5%
Other housing association tenant	1	11	3	15	1.2%
Other supported accommodation	0	1	8	9	0.7%
Owner occupier/shared owner	0	3	1	4	0.3%
Residential care/throughcare	0	1	19	20	1.6%
Temporary homeless accommodation	17	34	169	220	18.1%
Tenant of private/residential landlord	37	41	43	121	9.9%
Tied tenant	3	3	6	12	1.0%
<b>Total Each Household Type 16-25yrs</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>1218</b>	
<b>Percentage of Household Type</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>24.7%</b>	<b>62.1%</b>		

### 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	1484
Mid-market rent (MMR)	1744
Renting a private property	1658
Buying a house or flat (e.g. via Low Cost Home Own)	921
Building own home with a rural home ownership grant	455
Having home adapted to meet your daily living needs	411

- 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 a HHR tenancy (either from within Highland or out with). This is the same number as last year.

### HHR Suspension

- 2.14 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 current or former social housing tenancy
  - Poor housing condition at their current 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.
- 2.15 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, 71 applicants were suspended.

### Pressures Across Highland

- 2.16 Table 4 indicates relative pressure on housing by illustrating how many 'first choice' applicants there are for each house let. Pressure across the Highlands as a whole has remained at 4.6 applicants for every allocation. However, there has been improvements in the pressure in areas such as Badenoch and Strathspey which saw its pressure drop from 15.3 to 8. This will be due 22 more allocations and a reduction of around 150 applicants placing Badenoch and Strathspey as their First Choice. The housing pressure is highest in West Ross at 10.6 and in total, six housing areas have a housing pressure higher than the Highland average.

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

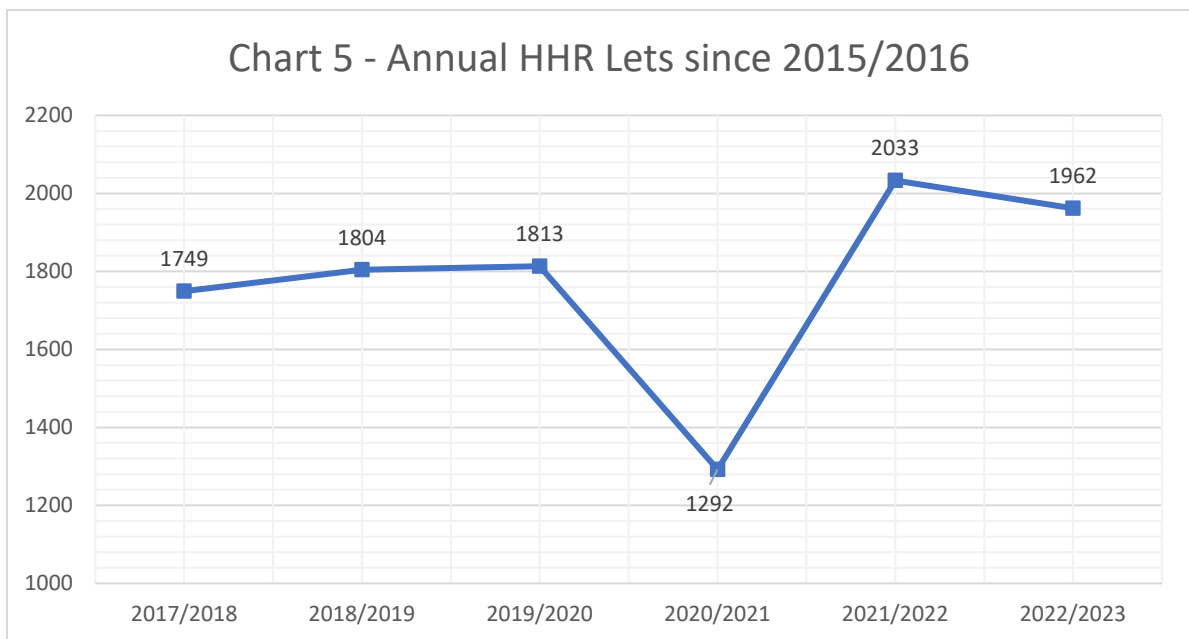
Area	Lets During Year	First Choice applicants	Pressure – applicants per let
Badenoch and Strathspey	69	549	8.0
Caithness	282	566	2.0
East Ross	267	942	3.5
Inverness	585	3267	5.6
Lochaber	185	960	5.2
Mid Ross	235	968	4.1
Nairn	54	421	7.8
Skye & Lochalsh	133	664	5.0

