

Agenda Item	9
Report No	HP/06/24

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Housing & Property Committee

**Date:** 31 January 2024

**Report Title:** Housing Performance Report: 1 April 2023 – 31 December 2023

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

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides information on how the Housing Service has performed in 2023/24 to 31 December 2023 based on key performance indicators and national benchmarking information.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

**NOTE** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2023 – 31 December 2023.

## 3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** - There are no resource implications arising from this report.

3.2 **Legal** - There are no legal implications arising from this report.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - There are no equality implications arising from this report.

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

3.5 **Risk** - Risk is managed through regular review and reporting to allow corrective action to be taken if necessary.

3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people).**

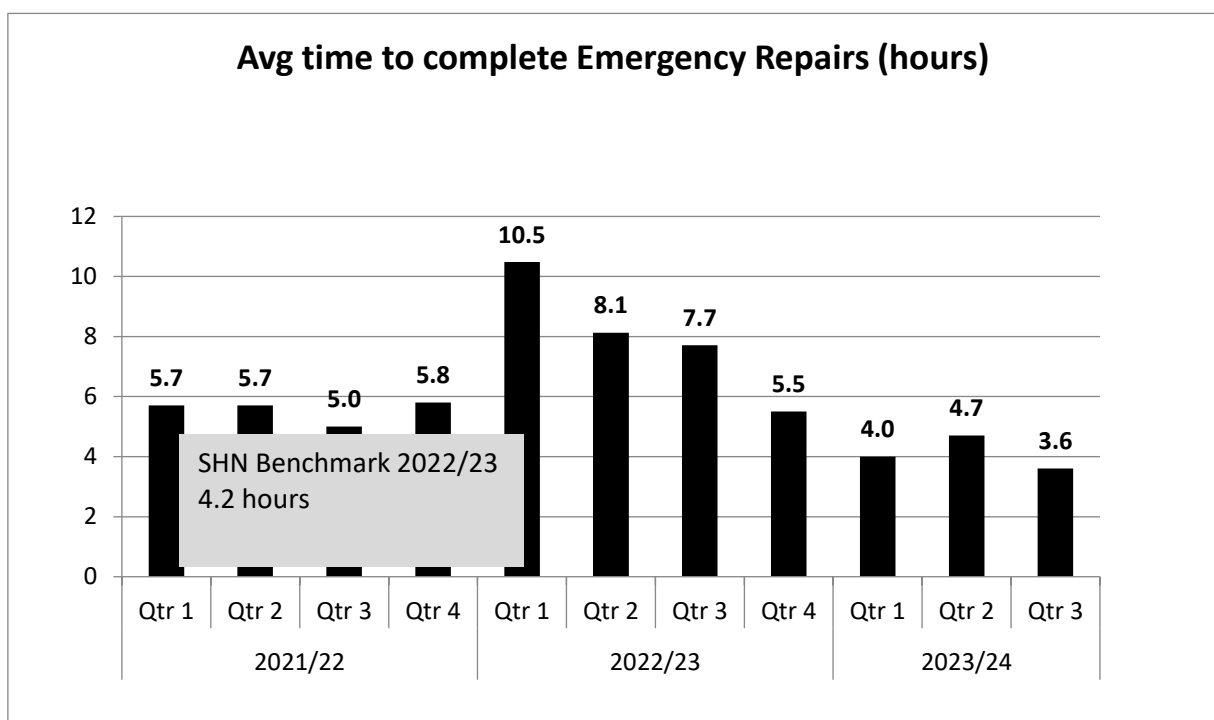
3.7 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has set out the performance indicators that it will use in its scrutiny of landlords.
- 4.2 This report provides performance information based on the reporting framework recommended by the SHR. Further performance information by Council Ward can be found on the Highland Council Intranet ward reporting pages.  
[http://www.highland.gov.uk/staffsite/info/13/members\\_intranet/37/ward\\_reporting/2](http://www.highland.gov.uk/staffsite/info/13/members_intranet/37/ward_reporting/2)
- 4.3 In accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter guidance, the Repairs, Tenancy Management and Rent Arrears figures are cumulative, while the Homeless Presentations figures are given for each separate quarter.
- 4.4 Scottish Housing Network (SHN) benchmark information, derived from the performance of all Scottish Landlords, has also been provided.

