

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	10
Report No	HP/19/24

Committee: Housing & Property Committee

Date: 14 August 2024

Report Title: Highland Housing Register Allocations Annual Monitoring Report 2023/24

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the annual performance review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy for 2023/2024. 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 and that the Highland Housing Register Partnership continues to provide affordable and secure social housing in Highland communities.

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

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no specific 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.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is a monitoring update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Housing Demand

5.1 There were a total of 8,338 'Housing' and 'Transfer' List applications on the Housing Register at the end of 2023/2024 compared to 8,951 in 2022/2023. Of all applications held at the end of last year, 70.24% 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 9% of households are defined as homeless under national homelessness legislation.

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 (which 39.3% of all applicants have selected as their First Choice), followed by Lochaber (10.6%), and Skye, Lochalsh & Wester Ross (9.6%).

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 Badenoch & Strathspey, followed by Inverness and then Nairn.

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 annual update of the Local Housing Strategy was reported to this Committee on 1 May 2024.

5.8 The Strategic Housing Investment Programme 2023-2028 was approved at this Committee on 31 January 2024. It committed to the delivery of an average of 500 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.

5.9 The Programme has been subsequently submitted and verified by the Scottish Government which provided positive feedback on the content and delivery of affordable housing in Highland. A revised Programme will be submitted to November's Committee and will update Members on the impact of the reduced Scottish Government grant funding which was announced in December 2023.

5.10 Highland agreed the establishment of a Highland Housing Challenge at Council on 27 June 2024. The Highland Housing Challenge noted the revised housing need and demand assessment estimates based on the proposed economic developments in Highland and the continued demand for both private and social housing in Highland in the coming years.

5.11 This report confirms the demand for social housing in Highland but also recognises that many housing applicants are willing to move into private sector housing if the supply increases in that sector.

6. Meeting Demand

6.1 Across Highland, 1,738 households were housed in 2023/2024. This represents a decrease on last year's number which stood at 1,962.

6.2 The majority of lets continue to be into Council housing (68% of lets), followed by Albyn HS (14%); Cairn HA (7%); Lochalsh & Skye HA (6%); Lochaber HA (4%) and Caledonia (1%). These percentage figures remain unchanged from the previous year.

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 869 lets – 50% of all lets - went to households with points which reflected their homeless status. This is a 3% increase from 2022/2023 and reflects the HHR's commitment to reduce the total amount of time a household is homeless and to move households into secure affordable tenancies as quickly as possible.

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, the Highland Council across five housing areas allocated more than 50% of stock to homeless households (Inverness (73%), Nairn (53%), Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross (58%), Badenoch and Strathspey (76%) and Mid-Ross (63%).

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 fifth of those who were housed had been living in housing which was unsuitable due to their health needs. Nearly a fifth 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 17 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, 17 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.

- 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.
- 6.10 Highland's social housing providers remain committed to working with the Scottish and UK Government in delivering services to households who form part of humanitarian and Resettlement Programmes.
- 6.11 Since the start of the war in Ukraine, 26 HHR secure tenancies have been allocated to Ukrainian Displaced Persons. A further 42 secure tenancies have been allocated as part of resettlement work with social landlords in other parts of Scotland.
- 6.12 The Council's Resettlement Team has also provided advice and assistance to Ukrainian Displaced Persons to move into mid-market rent, private rented housing and alternative hosting arrangements.

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 Housing and Property Committee on 27 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: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 10 July 2024

