



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S  
**LOCAL HOUSING  
STRATEGY**  
**2017/18 - 2022/23**  
SIX-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT



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## 1. Introduction

The LHS is the document that provides the strategic direction to tackle housing need and demand and to inform the future investment in housing and related services across the Scottish Borders area. The Strategy brings together the Local Authority's responses to the whole housing system including: requirements for market and affordable housing, prevention and alleviation of homelessness, meeting housing support needs, energy efficiency and house condition.

This LHS covered the period from April 2017 until March 2023, with elected members approving deferment of the next Local Housing Strategy by one year and the extension of the current plan by one year. The strategy was developed with partners and stakeholders and was formally approved in September of 2017. It addresses a wide range of challenges and issues as well as setting out outcomes, priorities and actions to be delivered

The vision for the LHS is:

**Every person in the Scottish Borders  
lives in a home that meets their  
needs**



The following four priorities were defined over the course of the LHS and continue over the additional year:

1. LHS Priority One: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities
2. LHS Priority Two: More People Live in Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes
3. LHS Priority Three: Fewer People are Affected by Homelessness
4. LHS Priority Four: More People are Supported to Live Independently in Their Own Homes

Some of the key objectives of the Local Housing Strategy included:

- To help ensure adequate housing supply across all tenures to address the varying and diverse housing need in the Borders
- To promote and increase energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty through the development and implementation of a new Home Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Strategy
- To increase the supply of new affordable housing that meets the needs of our community through the ongoing development and delivery of the next and future Strategic Housing Investment Plans
- To tackle disrepair in the private sector and address landlord compliance
- To address the Housing, Support and Care needs of the growing population of older people through the implementation of an Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Support and Care Needs
- To improve the health and wellbeing for people experiencing homelessness, and ensure fewer people are affected by homelessness
- To gain a better understanding of the housing aspirations and needs of young people in the borders

This 6 year summary report provides an update on the progress and achievements during the 5 year period of the LHS, and provides updates for 2022/23.

## 2. Housing Supply

Addressing Priority 1: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities

### Key Achievements:

- The delivery of 1,046 affordable homes; equating to an annual average of 174 homes a year, 131 new homes a year, exceeding the annual 128 target
- The SHIP 2018-2023 set out potential for up to 1,177 new homes which represent an estimated investment value of around £174.5m.
- £93.102m of Scottish Government funding allocated from the Affordable Housing Supply Programme
- The third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the period 2022-27 received robust and Credible status in July 2022
- Over the past 5 years, the Council has been working closely with Waverley Housing to consider suitable options and progress regeneration of Beech Avenue area in Upper Langlee, Galashiels. In March 2021,
- A new Regional Housing Board was established in 2019 as a means of better engaging the housing sector and harnessing its potential contribution towards the wider City Region Deal objectives.
- Lowood in Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site identified in the Borders Railway Corridor and in the South East Scotland City Region Deal. Following a considerable amount of work, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Design Guide (DG) agreed by Council in June 2021.
- Operation of Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) in Selkirk, Jedburgh and Hawick
- Recruitment of an Empty Homes Officer in August 2021 and has an active case load of 110 empty homes.

### COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 adversely impacted on affordable housing delivery, in particular with closure of construction sites and delays to planned site starts resulting in the need to delay construction activity with affected projects completed months later than originally intended. As a side effect there was an under spend in 2020/21 of the grant allocation from Scottish Government in the Scottish Borders area. However, the programme began to recover towards the end of the restrictions and 449 homes were under construction by March 2021.

COVID-19 also impacted the delivery of a range of plans and activities including Energy Efficiency Programmes, delivery of Homelessness services, CARS work, Empty Homes activity as well as impacting on Landlords and Tenants through emergency legislation and subsequently the Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022.

### Affordable Housing Delivery

Over the course of the current parliament the Scottish Government have set a national target for the delivery of 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 within Scotland – of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% in our rural and island communities. The Scottish Government allocated a total of £93.102m in Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding to assist with the delivery of affordable housing within the Scottish Borders.

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) is the sole strategic document for prioritising affordable housing investment within the Scottish Borders and sets out a rolling five year planning horizon. The SHIP 2023/28 was approved by Scottish Borders Council in October 2022 and identifies the potential to deliver

1,320 new affordable homes, under-pinned by an estimated £268m of investment over the period of the plan.

Over the 6 years covered by the Council’s Local Housing Strategy, 1,041 affordable homes have been delivered. This equates to an annual average of 174 homes which comfortably exceeds the annual 128 unit target.

**1,046 affordable homes delivered across the Scottish Borders  
2017/18 – 2022/23**

Table 1 provides a summary of all affordable homes delivered over the past 6 years:

<b>Table 1: Affordable Housing Completions</b>						
	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Eildon Housing Association	61	90	58	12	204	92
Berwickshire Housing Association	20	30	52	29	31	28
Scottish Borders Housing Association	6	10		4		
Waverley Housing			4			
Trust Housing Association				49		
Cairn Housing Association					2	
National Housing Trust (NHT)		9				
Open Market Shared Equity Scheme	34	22	14	9	16	8
RSL/Open Market Purchase	25	31	5	4	60	13
Rural Housing Grant			8		1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>146</b>



**Addressing Housing Need and Demand**

Over the lifetime of this LHS, Scottish Borders Council used Second Homes Council Tax and Affordable Housing Developer contributions to support and enable the delivery of affordable housing across the Borders in a variety of ways:

- Berwickshire Housing Association to carry out a master planning study for Beanburn/Lawfield sites at Ayton
- Waverley Housing to progress the regeneration of Beech Avenue Galashiels

- To support Eildon Housing Association’s “Green House Pilot” home energy efficiency action based research initiative
- Trust Housing Association to provide Extra Care housing at Todlaw Duns
- Eildon Housing Association to provide Extra Care housing at Langhaugh Galashiels
- Eildon Housing Association to provide Extra Care housing at Ex Kelso High School
- Eildon HA in providing a wheelchair standard house at Springwell Brae in Broughton
- Scottish Borders Housing Association to progress their proposals for TARTH Crescent Blyth Bridge
- Eildon Housing Association to deliver their project at Tweed Bridge Court Peebles
- Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development to provide five affordable homes at Ettrickbridge
- A wheelchair accessible housing need study
- Housing needs and aspirations of young people study
- Complete the delivery of the Scottish Borders Integrated Older Peoples Housing, Care and Support Strategic Plan
- Recruitment of an Empty Homes Strategy & Policy Officer

### Examples of Completed Developments 2017/18-2022/23



Roxburgh Street, Kelso 2017/18



Sergeants Park, Newtown St Boswells 2018/19



The Glebe, Chirnside 2019/20



Todlaw, Duns 2020/21



Wilkie Gardens, Galashiels 2021/22



High Buckholm Phase 1, Galashiels 2022/23

### **Elm Court**

Eildon Housing Association's development at Elm Court in Hawick began in July of 2020, with the aim of refurbishing and altering the 30 original flats at the site into 21 modern and sustainable homes. The design brief for the redevelopment focused on key objectives based on feedback from existing and departing tenants:

- To combine smaller, 1 bedroom/1 person flats into larger, more flexible flats with improved space
- To improve thermal efficiency using a "fabric first" approach and replace the ageing electric storage heaters with modern air-source heat pumps
- Reduce noise transfer between flats
- Replace major components including windows, doors, wiring, kitchens and bathrooms

The build was finished in August of 2022 with tenants moving in soon after – with the build costing circa £1.9m with a 400k grant from Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme.