Sutherland	125	329	2.6
West Ross	27	285	10.6
<b>Highland</b>	<b>1962</b>	<b>8951</b>	<b>4.6</b>

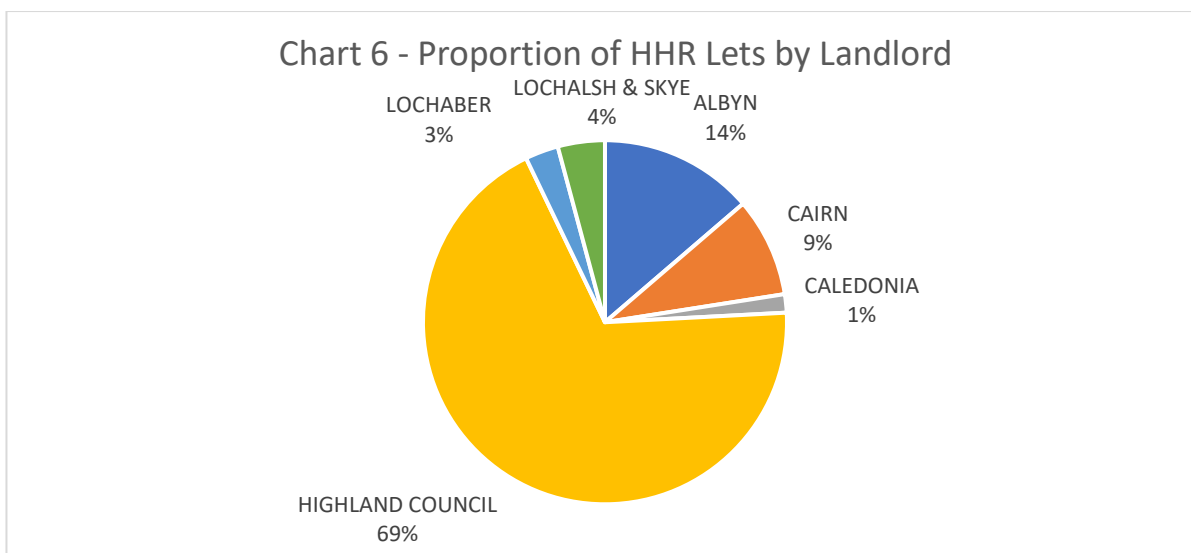
### 3 Allocations

3.1 Letting activity has recovered from its significant drop during the pandemic with a total of 1,962 lets taking place in 2022/2023. This is a slight decrease from last year's total of 2,033.

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 the Highland Council to provide more affordable, quality self-contained temporary accommodation for those who find themselves homeless. Temporary lets are not reflected in Chart 5. The 2020/2021 reflects Covid-19 restrictions on allocations and new build completions.



3.3 Chart 6 shows the proportion of allocations by HHR Partners. This year, the Highland Council's proportion has increased from 62% to 69% with Albyn and Cairn's proportion decreasing by 4% and 2% respectively.



- 3.4 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 independently from the HHR. HHR officers are encouraged to assist applicants to apply direct to these. In 2022/2023, two HHR applicants were housed by these landlords via HHR nominations.
- 3.5 Allocating housing to a transferring tenant is a useful tool for releasing properties to meet housing need. In 2022/23, 26% (520) of lets were to transfer applicants. This is detailed at Table 6 below. This year saw a 2% increase in the number of lets going to Housing List applicants.

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

Area	Lets During Year		
	Transfer Lets	Waiting List Lets	Total Lets
Badenoch & Strathspey	23	46	69
Caithness	69	213	282
Inverness	81	186	267
Lochaber	141	444	585
Nairn	43	142	185
East Ross	70	165	235
Mid Ross	11	43	54
West Ross	37	96	133
Skye & Lochalsh	44	81	125
Sutherland	1	26	27
<b>Highland</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>1442</b>	<b>1962</b>

- 3.6 In line with national guidance, housing applicants can refuse offers of housing. In 2022/2023, 535 offers of housing were refused by applicants. This represents 20% of all housing offers being refused. This is the same percentage as last year. It is lower than the national benchmarking figures.