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

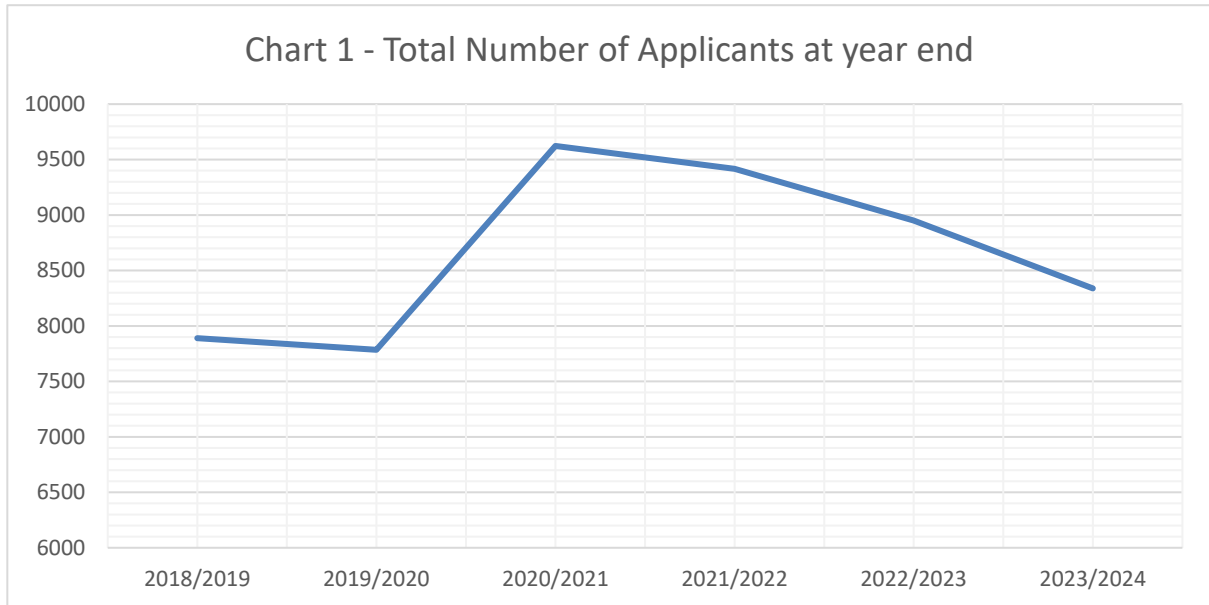
Appendices: Appendix 1 – HHR Annual Allocation Report 2023/24

1 Introduction

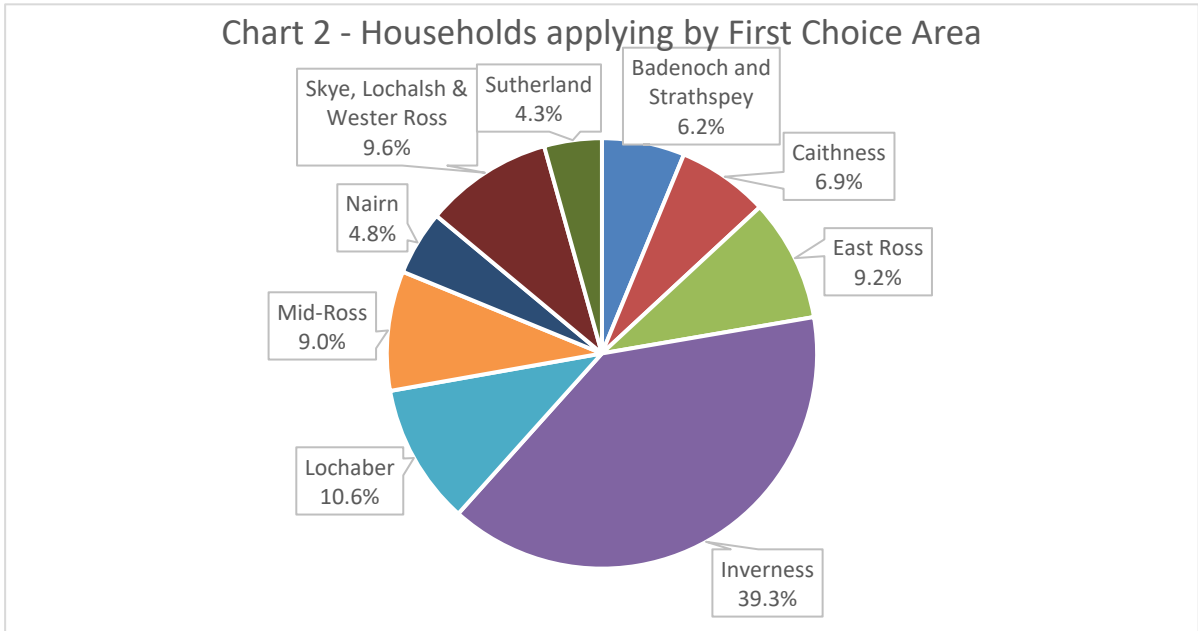
- 1.1 This report contains monitoring information and commentary on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocation Policy in 2023–2024. The analysis helps to identify improvements in meeting housing needs and aspirations in Highland.
- 1.2 The Housing Register is required to comply with 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, dependent 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 2024, there are 21,687 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 maximize their choices. The tool is at: 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.