## **Tackling Rural Affordability**

Scottish Borders Housing Association have completed a new development comprising four three bed family homes at Heriotfield in Oxton. Following background research into local housing as well as close consultation with the local community, it was confirmed that there was a specific need for affordable family homes in Oxton, which in recent years had seen families priced out of local housing and a resultant fall in the school roll. All four homes at Heriotfield are now allocated with two of them providing homes to families returning to the area.



These homes feature air source heating: an energy-efficient, low-carbon home energy solution for off-grid homes, allowing tenants to both heat their homes economically and reduce their impact on the environment.

Through partnership working between SBHA, Scottish Borders Council, Oxton and Channelkirk Community Councils, wider benefits have been generated for this small community as part of the build, including improvements to the adjacent Council-owned play park and groundworks for a new community hub.



Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company also led the community purchase of the former farm buildings and site of 2.06 hectares at Ettrickbridge from Buccleuch Estates. In late 2022 the development was successfully completed and the old Kirkhope Farm steading has been transformed into 5 affordable houses and 7 energy efficient workshop units.

## **Bridge Homes**

Bridge homes was a Limited Liability partnership established by Scottish Borders Council and Scottish Futures Trust to provide affordable housing for mid-market rental. Over the course of the development phase in 2017/18 and 2018/19, Bridge Homes owned 54 affordable homes throughout the Scottish Borders.

In December 2021 the Council disposed of all 54 homes owned by the LLP to Eildon Housing Association. The disposal was settled on 25 March 2022. This enabled the tenants to remain living in their current homes and secured all the homes in the affordable rented sector in perpetuity. Subsequent new tenancies will be on the basis of social rented housing.



## Tweedside

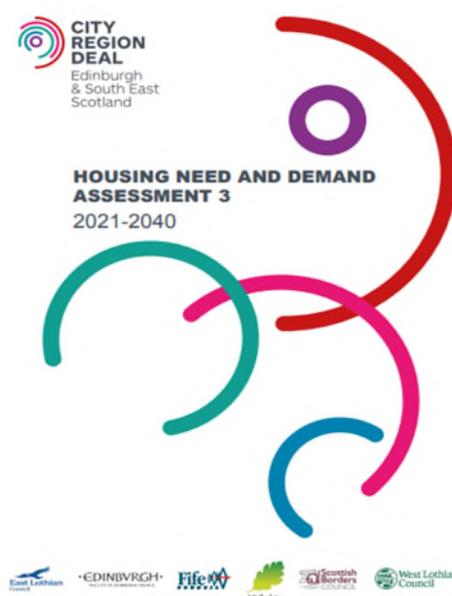
Tweedside was a Limited Liability Partnership that was also established by the Council, Scottish Futures Trust and a local developer to provide affordable housing for mid-market rental. During 2016/17, Eildon Housing Association acquired 21 homes at Chris Paterson Place Galashiels, and followed up in 2018/19 by acquiring all remaining 24 homes at James Hogg Court Innerleithen. This was supported by grant funding from Scottish Government's More Homes Division, and enabled the tenants to remain living in their homes in affordable housing.

## Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)

HNDA3 provides the evidence base for policy decisions in Local Housing Strategies and land allocation decisions in Local Development Plans for the local authorities in South East Scotland (City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, West Lothian Council, Fife Council and Scottish Borders Council) subject to subsequent agreement of housing supply targets.

The purpose of the HNDA is to estimate the future number of additional housing units to meet existing and future housing need and demand by housing market area, based on a range of scenarios rather than precise estimates. This includes analysis of demographic, affordability and wider economic trends which are key drivers of local housing markets, helping partners to understand housing market dynamics and make evidence-based choices on meeting housing need and demand. A section of HNDA3 also provides contextual information on a range of specialist housing requirements, helping inform targets for wheelchair and other accessible forms of housing.

The third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the period 2022-27 was prepared throughout 2020 and 2021 on behalf of the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders Councils. Officers from each local authority formed the HNDA3 Core Project Team who examined the interaction of Housing Market Areas in South-East Scotland; key housing market drivers; the housing stock profile and pressures; the current and future housing need and demand; and the need for specialist housing.



Over the course of 2020/21, officers from the HNDA3 Core Project Team used the HNDA tool to calculate housing estimates. This is a complex Excel database pre-populated with data, although the system can be adjusted to account for scenarios around future growth. The project team agreed six main scenarios (including a bespoke scenario for Midlothian), providing a range of options for growth.

Scenario 1: HNDA Tool	Default position
Scenario 2: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need	An additional scenario was produced to test the HNDA Tool default position but replacing the default existing need calculation with the local authority-generated existing need figures.
Scenario 2a: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need / Midlothian Modelling	Was requested by Midlothian Council based on Scenario 2 but with a 10-year backlog clearance for Midlothian only.
Scenario 3: Strong Growth	Reflecting a very positive outlook with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/ moderately high house price and rental growth across all local authorities.

Scenario 4: Steady Growth	Providing moderate real terms income growth, principal household projections, 'creeping' equality, moderate/trend house price and rental growth. The outputs of this scenario most closely reflect past trends.
Scenario 5: Slow Growth	Low inward migration reflecting below real terms income growth, greater inequality, moderately low / low house price and rental growth.
Scenario 6: Stalled Growth	Delay in recovery from Covid-19 pandemic to 2024 followed by moderate real terms income growth, principal projection, 'creeping' equality, moderate/ trend house price and rental growth.

The Strong growth scenario was the preferred scenario for the Scottish Borders. The strong growth this scenario outlined in the HNDA3 reflects a positive outlook across the region with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/moderately high house prices and rental growth. It reflects regional ambitions such as:

- More people move to the Scottish Borders from Edinburgh and the Lothians, making use of the links to the City by rail, in particular the Northern HMA and parts of Central HMA.
- Tourists are attracted to the area with the Tapestry opening in Galashiels, and a wider Masterplan relating to the town centre, with Destination Tweed continuing investment in biking facilities in the Tweed valley.
- Central Borders Innovation Park expands and redevelops, and the expansion of Tweedbank for housing and commercial development is underway.
- High levels of investment lead to improved digital connectivity, opening opportunities for businesses in rural areas of the Scottish Borders, and the new railway station at Reston provides more development opportunities to the East Coast.