- 3.7 Of the 535 refusals, 260 (60.9%) were deemed as an unreasonable refusal and 209 (39.01%) 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.
- 3.8 If an applicant refuses two reasonable offers, their housing application will be suspended for six months.
- 3.9 The percentage of overall refusals and the proportion of reasonable to unreasonable refusals has remained consistent over the last three years. HHR staff continue to receive training on how to minimise refusals, including frequent reviews of applicant choices and circumstances.

### Homelessness

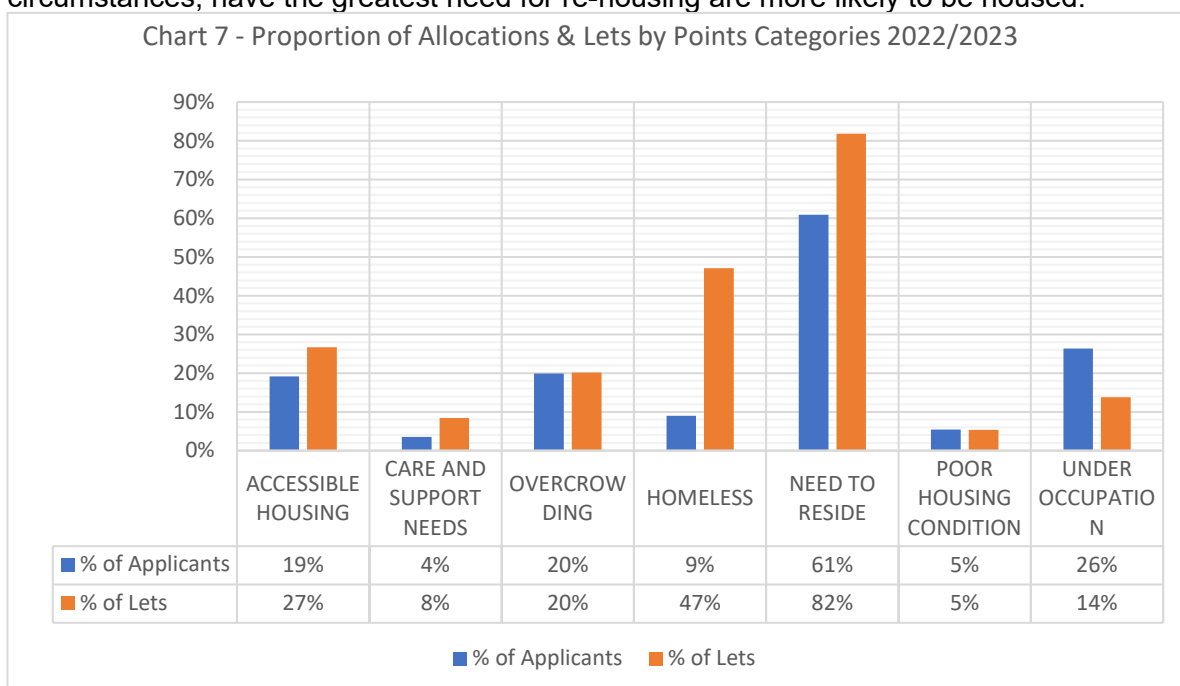
- 3.10 Social housing landlords are legally required to give reasonable preference to households who have particular needs including those in greatest housing need. Table 7 shows the extent to which allocations met urgent needs arising from homelessness.
- 3.11 As of the 31 March 2023, the HHR contained 804 households assessed as homeless. This is a slight increase from 801 in 2021/2022. In terms of percentage of all applicants, homeless applicants remain around 8% of all HHR applicants.
- 3.12 The vast majority of homeless households (617 households) are living in temporary homeless accommodation provided by the Council. 185 households were classed as 'homeless at home'. Highland Council policy allows homeless households to temporarily reside at a family or friend's home instead of our temporary accommodation and still occur 'Time spent in temporary accommodation' points.
- 3.13 The table below shows the percentage split between homeless and other applicants housed on the through Housing List.