2. Applications

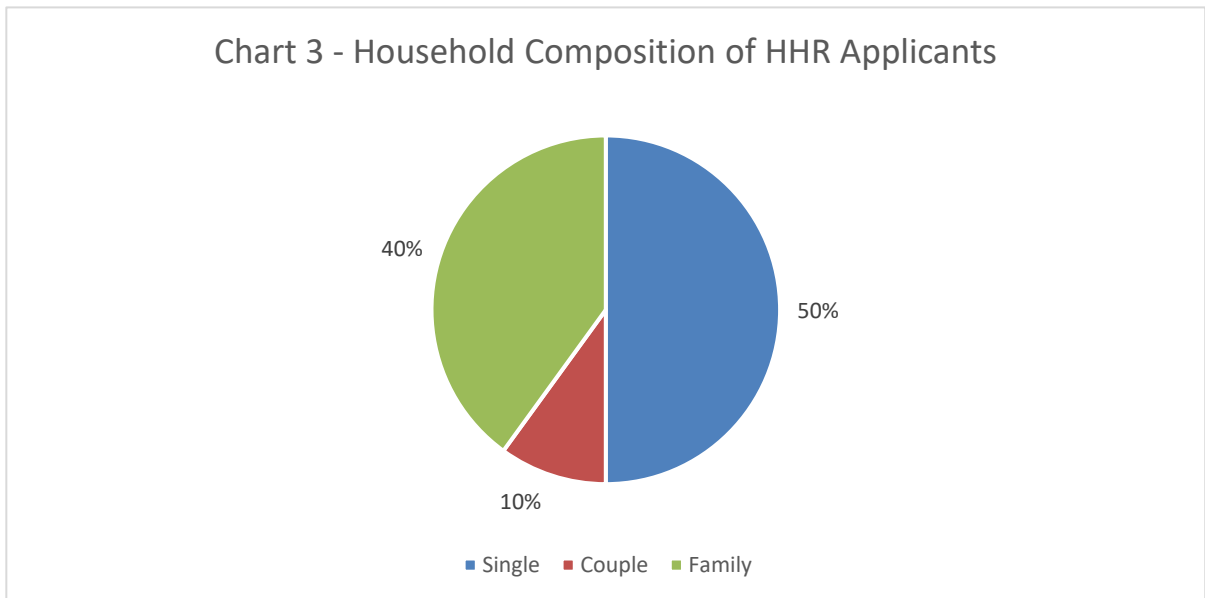
- 2.1 The number of households applying for housing was 8,338 on 31 March 2024. This is a 6.8% decrease from 8,951 on 31 March 2023. In 2019/20 - before the Covid-19 pandemic - the total number stood at 7,785. The chart below highlights the total number of applicants held over the last 5 years.



- 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 Over 1 in 4 applicants (29.76%, 2,481) are existing tenants of Highland Housing Register landlords applying for a transfer to another home. This is an increase of 1.26% from last year. Most households are applying to the 'Housing List' and are looking to move in as 'new' tenants (70.24%, 5,857). 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.
- 2.5 In terms of First Choice Demand, most applicants (39.34%, 3,280 households) are looking to be housed in Inverness. This is an increase of 3% from last year. Chart 2 illustrates this detail across Highland.



2.6 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 a one-bedroom property.