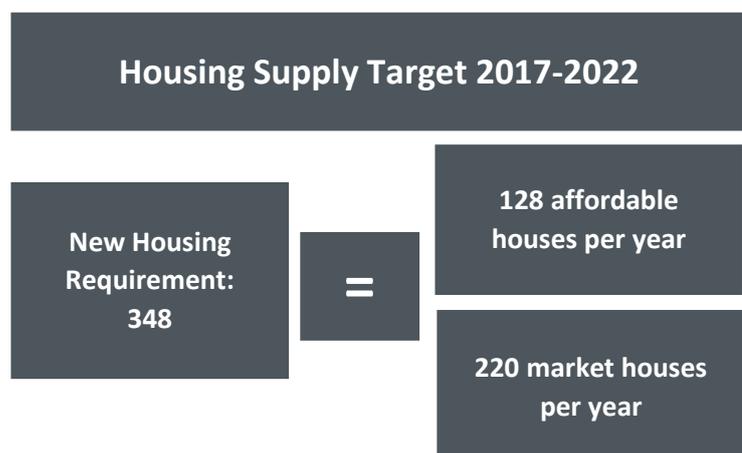
The third Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the South East Scotland area achieved robust and credible status from CHMA on Thursday 28th July 2022.

### **Housing Supply Targets**

The current Housing Supply Target (HST) identified in the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 was set in 2016. The target was informed by the outputs of SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment2 (HNDA2). The LHS 2017-22 identified the target as 348 new homes per year. This comprises of 128 affordable homes and 220 market homes per annum.

The affordable housing supply targets were ambitious, but achieved due to the Council and its RSL partners responding proactively and creatively to opportunities to increase the housing supply in the Borders over the last five years. Over the lifespan of the strategy on average 173 new affordable homes were delivered per year.

The housing supply target (HST) was determined in partnership with SESplan as part of the process of developing the Strategic Development Plan. The Targets must be reasonable, properly reflect the HNDA estimate of housing demand in the market. The HST is a policy view of the number of homes that each authority has agreed will be delivered in each housing market area over the periods of the development plan and Local Housing Strategy. The current Housing Supply



Targets were approved by SESplan Project Board in February 2016 and finalised in October 2016. The HST covers the period of the LHS.

The proposed Housing Supply target (HST) for the next LHS period of 2023-28 is set at 352 annual completions, with 141 of these being affordable housing. Both targets are higher than the current targets, setting an ambitious but achievable goal for housing supply in the Scottish Borders.

### **Housing Supply Strategy**

The Housing Supply Strategy 2018 - 2028 was developed to help better understand how the council and its partners can more effectively respond to the challenge of increasing the supply of new and suitable housing for the local area, while achieving our strategic vision for housing growth in the Scottish Borders over the next ten years and beyond. The Housing Supply Strategy supports the Local Housing Strategy (2017-2022) with particular focus on strategic priority 1 of the LHS: The supply of housing meets the needs of our communities.

Providing an adequate supply of new affordable, high quality and appropriate housing will not only aid in sustaining the council's rural communities but also with attracting potential new residents to the area.

Partnership working is an essential element of developing and implementing the Housing Supply Strategy which aims to deliver high quality housing across the Scottish Borders. Some of the actions currently being progressed are:

- Providing information and advice on shared equity schemes and promoting alternative home ownership options
- Creating housing profiles for each of the five localities within the region
- Developing a profile of empty homes
- Reviewing levels of second/ holiday home ownership and consider any potential interventions
- Promoting the self-build loan fund

The actions from the supply strategy have now been incorporated into the development of the new LHS 2023-2028.

### **Young People's Housing Study**

In order to deliver on the Council's strategic priorities and understanding the housing needs and aspirations of young people, the Council commissioned Indigo House to undertake a needs assessment of housing needs of young people in the Scottish Borders. This had the aim of supporting the development of a new action plan to help improve housing outcomes for young people.

The study included a lot of engagement with young people, this included:

- Focus groups with young people in schools from 14-18 years;
- A wide scale face to face survey of young people aged 16-34 years
- Comparative exploration of housing models across the UK and internationally considering what works and what could be applicable in the Scottish Borders;
- A programme of professional stakeholder engagement to complement that of the engagement with young people



A steering group which included a range of Community Planning partners oversaw the research and development of an Action Plan. This then shaped outcomes and priorities in the action plan, which are:

- **Priority 1: A holistic strategic approach for jobs, housing and transport**
  - Outcome 1 – Community planning partners take a holistic and strategic approach to the skills, employment, and housing and transport needs of young people in the Scottish Borders
- **Priority 2: Increasing housing choices and options**
  - Outcome 2 – Young people are able to access a range of different housing options which enable continued skills development and access to employment in the Scottish Borders
- **Priority 3: Meeting the needs of vulnerable young people**
  - Outcome 3 – Young people are able to access a range of housing information, advice and support to enable independent living
- **Priority 4: Monitoring and review of the Action Plan**
  - Outcome 4 – The Housing needs of young people are understood and services implemented in the context of a wider Local Housing Strategy and the Integrated Children and Young People’s Plan



This resulted in the creation of a five year action plan. This plan has developed a range of policy and practical responses, with commitment from a range of partners. This will enable young people to make more successful and sustainable transitions into their own housing. Work is currently underway towards ensuring these actions are delivered and that Scottish Borders Council works closely with our partners. Some of these actions are:

- Engage with transport initiatives and seek to link with housing to maximise impact e.g. Explore opportunities to subsidise first months travel for new Modern Apprentices at SBC
- Develop and implement the private rented sector strategy to improve access to and quality in the private rented sector.
- Work with community councils and other community representatives to consider whether there is interest and capacity within communities to enable new community led housing development
- Implementing actions in the RRTP
- Housing leads to support the development of the Child Poverty Plan in 2019

The work on young people and actions have been included in the development of the new LHS 2023-2028 and as a result, further actions will be taken forward as part of the new LHS.

### **Masterplan for Upper Langlee, Galashiels Regeneration**

A consultancy brief was developed in partnership between the Council’s Strategic Housing and Waverley Housing to significantly regenerate and improve the homes and sense of place of part of Upper Langlee. Working with Ark Consultancy and through working in partnership with the community and other registered social landlords a Masterplan for the area has been developed.

Scottish Borders Council and Waverley Housing have worked closely to consider suitable options for the future of part of the Upper Langlee



housing estate in Galashiels. There are 229 homes in the study area and proposals envisaged the demolition of 159 homes and the provision of 109 new build energy efficient homes for social rent. These homes will better meet the needs of tenants and residents in the local community along with addressing future housing demand in the Galashiels area.



The project also includes the refurbishment of 68 homes which has been completed in 2021. In March 2021, planning consent was granted for 229 homes including the demolition of 159 homes.

This is a high cost regeneration project with estimated costs in the region of £19.5m. This will be delivered over a number of financial years through a process including rehousing remaining tenants and demolition of vacant blocks. Demolition was completed in December 2022 and Waverley Housing are currently in the process of procuring a contractor for phase 1 of the new development.

There has been a desire to regenerate this area of Galashiels for some time, and this development is considered a strategic housing priority for both Waverley Housing and Scottish Borders Council. The development offers a clear fit with a number of the Strategic Outcomes set out in the Local Housing Strategy.