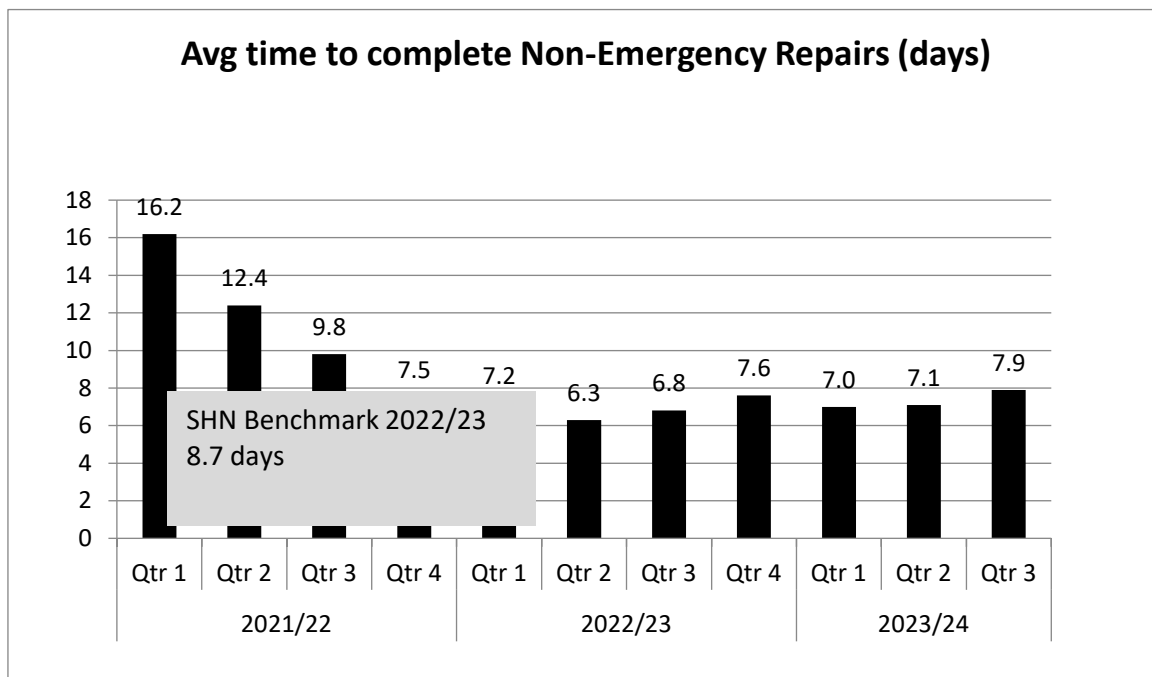
## 5. Housing Repairs

- 5.1 The key indicators for measuring repairs performance are the average time taken to complete Emergency repairs and Non-emergency repairs.
- 5.2 Table 1 details performance on the average time taken to complete emergency repairs and Table 2 details the average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs. Both graphs contain national benchmark figures for these indicators based on published 2022/23 figures.
- 5.3 **Table 1: Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)**  
**Target 12 hours**  
**2022/23 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 4.2 hours**



5.4 The time taken to complete emergency repairs in the last quarter has decreased to below the national benchmark average and reflects ongoing efforts to prioritise emergency repairs. Highland geography needs to be considered when comparing the Highland figure for the national benchmark on completing emergency repairs.

5.5 **Table 2: Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)**  
**Target 8.9 days**  
**2022/23 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 8.7 days**



5.6 Average time to complete non-emergency repairs has increased in the last quarter but remains well below the national benchmark average.