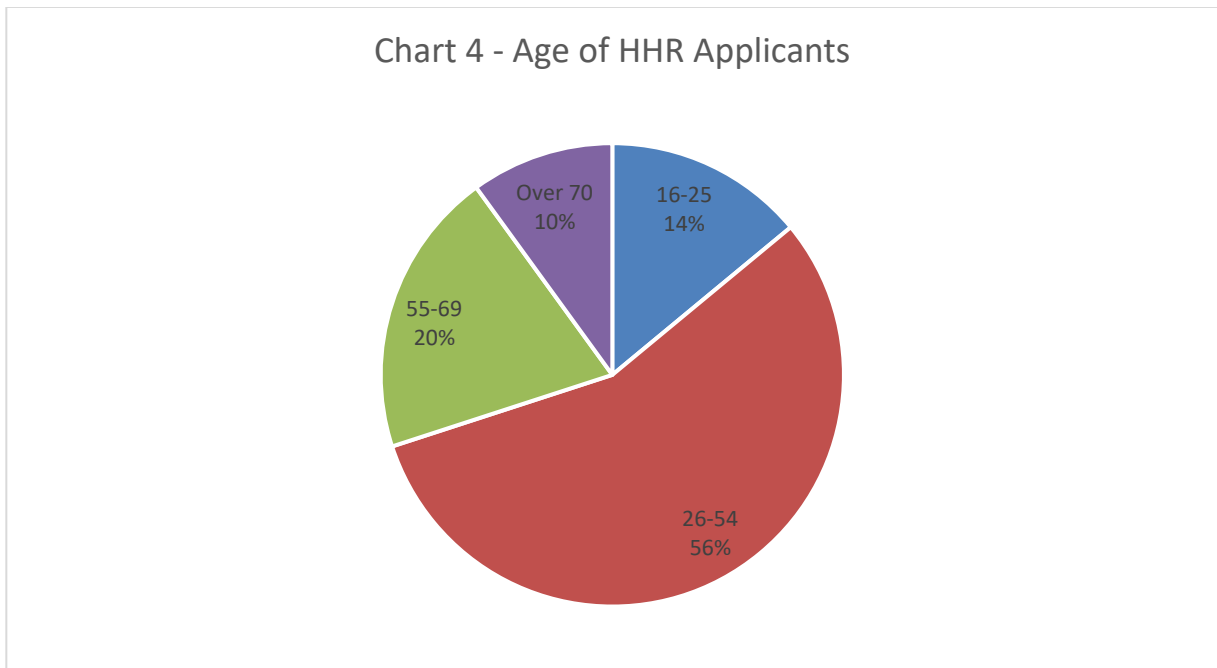


2.7 Table 1 below provides the number of bedrooms applicants require. This highlights the significant contrast between demand and supply for one-bedroom properties and 5+ bedroom properties.

Table 1 - Number of Bedrooms Applicants Require
Applications counted in their '1st preference' area

Area	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5+	%	Apps/ stock
Badenoch& Strathspey Demand	296	57%	113	22%	82	16%	21	4%	7	1%	519
Available Stock	244	26%	483	51%	185	20%	21	2%	6	>1%	939
Caithness Demand	365	64%	97	17%	70	12%	38	7%	4	>1%	574
Available Stock	737	27%	1147	28%	768	28%	116	4%	4	>1%	2772
Inverness Demand	1925	59%	762	23%	399	12%	147	5%	47	2%	3280
Available Stock	1961	29%	2967	44%	1620	24%	163	2%	12	>1%	6723
Lochaber Demand	485	55%	235	27%	98	11%	51	6%	13	2%	882
Available Stock	250	12%	1151	53%	682	32%	75	4%	1	>1%	2159
Nairn Demand	242	60%	78	19%	58	14%	17	4%	9	2%	404
Available Stock	328	33%	397	40%	233	23%	31	3%	5	>1%	994
East Ross Demand	451	5%	157	2%	101	1%	42	>1%	15	>1%	766
Available Stock	568	19%	1011	34%	1245	42%	142	5%	30	>1%	2996
Mid Ross Demand	420	5%	190	2%	92	1%	29	>1%	18	>1%	749
Available Stock	426	22%	904	47%	525	27%	63	3%	11	>1%	2070
Skye, Lochalsh & Wester Ross Demand	566	7%	143	2%	62	1%	26	>1%	6	>1%	803
Available Stock	454	24%	824	44%	530	28%	57	3%	1	>1%	1612
Sutherland Demand	231	64%	87	24%	25	7%	15	4%	3	1%	361
Available Stock	351	31%	428	38%	348	31%	7	1%	3	>1%	1136
Highland	4981	60%	1862	22%	987	12%	386	5%	122	2%	8338
Available Stock	5319	25%	9312	43%	6136	29%	675	3%	73	>1%	21515

2.8 Chart 4 illustrates the different age groups of HHR applicants. The bulk of applicants are aged between 25 and 60 (56%) with under a third of applicants (30%) aged over 55 years. Figures remain largely unchanged from previous years.