### **South East Scotland City Region Deal**

Building on previous Council joint working through the South East Scotland Plan arrangements, City Region Deal joint working has developed on a number of fronts, with new governance arrangements being developed and agreed upon. A new Regional Housing Board was established in 2019 as a means of better engaging the housing sector and harnessing its potential contribution towards the wider City Region Deal objectives.

A number of work streams have been, or are being developed. There is a particular focus on the development of a “Regional Growth Framework”, which will be published for consultation in June 2021 and the development of Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3. The South East Scotland City Region partnership has developed a greater understanding of infrastructure requirements and challenges as well as opportunities for modern methods of construction and related funding bids.

The Regional Housing Programme aims to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing and housing across all tenures, enable the development of seven major strategic housing sites and drive efficiencies across the public sector estate. It has two strategic objectives were identified for the Regional Housing Programme:

- Deliver a step change in innovation and inclusive growth in the housing and construction sectors; and
- Deliver a step change in the supply of new homes across the South East of Scotland

Regional partners collaborate, share best practices and lessons learned on strategic sites, infrastructure, affordable housing delivery, innovation, and skills. There are seven strategic sites Blindwells, Calderwood, Dunfermline, Edinburgh's Waterfront, Shawfair, Winchburgh and Tweedbank in the Borders.

The Edinburgh City Region Housing programme also includes the Edinburgh Home Demonstrator project which will demonstrate the effectiveness of homes designed and constructed to net zero carbon, using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). MMC uses technology, new materials and contemporary on-site building techniques to improve efficiency and quality in buildings. Two Borders based RSLs have expressed interest in participating in this project and will be identifying potential sites in 2023/24. This work is in collaboration with:

- Scottish Government
- Scottish Futures Trust
- Off Site Solutions Scotland
- Edinburgh Napier University
- BE-ST (formerly Construction Scotland Innovation Centre)

### **Lowood, Tweedbank**

Lowood in Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site identified in both the Borders Railway Corridor and the South East Scotland City Region Deal that is situated within the Scottish Borders. During 2018/19, the Council concluded the acquisition of the Lowood Estate which was identified as providing a key mixed use development site opportunity, aligned to the Borders Railway Corridor and City Region Deal partnership working. At the Lowood site at Tweedbank there have been a number of developments through 2021/22:

At the Lowood site at Tweedbank there have been a number of developments through 2021/23:

- Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Design Guide (DG) agreed by Council in June 2021
- In September 2021 Council approval was secured in relation to the construction of road and service infrastructure into Business Zones 1 & 2 and into housing allocation.
- A planning application submitted for roads and service infrastructure was submitted in March 2022.
- Establishment of Board to oversee delivery of housing, supported living and elderly care facilities at Tweedbank
- The application was for the construction of road infrastructure, drainage and planting (22/00494/FUL) was approved in April 2023

Further milestones looking ahead to 2023/24 will include:

- Identify funding for construction of a new bridge over the railway into the housing allocation; and
- Preparation of further reports to Council providing general update, information on Care Village proposals and information on the marketing strategy for the site.
- For the first phase of road works connecting to zones 4 & 5 it is likely these could start towards the end of 2023 and complete in Spring 2024
- Bridge works and further road connections may start on site in 2024

### **Town Centre Work**

Housing has a significant role to play in contributing to and helping to maintain the vibrancy of town centres. Through implementing actions outlined in the LHS, in 2019/20 Scottish Borders Council has continued to work with partners on initiatives to improve town centres, including support to reduce the number of vacant properties, targeting energy efficiency measures within areas, as well as piloting a missing shares scheme in Hawick supporting scheme of assistance approaches in regard to housing condition, including common repair. Over the period of the LHS, three Town Centre Housing Contribution

Statements have been developed for Hawick, Eyemouth and Galashiels. Officers are also proactively involved in the Town Place-making Groups and the development of the Local Place plans, as well as targeting empty homes activity in Town Centres with higher numbers of vacant homes.

### **Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)**

The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) is part of a national programme to conserve Scotland's traditional buildings and support the regeneration of town centres. CARS activity supports the Scheme of Assistance which helps address issues of housing quality and condition. Information and advice is provided to owner occupiers, landlords and tenants of privately let properties; helping address disrepair and supporting owners of empty property to bring them back into use.

#### **Selkirk CARS**

2018/19 saw the end on the five year Selkirk CARS project; a partnership project developed with a community-based steering group, funded by Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Borders Council. All of the CARS funded works and activities were complete by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, with additional externally funded works completing to compliment the CARS investment, notable at Sir Walter Scott's Courthouse and the Streetscape Improvement works in the Market Place.



**59 High Street, Selkirk - Before CARS work and After**

Selkirk CARS focused on a range of heritage and conservation-based regeneration activities within the town, the centrepiece being repairs to the Sir Walter Scott Courthouse steeple, weather vane, clock faces and high level stonework.

Almost 70 grant offers were made through the scheme, ranging from £525 to £205,000, enabling a range of traditional building repairs and improvements. Works continued to regenerate problem/ empty sites within the town at buildings on the High Street/ Chapel Street, Scott's Close and Scott's Place/ Viewfield Lane.

## Jedburgh CARS

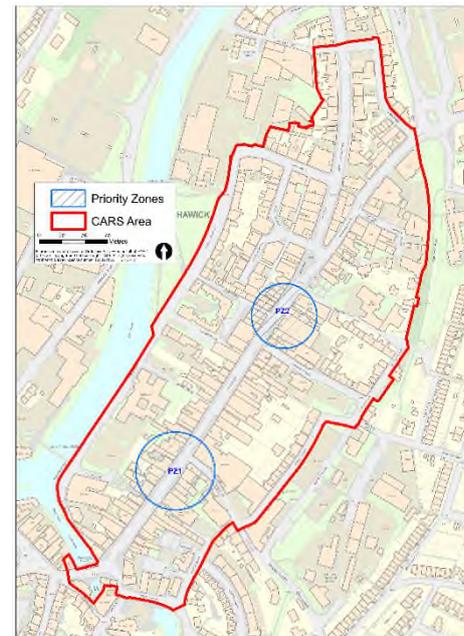
Jedburgh CARS focused on a range of heritage and conservation based regeneration activities within the town centre over a five year period (2017-22). Jedburgh CARS formally closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 with some extensions granted to complete works. A total of 59 grant awards were made for building repairs towards 32 town centre buildings, totalling over £749k in spend. Additionally, seven priority projects were offered funding totalling over £390k, including the Port House which is set to be in use again with the help of £187,500 of CARS funding. There was also essential repairs carried out to the Abbey Ramparts retaining wall. Jedburgh CARS successfully delivered, the project outputs identified at the outset of the scheme, and has also been successful in attracting some additional funding to support additional repair works in the town centre. The final year of the initiative was challenging, due to backlog of construction works, but the repair projects delivered have resulted in a significant impact within the town centre Conservation Area, and hopefully assist with the development of robust and sustainable regeneration opportunities for the future.