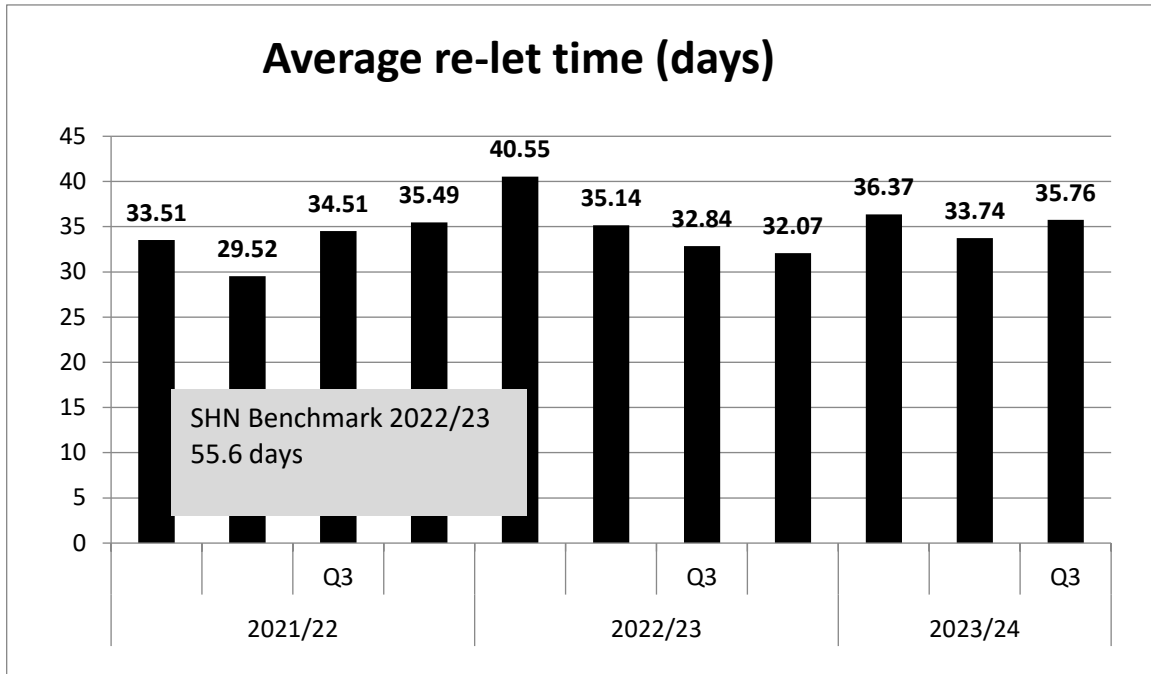
5.7 The Housing Revenue Monitoring Report submitted to August 2023 Committee, referred to the overspend on the repairs budget in 2022/2023. It also identified existing and future management actions to minimise repairs spend to ensure this is within budget in 2023/2024. The Monitoring Report to this Committee provides an update on the repairs budget expenditure to the end of Quarter 3.

5.8 The budget controls are likely to have an impact on performance against non-emergency repairs during 2023/24, as inevitably some of these works will be delayed ensuring best value for money is achieved. Any impact will be reported as part of future quarterly reporting to Committee.

## 6. Tenancy Management

6.1 Table 3 below provides information on the average re-let time showing the trend back 3 years and highlighting the same quarter in previous years for comparison.

6.2 **Table 3: Average re-let time (days) Target 35 days  
2022/23 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 55.6 days**