2.9 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 (21% 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	%
A Tenant of a HHR Landlord	10	118	55	183	16%
Homeless in Non-Council Accommodation	1	15	33	49	4%
Living in Caravan	1	1	5	7	1%
Living in Hostel/Hotel/B&B	2	1	3	6	1%
Living or Lodging with Friends	7	6	38	51	5%
Living with Parents or Relatives	64	68	318	450	40%
Long Term Stay in Hospital			3	3	0%
Other Council Tenant	2	14	6	22	2%
Other Housing Association Tenant		11	3	14	1%
Other Supported Accommodation			7	7	1%
Owner Occupier/Shared Owner	1	4	3	8	1%
Residential Care/Throughcare	1	1	22	24	2%
Temporary Homeless Accommodation	10	24	158	192	17%
Tenant of a Property Leased by Council		2		2	0%
Tenant Of Private/Residential Landlord	28	36	36	100	9%
Tied Tenant	2	1	11	14	1%
Total Each Household Type 16- 25yrs	129	302	701	1132	
Percentage of Household Type	11%	27%	62%		

Mutual Exchange

- 2.10 Mutual Exchanges can help tenants to meet their needs and aspirations to move (especially if their points are low). 118 tenants used this method to move into a HHR tenancy (either from within Highland or out with). This is a decrease of 29 from last year.
- 2.11 Further efforts are being made to assist Council tenants to securing Mutual Exchanges. This will help tenants who would otherwise find it difficult to secure a move through the normal allocations process.

Sheltered Housing

- 2.12 The demand showed there are 603 applicants who have requested sheltered housing on their application form and 195 of these are aged over 55. There is ongoing partnership work with various agencies to raise awareness of housing options for older people and to encourage individuals to consider their long-term housing situation and what their individual housing needs may be in the future.

HHR Suspension

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 As of 31 March 2024, 74 applicants were suspended. This compares to 71 as of 31 March 2023.

Pressures Across Highland

- 2.15 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 increased to 4.9 applicants for every allocation (up from 4.6). The biggest increase was in Inverness from 5.6 to 7.1, followed by Badenoch and Strathspey from 8 to 9.8.

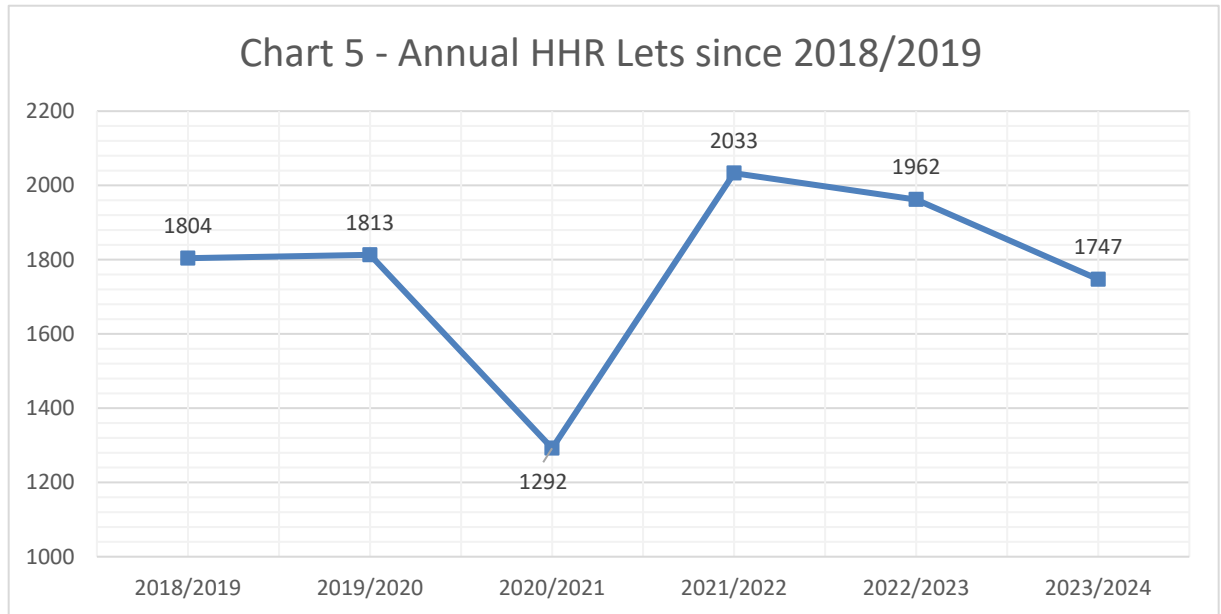
Table 4 - Relative Pressure – First Choice HHR Applicants per HHR Let