## Hawick CARS

Hawick CARS formally launched in October 2019 and has been extended for an additional year due to Covid-19 until March 2025. Nine grant repair projects are now complete and an additional 5 small grants (2 properties) have been awarded funding over the course of 2022/23. The projects currently offered grant funding and/or are complete provide a significant impact to the town centre due to their location and prominence on the high street.

Hawick CARS is also working with property owners to develop priority building repair projects at six locations in the town centre, and there are two priority buildings currently on site which are on the buildings at risk register (BARR). With 26 High Street complete in Summer 2021, Hawick CARS were delighted to be able to offer grant funding to 80 High Street (the former Liberal Club) with an intervention rate of 90% in September 2022. The works were due to be completed end of April 2023. This will secure the occupied areas of the building for the future. The main Liberal Club is however still to be developed, which will take the building off the buildings at risk register. SBC applied for a levelling up grant to help support the works required for this part of the building, however the application was unsuccessful. Progress is hoped in the coming year, once the sale of the building has gone through with a new developer/owner in sight.





*View from top of 80, High Street, Hawick*



*View to turret, overlooking Hawick town.*

Hawick CARS were also able to offer grant funding to another priority building – Glenmac Mill, Hawick. This work was due to start in April 2023 and due for completion Autumn 2023 to tie in with the flood protection works and the Hawick CARS public realm project currently being developed with the appointed external consultants and funded by the heritage scheme.

A complimentary missing shares initiative is available and delivered by SBC. This is a pilot scheme to run alongside Hawick CARS, originally for two years but now extended to the duration of the scheme. The scheme supports willing owners by paying the missing share of the contribution for essential works and recovers the cost.

### **Empty Homes**

SBC continue to work with the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to achieve significant outcomes in relation to developing processes for engaging with owners and maximising opportunities to assist owners getting their properties back into use. Some of the work carried out during the LHS have included:

- Developed an updated empty homes profile for the Scottish Borders which will provide a more complete picture of empty homes within the region.

- SBC developed a Matchmaker Scheme to help connect people wishing to sell an empty home with people who want to buy them.
- Providing advice in relation to potential VAT exemptions available for qualifying repairs
- Advice on any potential funding opportunities such as the rural housing fund where these are applicable
- Council tax is levied at 200% on long term empty homes (over one year). Officers provide discretion on this higher level of Council Tax can be applied where a package of work to return the property to use is agreed.
- Providing information on SBC's website

An example of bringing an empty property back into use is 121-123 High Street in Selkirk; following a number of development studies which did not progress, Eildon Housing Association started work to redevelop this long term empty former shop and flats to provide 10 new build flats. This project was assisted by a Scottish Government housing grant and was completed in 2019.



**121-123 High Street, Selkirk**

SBC officers were involved in a property at High Street, Coldstream, where officer's guidance and specialist advice helped an owner to progress works and secure VAT exemptions. Support was also provided to assist the owner's application for the rural housing fund, with the intention of assisting the owner with bridging any funding deficit in the renovation of the listed property bringing it back into use.

As an example, SBC supported work at a property at Chapel Street, Eyemouth lying within the town's conservation area and listed on the buildings at risk register. Guidance and specialist advice has helped the owner to progress works, and secure VAT exemptions.



**High Street, Coldstream**



**Empty Homes: Before and after shots of the exterior of a renovated empty home at Chapel Street, Eyemouth**



**Before and after shots of the interior at Chapel Street, Eyemouth**

Scottish Borders Council appointed a dedicated Empty Homes Officer in August of 2021, who currently has an active case load of 182 empty homes. Over the last 18 months the Empty Homes Officer has been making connections with owners, neighbours and communities being affected by empty homes.

Efforts have also been taken to ensure owners of Empty Homes are aware of all the support available to them including merchant discounts via The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership and potential VAT reductions and exemptions where applicable. As well as providing advice regarding council tax status and supporting applications of discretion where owners are active in bringing a home back into use.

Further development of the existing Matchmaker scheme, to assist in connecting those looking to sell empty homes to those looking to buy projects to bring back into use. The intention behind this is to further promote the scheme with empty homes owners looking to sell.

In taking a data lead approach, work has been undertaken to review the data held on the empty homes within the Scottish Borders, which will create a framework for future activity.

In understanding the issues around why homes become empty, the burden of cost is often cited as the greatest reason why action is not being taken. Following appointment to the role, work was undertaken towards launching an Empty Homes Grant Scheme which will provide financial support directly to owners.



The SBC Empty Home Grant Scheme was officially launched in September 2022. The Grant Scheme has been well received and we currently have 16 applications for a variety of empty homes across the Scottish Borders, 12 of which will become affordable rental homes.

In the first year of dedicated resource being applied to empty homes, we have seen 18 empty homes being brought back into use through direct officer activity. Through the successful building of the empty homes caseload we expect to see many more homes come back into use supported by the Empty Homes Officer.

The Empty Homes Office also presented at the Scottish Empty Homes Partnerships annual conference, highlighting the issues of Empty Homes in the Scottish Borders and the actions we are taking to bring these homes back into use. The following year our officer was nominated for the SEHP Rising Star Award at the Scottish Empty Homes Conference 2023.

### 3. Good Quality and Energy Efficient Homes

Addressing Priority 2: More People Live in Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes

#### Key Achievements:

- The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) 2019-2023 was implemented.
- SBC allocated £9.2m in grant funding from Scottish Government for EES:ABS Programme
- Energy efficiency schemes in the Borders between 2017 and 20223 have resulted in 1,870 installed measures across 1,553 households.
- Each RSL has prioritised investment towards meeting EESSH, which resulted in £12.1m over the 5 year period of the LHS. 89.3% of RSL stock meets EESSH.
- 4 of Eildon Housing Association’s affordable housing projects have been selected for inclusion in the Green Homes Pilot. The 1st Passivhaus development comprising 3 houses in St Boswells were completed in March 2020.
- The Borders Home Energy Forum was established in March 2018
- The Energy Efficient Scotland (EES) Pilot Project was developed in Peebles – ‘Change Works in Peebles’. Over 1,400 people visited the hub and there have been over 500 referrals to HES
- SBC secured 2 years of funding worth £551,000, from National Grid’s Warm Homes Fund to deliver the “Warm and Well Borders” project. This project has now been extended for 24 months.
- SBC has partnered with Partnership with Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS) to provide one landlord forum per year and a number of training events throughout the year.
- Through the Scheme of Assistance, 172 instances of practical assistance were given in the private sector including advice on repair and maintenance; empty homes advice; support to landlords and tenants and, as a last resort, enforcement
- To help progress shared repairs, in 2019 SBC agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme.

#### COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 presented a number of challenges involving delivering energy efficiency programmes across both the private and social sectors. This was due to works being put on hold due to lockdowns and restrictions, as well as delays with supply of Air Source Heat Pump units due to a slowdown in production as a result of social distancing guidelines within the manufacturing plant.

Private sector property inspections were impacted as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, and were carried out virtually, with in-person inspections only carried out in the event of emergencies. The pandemic also impacted on training events, with an event scheduled for June 2021 cancelled – however, online training for landlords was offered at a later date.