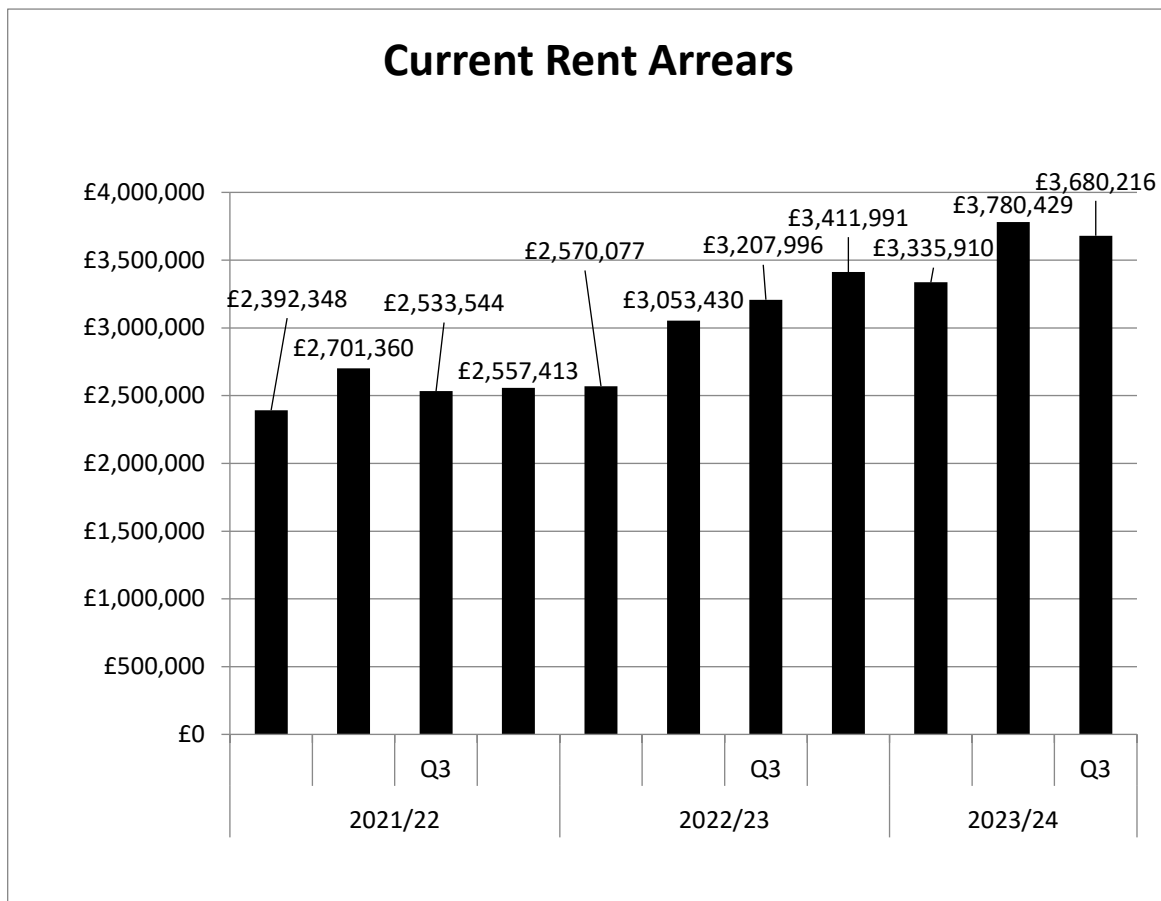
6.3 Performance on reletting times has increased for Quarter 3 but continues to compare very favourably with the national benchmarking figures.

6.4 As indicated at section 5 above, our relet performance will be impacted by the financial controls in place for 2023/2024. Local teams will ensure that reletting takes place as quickly as possible, but that this is within the context of achieving best value.

## 7. Rent Arrears

7.1 The key performance indicator for rent arrears is the value of current arrears. Table 4 below provides information on current rent arrears and shows the comparative figure for the same quarter in the previous year.

Table 4 – Current Rent Arrears



7.3 Rent arrears for Quarter 3 have decreased from Quarter 2 but they remain high compared to the same quarter in previous years. This is related to the Cost of Living Crisis which has increased the number of tenants in arrears

7.4 The Cost of Living (Scotland) Act was passed by the Scottish Government on 6 October 2022. This has temporarily suspended evictions in most circumstances, although social landlords are still able to evict where tenants have been found responsible for ongoing anti-social behaviour and where tenants are in arrears of over £2,250. The legislation ends on 31 March 2024.