Area	Lets During Year	First Choice applicants	Pressure – applicants per let
Badenoch and Strathspey	53	519	9.8
Caithness	303	574	1.9
East Ross	216	766	3.5
Inverness	464	3280	7.1
Lochaber	201	882	4.4
Mid Ross	145	749	5.2
Nairn	58	404	7.0
Skye, Lochalsh & Wester Ross	166	803	4.8
Sutherland	109	361	3.3
Highland	1715	8338	4.9

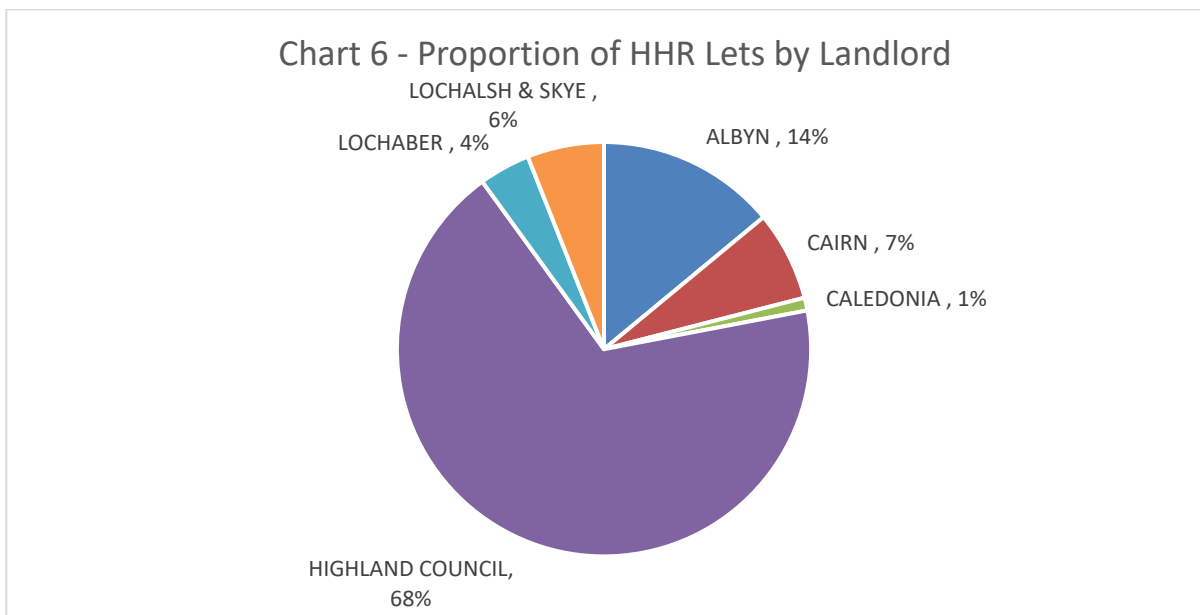
3 Allocations

- 3.1 Letting activity has recovered from its significant drop during the pandemic with a total of 1,747 lets taking place in 2023/2024. This is a decrease from last year's total of 1,962.
- 3.2 Chart 5 highlights a significant drop in lets compared to last 2023/2024, with the figure being below pre-Covid numbers. The availability of lets reflects a number of interconnected issues, which include:
- High tenancy sustainment rates (tenants successfully managing tenancies, including fewer abandonments and tenancy terminations);
 - Fewer new build completions among HHR partners; and
 - Longer void repair times among HHR partners as a result of trades capacity across the construction sector.