The pandemic also impacted on the delivery of CARS, the Scheme of Assistance and Missing Shares initiatives where delivery was impacted by periods of lockdown and difficulty securing contractors. These effects began to ease as lockdowns became less frequent and restrictions lessened.

## **Climate Emergency**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020 Scottish Borders Council declared a climate emergency and committed to a target of net carbon zero in line with government targets. The commitment adds further impetus to the need for an active delivery of the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEES).

The climate declaration supports the national commitment to achieving a net carbon zero in Scotland by 2045. The Scottish Borders can play its part in this by providing more energy efficient housing and affordable warmth as well as promoting decarbonisation, energy efficiency, sustainability and renewable technology within the region.

The Council developed a climate change route map in 2021, which shows a pathway to climate change resilience and to net zero emissions for the Scottish Borders, over a 25-year horizon. It does this by identifying the biggest causes of greenhouse gas emissions in the Scottish Borders and what the Council and partners have already done to combat these and what they are planning to do in the future.

## **Borders Home Energy Forum**

The Borders Home Energy Forum was established in March 2018, to ensure that a strategic, multi-agency approach is taken to help reduce fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency and improve health and well-being in the Scottish Borders, particularly for the most vulnerable households. The creation of the Borders Home Energy Forum was designed to align with the work of Scottish Government work on the tightening of climate change targets, and is designed to reflect a local experience of energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues and the emerging national policy position.

The Partnership comprises organisations representing housing associations, statutory bodies, advisory groups, bodies associated with energy, affordable warmth, health and income maximisation, and representatives from Scottish Borders Council.

The forum continues to attract new members as more groups are established in the region to address climate change challenges and promote energy efficiency and affordable warmth within local communities. The Forum has acted as a catalyst for building collective support for ongoing strategies including;

- Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy
- EES:ABS and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)
- Funding opportunities such as the Warm and Well project
- Joint proposals have been planned and submitted by RSLs
- Upcoming funding opportunities are being discussed proactively and in advance of calls being released
- Facilitated the recent establishment of a new Construction Sector and Supply Chain Forum
- LHEES. Awareness of Scottish Government requirements and facilitate joint working and identifying areas of opportunity

It has additionally served as a platform to promote and facilitate measures and schemes that target alleviating fuel poverty and increasing energy efficiency in households; as well as improving health and wellbeing. The forum has continued to meet online and has been able to have guest speakers and new members attend the meetings. We have had ongoing attendance from the Highlands & Islands Housing Forum (and in turn attending their forum meetings) which continues to facilitate knowledge sharing and highlighting common issues that rural areas face while collectively seeking solutions. This has been especially useful during the recent energy cost increases.

## **Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy**

To support Priority 2 of the LHS the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) was launched in 2019. The Strategy runs to 2023 and is reviewed regularly by the Borders Home Energy Forum. It takes lead and inspiration from commitments on fuel poverty and home energy efficiency, as well as the ongoing wider Scottish Government support, to provide an effective Strategy that delivers for all in the Scottish Borders.

AWHEES continued to be a key strategy for SBC. The Scottish Borders Home Energy Forum continued to meet remotely during pandemic and supported the sharing of best practice by stakeholders during these difficult times which was invaluable. The Forum continues to inform delegates and share updates and best practice which, during the Covid pandemic was valuable in understanding responses to restrictions and how to best service householders and tenants.

The Strategy provides actions to deliver affordable warmth for those that need it most, and a commitment to increase the energy efficiency of all homes regardless of circumstance – providing multiple benefits that reach out to the householder, providers and the wider supply chain.

Covering the period 2019-23, the Vision is that ‘more people live in energy efficient and affordably warm homes’. The Priorities that work towards fulfilling this Vision are:

- Priority 1: To collectively work with our partners to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes.
- Priority 2: To explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home.
- Priority 3: To ensure that the AWHEEs provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders.

The first three years of this Strategy have now been implemented and a separate update report is currently being prepared. Core priorities have been successfully progressed through the LHS and supporting AWHEES, these include:

- Increase in EPC ratings across all tenures and wards
- Insulation levels (cavity wall, solid wall and loft) have all increased
- Increase in EESSH compliance within Social Housing Sector
- Establishment of Construction Forum to support local supply chain and build on outputs of Home Energy Forum
- Two years extension to the Warm & Well programme offering support advice and income maximisation to Borders households, particularly those in Fuel Poverty
- Increase spend and allocation on EES:ABS
- Development and introduction of renewable technologies into EES:ABS

SBC’s ongoing support and activity in relation to affordable warmth and energy efficiency will continue to be prioritised through the Local Housing Strategy, as a statutory requirement. This will be further supported by development and then delivery of a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, which must be in place by the end of December 2023. This will be identified as key action in the LHS 2023-2028.



## **Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES)**

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) will be a key strategy and delivery programme for all local authorities to provide a long-term plan for decarbonising heat in buildings and improving energy efficiency across an entire local authority area. The 2 core drivers are:

- Reduce energy demand
- Decarbonise heat supply

LHEES are a place based, locally-led and tailored approach, covering a period of up to 20 years, with detailed actions set out in shorter term (5 year) Delivery Plans.

Every building in the region will be assessed and have a plan to enable energy use reduction. Scottish Borders Council will consolidate energy reduction strategies, schemes and future plans within a cohesive overarching strategy. The LHEES cover all sectors: Domestic, Non-Domestic & Public Buildings and provides a framework for taking an area-based approach to heat and energy efficiency planning and delivery.

SBC participated in a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) pilot for Peebles in 2018/19. The LHEES pilot project proved to be an interesting and worthwhile undertaking and allowed officers to gain a greater understanding of the process involved in undertaking an LHEES. Previous experience and activity in relation to this LHS will inform development. SBC appointed consultants to support development of the LHEES ahead of delivery phase commencing in 2024. To focus the delivery SBC will recruit a dedicated LHEES Coordinator in 2023.

SBC are working with Scottish Government and internal colleagues to develop the LHEES in line with government timings and prescribed phased approach, taking due consideration of the LHEES priorities for delivery. SBC will be engaging with key regional stakeholders and ensuring that the LHEES aligns with ongoing and existing priorities and council strategies and areas of delivery such as Climate Change and Sustainability. SBC procured for and appointed a dedicated consultant to support with the data analysis and identification of opportunity zones that are core to a structured and data led LHEES. Changeworks will support SBC across both LHEES and the EES:ABS scheme. This is particularly useful and relevant when looking at fuel poverty and domestic properties.

## **Energy Efficient Scotland (EES) Pilot Project**

Energy Efficient Scotland is the renaming of Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP). The purpose of the 20 year roadmap is to define a set of actions aimed at making Scotland's buildings near net zero carbon by 2050, in a way that is socially and economically feasible. It considers two main policy areas; fuel poverty and climate change. The two main objectives are to:

1. Remove poor energy efficiency as a driver for fuel poverty
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through more energy efficient buildings and the decarbonisation of heat supply

Funding was made available to Local Authorities to pilot different approaches to EES.