**Table 8 – HHR Homeless Lets as a Percentage of All (and Housing List applicant) Lets**

Area	Number of Apps with Homeless Points	% of Housing List Apps	All HHR Lets 21-22	Lets to Homeless Households		
				No. of Lets to Apps with Homeless Points	% of Housing & Transfer Lets	% of Housing List Lets only
<b>Badenoch and Strathspey</b>	63	14.0%	69	36	52.2%	78.26%
<b>Caithness</b>	8	2.4%	282	58	20.6%	27.23%
<b>East Ross</b>	55	9.5%	267	121	45.3%	65.05%
<b>Inverness</b>	441	18.8%	585	379	64.8%	85.36%
<b>Lochaber</b>	61	8.7%	185	81	43.8%	57.04%
<b>Mid Ross</b>	73	10.8%	235	120	51.1%	72.73%
<b>Nairn</b>	34	11.4%	54	34	63.0%	79.07%
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	59	10.8%	133	72	54.1%	75.00%
<b>Sutherland</b>	3	1.3%	125	13	10.4%	16.05%
<b>West Ross</b>	7	2.8%	27	11	40.7%	42.31%

<b>Total</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>9.00%</b>	<b>1962</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>47.1%</b>	<b>64.1%</b>
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- 3.14 In most areas, homeless applicants make up the majority of allocations on the Housing List. In Caithness and Sutherland where demand and supply are less pressurised, many housing applicants can be re-housed before they become homeless. This accounts for their lower percentage.
- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 Chart 7 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.



- 3.17 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 Nairn, over 94% & 98% of all housed applicants had 'need to reside' points.
- 3.18 Table 9 provides the number of applications from people outwith Highland. Around 18% of HHR applicants had an application address outwith Highland as of 31 March 2023. This is the same as the previous year.

**Table 9 - Percentage of HHR applicants with application addresses from outwith Highland**

Housing Area	Percentage of HHR applicants with addresses from outwith Highland
Badenoch and Strathspey	22%
Caithness	17%

East Ross	11%
Inverness	10%
Lochaber	22%
Mid Ross	13%
Nairn	14%
Skye & Lochalsh	29%
Sutherland	19%
West Ross	25%
<b>Average Percentage</b>	<b>18%</b>

- 3.19 Highland supports the Armed Forces including through the Covenant which recognises the particular needs of this group. In 2022/2023 there were 20 applications from serving members and 25 applications from former members of the British Armed Forces.
- 3.20 We gather information on ethnic origin of housing applicants for monitoring purposes. Provision of this information is optional for applicants. Table 10 provides a breakdown of the returns received.

**Table 10 - HHR Demand and Lets by Ethnic Origin**

<b>Ethnic Origin*</b>	<b>Applications**</b>	<b>Housed Applicants</b>
(i) (a) White Scottish	2,090	399
(i) (b) White Other British / Irish	369	75
(i) (d) White Gypsy/Traveller	3	0
(i) (e) White Polish	98	21
(i) (f) White Other	183	25
(ii) Mixed or Multiple Ethnic	20	1
Other Non-white	56	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2824</b>	<b>526</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 as it is voluntary

- 3.21 Information on applicants identifying as disabled is also monitored. Not all applicants provide this information as it is voluntary. Disabled households are more likely to be rehoused than most other categories of applicants as a result of the award of high points in the Accessible Housing and Care & Support points categories.

#### **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 specifically recognised by the other categories of housing need in the policy. In 2022/2023, 140 applicants were housed with SAS points. This included applicants who were housed as a result of being victims of anti-social behaviour or because of major house refurbishments.
- 4.2 HHR partners continue to work closely with partners to meet the housing needs of clients. In 2022/2023, 14 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, 29 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 103 applicants requiring housing suitable for wheelchair users. This remains unchanged from last year.

**Table 12 – 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; Strathspey</b>	5	1		28	6
<b>Caithness</b>	7	3		46	28
<b>East Ross</b>	15	3		72	30
<b>Inverness</b>	30	20		214	75
<b>Lochaber</b>	16	3		84	19
<b>Mid Ross</b>	12	4		83	28
<b>Nairn</b>	5	0		29	5
<b>Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	5	6		40	17
<b>Sutherland</b>	2	4		30	30
<b>West Ross</b>	6	0		17	3
<b>Highland</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>44</b>		<b>643</b>	<b>241</b>

- 4.4 Across Highland, 44 households who required wheelchair housing had their needs met. This is a decrease from 56 in 2021/2022. Across Highland, the proportion of lets to wheelchair housing 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.

### **Sheltered housing**

- 4.6 There were 61 lets into the Council’s sheltered housing during the year – 29.5% were HHR transferring tenants; 36% homeless lets and 34.5% were from the housing list. Sheltered housing continues to help 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 61 lets, 12 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 because of the limited supply of housing.
- 5.3 The new HHR Allocation Policy was approved by the Housing and Property Committee on 27 April 2023 and is currently being implemented. The policy changes are focus on addressing the challenges in Highland and determining how best to increase the supply of housing for those with unmet housing need across Highland.

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