7.5 The below table details the breakdown of tenants in rent arrears. All high-level arrears cases remain under weekly review and are subject to legal advice.

Arrears status (all tenants)	% of tenants	% of arrears
Clear rent account	54%	0%
Arrears <£99	12%	2%
Arrears £100 - £499	19%	17%
Arrears £500-£999	7%	17%
Arrears £1000-£2249	5%	27%
Arrears over £2250	3%	36%

7.6 At November 2023 Committee, Members requested a breakdown of the length of time tenants had been in arrears. The table below provides information on this.

<b>Length of time in arrears</b>	<b>% of existing arrears cases</b>
Less than 3 months	21.38
3 months to 1 year	33.49
1-2 years	16.96
2-4 years	12.76
Over 4 years	15.41

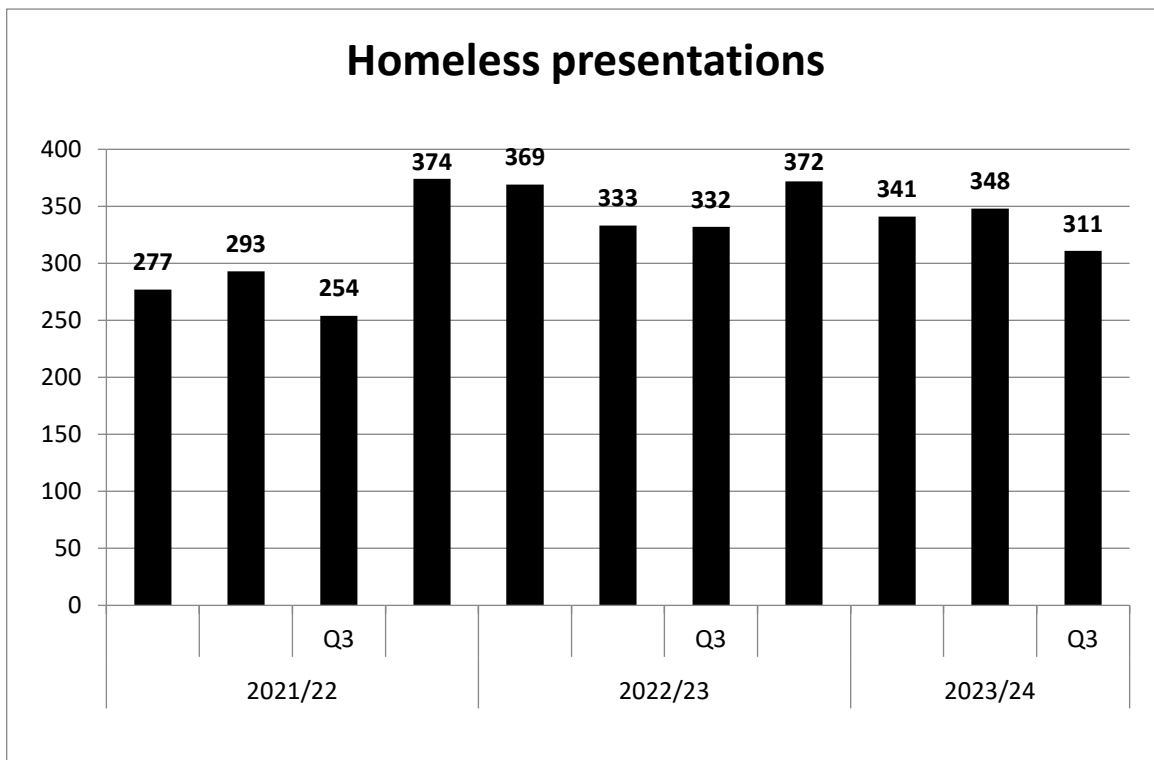
- 7.7 As detailed, 21.38% of tenants who were in arrears on 31 December 2023 had been in arrears for less than 3 months. This figure included many tenants who are currently awaiting receipt of benefits following claims. 15.41% of tenants in arrears at 31 December 2023 had been in arrears for 4 years and over. This figure included many tenants whose arrears have been static or slowly decreasing.
- 7.8 Most of our tenants remain willing to responsibly manage their rent accounts. Officers continue to be supportive and sympathetic to all tenants facing financial hardship at this time and officers continue to signpost tenants to partner services who can provide specialist advice relating to income maximisation and benefits uptake.
- 7.9 The Review of our Rent Arrears Management Policy was reported to November 2022 Committee and Members noted the advice and assistance that is in place to help tenants manage their rent accounts.
- 7.10 This support includes assistance to tenants in receipt of Universal Credit. **Appendix 1** details some changes to the Universal Credit process which will require officers to provide additional advice and assistance for Highland tenants. It also provides details of information on tenants who are in receipt of benefits to assist them to pay their rent.