Temporary lets are not reflected in Chart 5. The 2020/2021 figure reflects Covid-19 restrictions on allocations and new build completions.



3.3 Chart 6 shows the proportion of allocations by HHR Partners. The figures remain broadly similar to 2022/2023.



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 2023/2024, 9 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 2023/2024, 21% (371) 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. This is mainly due to the increase in lets to homeless households.

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

Area	Lets During Year		
	Transfer Lets	Housing List Lets	Total Lets
Badenoch & Strathspey	6	32	38
Caithness	61	182	243
Inverness	55	263	318
Lochaber	27	108	135
Nairn	8	22	30
Alness	34	108	142
Dingwall	15	89	104
Portree	14	75	89
Sutherland	18	63	81
Albyn Housing Society Ltd	51	194	245
Cairn Housing Association	31	97	128
Caledonia Housing Association	2	16	18
Lochaber Housing Association	15	48	63
Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association	34	70	104
Highland	371	1367	1738

- 3.6 In line with national guidance, housing applicants can refuse offers of housing. In 2023/2024, 547 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 447 refusals, 279 (62%) were deemed as an unreasonable refusal and 168 (38%) 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. Those who refuse one reasonable offer under Caithness Choice Based Letting will have their application 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 8 shows the extent to which allocations met urgent needs arising from homelessness.

- 3.11 As of the 31 March 2023, the HHR contained 736 households assessed as homeless. This is a decrease from 804 in 2022/2023. This decrease will in part be due to an effort to increase allocations to homeless applicants across the board. In terms of percentage of all applicants, homeless applicants represent 9% of all HHR applicants.
- 3.12 The table below shows the percentage split between homeless and other applicants housed on the through the HHR.

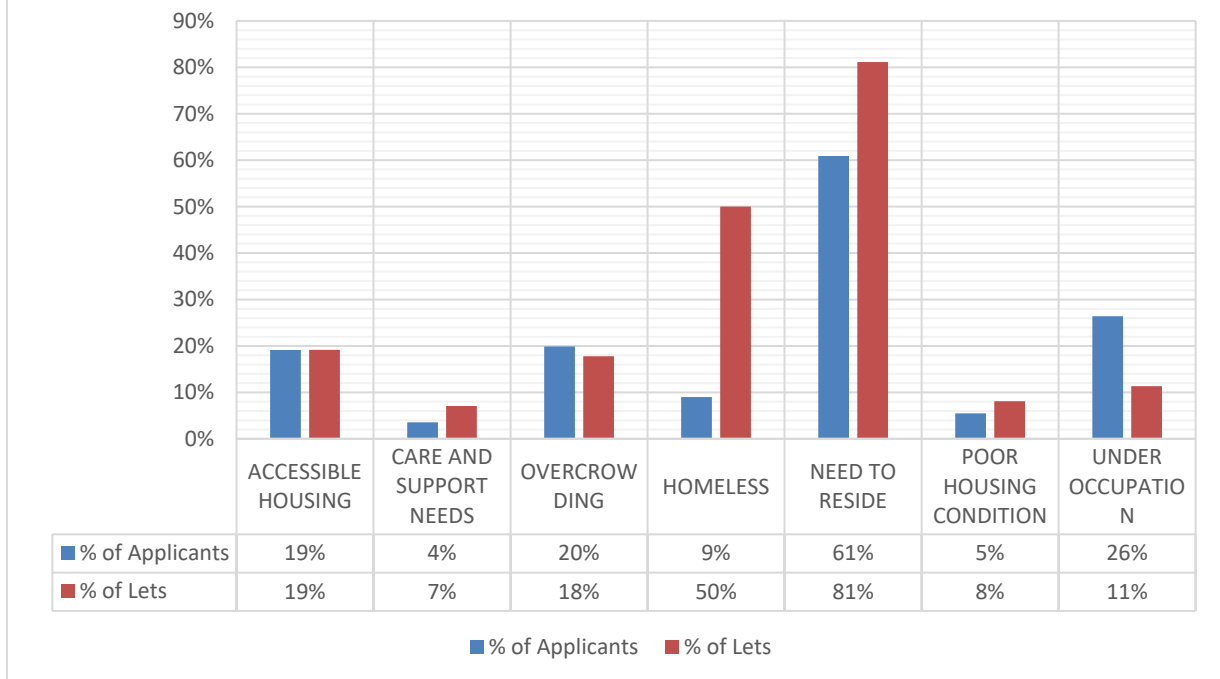
Table 8 – HHR Homeless Lets as a Percentage of All (and Housing List applicant) Lets*