In 2017 the Council commissioned Changeworks to support delivery of the new Energy Efficient Pilot project in Peebles. Through this funding the 'Change Works in Peebles' project was developed – a locally based project working to pilot new approaches to energy efficiency within the community. The project was centred on helping to reduce costs and improve warmth in local homes, schools and



organisations. Peebles was chosen as it was shown to be a high energy use town with fuel bills 14% higher than the national average and annual median gas use 12% higher than the Scottish Borders average.

The project offered the local community face to face advice and support via a hub on Peebles High Street, with a varied programme of events and workshops on topics like insulation, draught-proofing and ways to reduce energy usage and bills. By 2019 over 1,400 people had visited the hub (including repeat visits and multiple person visits) and there had been over 500 referrals to Home Energy Scotland for support. Workshops and events were carried out regularly, with a survey of local businesses carried out, school interviews completed for the capital works programme and research done across the supply chain on barriers and opportunities to implement energy efficiency measures.



The grant also funded a Changeworks Senior Education Officer to engage with schools in Peebles to support the area-based approach to energy efficiency – including meetings with school Heads, and development of a programme including energy assemblies and workshops during the school year.

The CWiP (Change Works in Peebles hub) was extended in 2018-19 to cover the whole of Tweeddale until the end of the pilot in June 2020, focussing specifically on behavioural change and in engaging with local householders and businesses to reduce energy consumption and fuel bills as well as increasing the uptake of energy efficiency measures.

This was seen as the first stage of covering all five localities during the funded period of Energy Efficient Scotland, with a primary target of owner occupiers with an EPC banding lower than C.

Additionally, workshops and events were held regularly; a survey of all Peebles based businesses has been carried out; Peebles High School had received £400,000 funding and support through the capital works programme and Energy Efficient Scotland funding; there has been research across the supply chain on barriers and opportunities to implement energy efficiency measures.

Given the Covid-19 restrictions the scheme was unable to build upon the community engagement work delivered previously, although lessons were still learned in how to engage using alternative methods, typically using social media and digital technologies.

### **Scottish Federation of Housing Associations £2m Fuel Poverty Fund for RSLs**

Eildon Housing Association successfully led a joint bid in 2020/21 by all 4 Scottish Borders Registered Social Landlords to secure £450k from the Scottish Government's £2m Fuel Poverty fund. This significant 'one off' funding is meant to have a real impact in tackling fuel poverty, with funding being allocated on a pro-rate basis of housing stock and in two lots:

- Immediate payment of large-scale arrears of £50-£1000 per household. Payment will be made direct to the energy supplier and all RSLs will have a pro rata split for this purpose. It was estimated that around 200 people across all RSLs would benefit from this
- Ring-fenced funding which is held by the Fuel Bank Foundation who can issue vouchers to tenants throughout the rest of the year. These vary from £30 in the summer to £49 in the winter months.

## **Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (EESH) and EESH2**

The Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (EESH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. Social landlords are required to reach a set energy efficiency rating for a household based on the housing type and fuel type used to heat it. The first milestone (EESH 1) is for all applicable social housing to reach the minimum rating of no lower than an EPC C or D by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

The original EESH aimed to improve the energy efficiency levels of social housing, to help reduce energy consumption, fuel poverty and the emission of greenhouse gases. An additional milestone was introduced in June 2019 (EESH2) which laid out more stringent targets for energy efficiency, stating that:

*“All social housing meets, or can be treated as meeting, EPC Band B (Energy Efficiency Rating), or is as energy efficient as practically possible, by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent. “*

Berwickshire Housing Association	81.1%
Eildon Housing Association	91.4%
Scottish Borders Housing Association	92%
Waverley Housing	92.5 %

The challenge facing RSLs in the immediate future is the current, national review of the EESH2, which should be concluded later in 2023.

RSLs will continue to develop and deliver scheduled maintenance and improvement programmes to address the anticipated EESH2 standards across their housing stock. EESH 2 represents a much higher EPC standard and will be more challenging and costly for RSLs to attain. The higher EPC reflects the government’s wider push for more energy efficient housing across Scotland.

SBHA, for example, is currently developing its Sustainability Strategy and working on the plan for EESH2. In 2022/23, Greenskye Energy carried out £822,000 of funded energy efficiency works for SBHA, saving approximately 2.3m tonnes of carbon in that time.

## **Warm & Well Borders**

Scottish Borders Council secured two years of funding in 2019/20, worth £551,000, from National Grid’s Warm Homes Fund to deliver the “Warm and Well Borders” project. The project is being delivered through a partnership between Scottish Borders Council, Changeworks, three local Citizens Advice Bureau, Home Energy Scotland, health and social care teams and community health organisations. Warm and Well Borders is supporting fuel poor households to live affordably warm at home by tackling high fuel bills, fuel debt, and supporting skills to be in better control of energy costs as well as building resilience to tackle the causes of fuel poverty.



Covid-19 had a huge impact on the delivery of the scheme due to the constraints put in place through social distancing. Working with the funder, the scheme delivery team were able to adapt support methods incredibly well, adopting alternative approaches including digital and online support as well as interviews with householders has

been effective. The scheme was able to support 771 households and secured benefits and savings of £1.2 million for households across the region.

Primarily focussing on supporting householders in or at risk of fuel poverty, as the increasingly concern and uncertainty over energy price increases came into effect, more people within the region were impacted by fuel poverty drivers. The importance of the scheme and the support was increasingly required.

Following on from the initial success in the two year pilot, Warm and Well have been working with SBC colleagues and have been able to secure a further 24 months extension of the scheme in partnership with the Borders Citizens Advice Bureau. This has enabled the great work and support the service provides to continue, particularly in instances of fuel poverty and uncertainty around energy price increases.

SBC & CABs Warm and Well 2022/23 has been able to engage 398 households, with 198 cases resolved with a positive outcome and secured benefits and savings of £1.36 million for households across the region. As the scheme enters 2023/24 delivery the need for front line support in response to increased cost of living and energy costs is as vital as ever.

### RSLs

SBHA's Warm and Well Coordinator supported 621 tenants in 2022/23 against a target of 350, and issued 1,171 fuel vouchers worth more than £55,000 to SBHA tenants. They also made 130 fuel debt payments, totalling £159,763. The Borders Housing Network (BHN) plans to expand on this work in 2023/24, thanks to a grant of £84,000 from the Scottish Borders Council Cost of Living Fund – with recruitment of a new advisor to support all RSLs in the BHN currently underway.

### **Scottish Borders Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES: ABS)**

Scottish Government funding for private home energy efficiency improvements is known as the Energy Efficient Scotland Area Based Scheme (EES: ABS). The funding enables investment in: external and internal wall insulation; cavity wall insulation; loft insulation; and underfloor insulation. As well as offering insulation and fabric first measures the scheme will also aim to deliver more renewable technology in off gas grid areas, such as Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV and Battery Storage systems. The intention is to continue to offer a blend of insulation and renewable technologies.