## **8. Homelessness**

- 8.1 Performance information on homelessness is noted in tables 5 and 6.

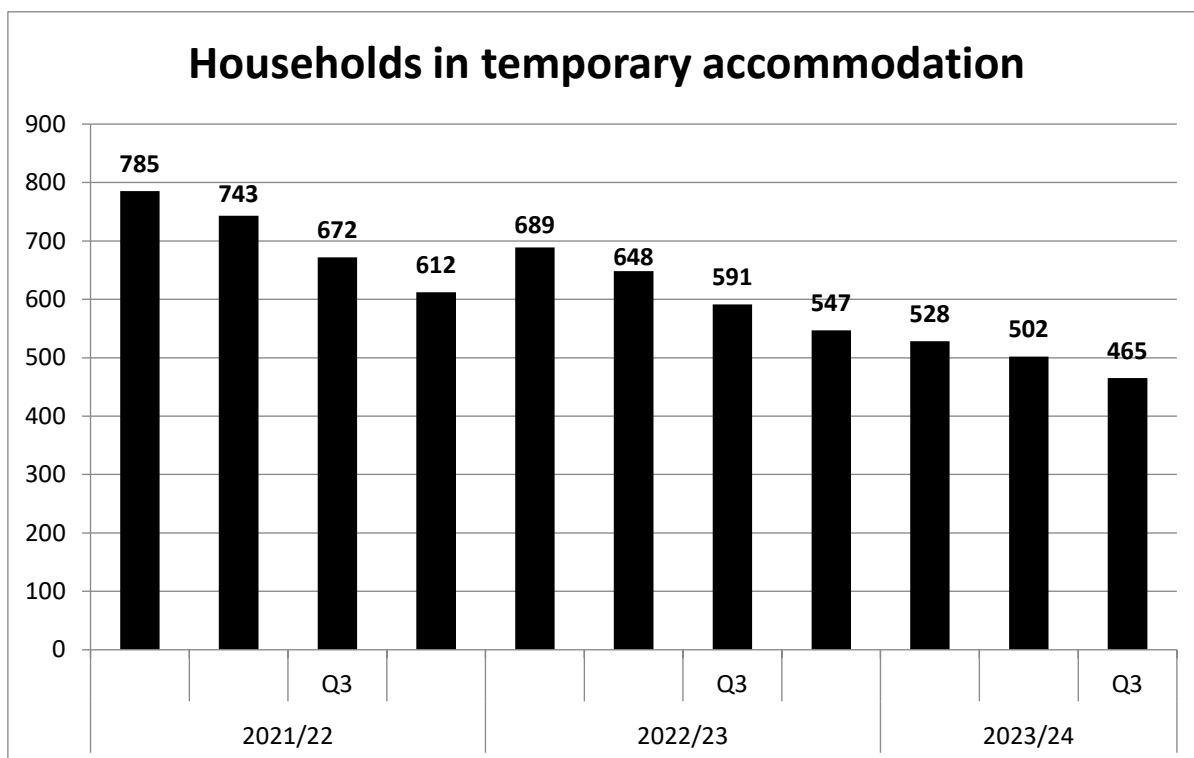
8.2

**Table 5 - Homeless Presentations per Quarter**



8.3

**Table 6 – Households in Temporary Accommodation**



8.4

Table 5 (above) shows that numbers of homeless presentations have decreased since the previous quarter but that there is ongoing homelessness demand across Highland. This reflects national trends with local authorities experiencing long-term pressure in homeless presentations.