Area	Number of Apps with Homeless Points	% of Housing List Apps	Lets to Homeless Households	
			No. of Lets to Apps with Homeless Points	% of total lets
Badenoch and Strathspey	43	10%	29	76%
Caithness	8	2%	46	19%
East Ross	52	11%	73	51%
Inverness	413	18%	233	73%
Lochaber	52	8%	77	57%
Mid Ross	65	13%	66	63%
Nairn	33	11%	16	53%
Skye Lochalsh & Wester Ross	64	10%	52	58%
Sutherland	9	3%	15	19%
Total	739	9%	607	50%

**Highland Council Re-Letting Figures only*

- 3.13 The five Housing Association HHR Partners housed a total of 262 homeless applicants. This represented 47% of their total lets. Albyn housed 122, Cairn, 48%, Caledonia 67%, Lochaber 32% and Lochalsh & Skye 45% respectively.
- 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 comparatively less pressurised, many housing applicants can be re-housed before they become homeless.
- 3.15 Chart 7 below 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 7 - Proportion of Allocations & Lets by Points Categories 2023/2024



- 3.16 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, 100% & 97% of all housed applicants had 'need to reside' points.
- 3.17 Under-occupation of housing remains an issue in Highland, with 26% of applicants awarded points for having unused room/s in their existing home. The HHR Partnership is currently reviewing its Rightsizing Policy, whereby relevant applicants are incentivised to transfer to a smaller home through assistance with removal costs and the like. This can free up houses for larger households who have applied, often as a result of overcrowding in their existing home.
- 3.18 Highland supports the Armed Forces including through the Armed Forces Covenant which recognises the particular needs of this group. The annual review of the Covenant was reported to Council on 27 June 2024.
- 3.19 The Highland Housing Register (HHR) collects data on those who are serving and former members of the Armed Forces. The HHR also provides additional priority to those who are leaving or just left the Armed Forces, and they are awarded Need to Reside points for anywhere in Highland. In all other circumstances, these points are reserved for those who have a connection to the local area e.g. work or already live there.
- 3.20 Training has been given to staff on Housing Options available to members of the Armed Forces and Housing issues common to members of the Armed Forces. The

local Housing Team has also established a relationship with the resident battalion at Fort George to assist if a member of the armed forces has housing options concerns or may become at risk of homelessness.

- 3.21 The Council has amended its housing application to ensure they can better identify veterans and those who have been given notice to leave armed forces accommodation.
- 3.22 In 2023/2024 there were 24 applications from serving members and 123 applications from former members of the British Armed Forces.
- 3.23 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

Ethnic Origin*	Applications**/**	Housed Applicants
(i) (a) White Scottish	238	291
(i) (b) White Other British / Irish	33	55
(i) (d) White Gypsy/Traveler	2	0
(i) (e) White Polish	13	11
(i) (f) White Other	6	22
(ii) Mixed or Multiple Ethnic	12	3
Other Non-white	30	25
TOTAL	334	407

* *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*

*** *Equality Data from before 2023/2024 was archived and new data is now being collected due to changes in how the HHR collects equality data*

- 3.24 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 because 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 2023/2024, 76 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 2023/2024, 17 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, 17 young people were housed in their first tenancy through the Care Leavers Protocol.

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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Date: 10 July 2024