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- 8.5 The pressure on homelessness services partly reflects the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis with households struggling with mortgage and private rental payments. While the extension to the Cost of Living Act has protected private tenants from eviction, many households have reported continuing difficulties with accessing the private rented sector both in terms of affordability and supply.
- 8.6 Highland remains committed to homeless prevention and our approach will be reviewed as part of the Scottish Government's new prevention duties which they intend to implement in 2024/25. The intention is to convene a Member workshop on these duties once there is confirmation of their implementation and potential impact on Highland. This workshop will also focus on existing and future support offered to households, including partnership work to support former members of the armed forces and older households.
- 8.7 The number of homeless households recorded as living in temporary accommodation has however continued to reduce as a result of an increase in clients receiving a permanent tenancy.
- 8.8 Detail on lets to homeless applicants is included in the annual report to this Committee on the performance of the Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy. However, at November 2023 Committee there was a request by Members to provide additional detail to this Committee on the age ranges of homeless applicants and their reasons for presenting as homeless. This is detailed at **Appendix 2**. It should be noted that the format of the information is based on Scottish Government reporting criteria.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property

Date: 12 January 2024

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

Background Papers: Scottish Housing Regulator: The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Changes to Universal Credit and Benefit uptake of Highland Council tenants

Appendix 2 - Main reason given by household for homeless presentation by age range (1 April 2023-31 December 2023).



## Changes to Universal Credit and Benefit Uptake of Highland Council tenants

### Migration to Universal Credit

In April 2022 DWP published [Completing the move to Universal Credit](#) which sets out the strategy for moving remaining legacy benefit and tax credits claimants to Universal Credit. This involves moving those claiming legacy benefits and tax credits to Universal Credit by March 2024. It has been confirmed that this process will begin in Highland in February 2024.

Tenants still on legacy benefits will be sent a Migration Notice and there then is a process and timescale for them to follow.

There is a dedicated “Move to UC” Helpline which tenants can phone if they have any queries/need assistance – the number will be clearly stated on the Migration Notice.

Highland Council will not be informed which tenants will receive a Migration Notice. The Council’s intention will be to highlight the assistance available to all tenants, both via the helpline and our own Welfare Support Team or local Citizens Advice Bureau using staff contact, information on standard letters, social media and our Internet pages.

### Type of benefit claimed

As at the end of Quarter 3 2023/24 the majority of tenants claiming benefit to help pay their rent were claiming Universal Credit Housing Element (37%) with 28% claiming Housing Benefit (65% claiming benefit overall):

<b>Benefit claimed</b>	<b>Number of tenants</b>	<b>%</b>
Universal Credit Housing Element	5,574	37%
Housing Benefit	4,157	28%
Not claiming benefit to help with rent	5,284	35%

## Appendix 2

### Main reason given by household for homeless presentation by age range (1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023)

Main Reason for Homelessness	16-17	18-25	26-59	Over 60
Rent or Mortgage Arrears		4	20	7
Other action by landlord	1	1	55	14
Termination of accommodation (i.e. ended their tenancy)		3	16	
Loss of service or tied accommodation		9	28	1
Discharged from prison/hospital/care or other setting		4	24	2
Emergency such as fire/flooding/storm or Environmental Health Order			7	2
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home			5	2
Other reason for loss of accommodation	1	14	55	10
Violent dispute or abuse from within the home	4	32	87	9
Non-Violent Dispute at home (i.e. relationship breakdown)	11	75	189	14
Fleeing violence from outwith the home (i.e. violence from a neighbour)		2	16	1
Harassment or other non-violence actions		1	14	1
Overcrowding		12	12	1
Asked to leave the accommodation	10	61	97	15
Other reason	1	8	45	6
<b>Total:</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>85</b>