The Council works in partnership with Changeworks to deliver Energy Efficiency Programmes – Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS), building on the strong relationships established over previous years. This partnership allows the Council to benefit from the expertise required to maximise the effectiveness of this project and to build on the successful outcomes delivered to date. The schemes follow an area based approach with focus on the most fuel poor area and households, drawing on a range of data including index of multiple deprivation, child poverty, the Scottish House Condition Survey, heat mapping and local knowledge.

Programmes typically involve the installation of 'fabric first' external wall insulation (EWI), internal wall insulation (IWI) as well as cavity wall insulation. In the last few years the scope of measures has been widened with renewable technology like Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) and Solar Photovoltaic and battery storage (PV battery) becoming more common through the scheme.

Over the period of 2017/18 to 2022/23 the programmes has successfully delivered over £9.22m of investment in energy efficient measures for households in the Scottish Borders. The EES:ABS programme was awarded £1.786m in 2021/22 and £1.8m in 2022/23. Council outputs show that from April 2017 to March 2023, 1,870 measures were installed across the Scottish Borders, supporting over 1,553 households –these totals are including the forecasted totals for 2022/23. Table 3 shows a summary of investment and

the number of measures installed and households supported from 2017/18 to 2022/23, as well as reference investment levels for 2023/24.

Table 3: Investment in EES: ABS in the Last 6 years						
Households assisted by EES: ABS	EES: ABS investment levels	Measures installed	Households supported	Estimated Annual Fuel Bill Savings	Estimated Lifetime Fuel Bill Savings	CO 2 reductions tonnes
2017/18	£1.23m	735	623	£172,618	£6,386,866	719
2018/19	£1.34m	428	387	£53,360	£2,049,960	231
2019/20	£1.35m	100	81	£45,110	£1,588,360	190
2020/21	£1.72m	195	176	£23,360	£904,320	94
2021/22	£1.78m	192	116	£15,400*	£539,000*	132
2022/23	£1.8m	220	170	£22,610*	£791,350*	193* (tbc)
2023/24	£1.82m	TBC	TBC			

Source: SBC and Changeworks monitoring data

Tracking the annual savings across the last two years of the EES:ABS scheme has been extremely difficult due to the unprecedented energy pricing landscape. The Energy Price cap has been increasing across the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. These figures are set by the government and relate to the expected average household energy use. The Energy Saving Trust, who provide average use figures, take these UK Government's Energy Price Guarantee average prices for gas and electricity. As most households in the UK are currently paying prices set by the UK Government. The lifetime savings are then based on the current average cost. However, these changed several times across the reporting period.

With the Guaranteed Energy Price Guarantee and price cap changing quarterly in response to the crisis, remodelling and reviewing typical savings, either annual or lifetime, has become more challenging. As such, we have modelled the savings for years 21/22 & 22/23 in the above table on the figure and averages used before the pandemic and the subsequent increases to the Energy Price Guarantee and Price Cap. These are for indicative and illustrative purposes. While the energy market is subject to ongoing fluctuation, we can revisit these figures to present an averaged considered figure although these will be caveated by the unprecedented market conditions experienced at this time.

The EES:ABS continues to be a core delivery channel for addressing fuel poverty and promoting affordable warmth across the region. The funding allocated to SBC for EES:ABS has steadily increased. EES:ABS has provided varied insulation schemes and the continuing need to offer Internal Wall Insulation given the regions housing stock (i.e. older, solid walled properties that are unsuitable for cavity insulation).

As part of a commitment to decarbonisation, and increasingly electrification, of heating there has been and will continue to be a focus on delivering renewable technologies in the region. Starting in 2019/2020 and each year since, there have been projects installing Air Source Heat Pumps, Solar Photovoltaics and Battery Storage.

Renewable technology and insulation which enables more economic use of heating energy are both key factors in supporting climate change mitigation within the region. The 2022/23 EES:ABS scheme saw a successful funding application of £1.8 Million for the region and we are approaching the final delivery stages of the current scheme year. Looking ahead to 2023/24, SBC have been allocated £1.82 million to

deliver the next EES:ABS cycle which is an increase on the previous years. The proposal is to again include insulation and renewable technologies within the scheme delivery.

**External Wall Insulation Measures Installed in the Scottish Borders**



**Innerleithen 2018/19**



**Town Yetholm 2019/20**



**Before and after - Langlee 2020/21**



**Kelso 2021/22**

## Home Energy Scotland Referrals

Home Energy Scotland (HES) is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Energy Saving Trust to provide free and impartial advice on ways to save energy, reduce fuel bills and make homes cheaper and easier to heat.



They have a network of five advice centres across Scotland to help them reach householders, community organisations, businesses and local authorities in order to reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions. One advice centre covers the South East of Scotland and has good contacts and knowledge of the Borders.

SBC and stakeholders will always look to signpost or recommend householders speak to HES regarding energy matters and wider energy advice. The service acts as a referral mechanism to enable local householders to register for schemes such as EES:ABS and Warm & Well where appropriate.

They can provide advice on energy efficiency, switching suppliers, renewables, saving water, sustainable transport and refer people for benefits and tax checks. With increased concern and uncertainty due to increasing energy costs this service is as important as ever. Table 4 shows interactions data from Home Energy Scotland for the Scottish Borders between 2018/18 and 2021/22, with 2022/23 data still pending. Event numbers have been impacted by COVID restrictions, but there has been a big increase in social media and email interactions.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Inbound calls	934	1,245	1,130	1,039	1,130
Outbound calls	705	977	558	2,330	1,141
Events	1,379	945	516	43	17
Other (e.g. emails, letters, home visits)	2,106	2,244	2,973	2,089	4,103
Total advice interactions	5,124	5,411	5,117	5,501	6,391

## Eildon Housing Association's Green Homes Pilot

Eildon Housing Association have been leading on the Green Homes Pilot with Construction Scotland Innovation Centre (CSIC) and supported by SBC, where a variety of modern energy efficient building techniques and styles are being utilised in their projects and post installation studies will be completed. The project aims to determine a new-build comparison program with different home types that can be monitored as they are designed and built and thereafter. Eildon Housing Association secured £100,000 from Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and Scottish Borders Council to carry out action based research and independent evaluation known as the "Green House Pilot".

Four of Eildon's affordable housing projects have been selected for inclusion in the Pilot, which will involve the design, development and delivery of around 30 homes, using three different energy efficient solutions such as Passivhaus, Energiesprong and off-site construction/volumetric design, alongside a 12



*Passivhaus Development, St Boswells*

hour traditional build “control” project. Construction on these homes started in March 2021, which follows on from the first Passivhaus development comprising 3 houses at Springfield Terrace St Boswells which was completed in March 2020.

Independent monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by the Mackintosh Environmental Architecture Research Unit within the Mackintosh School of Architecture. The outcomes of the research will inform the Association’s new build design guide and its approach to component replacement and energy efficiency in existing properties. It will also influence the Association’s Rent Setting Policy. Eildon Housing Association propose to share the experience gained with other Registered Social Landlords and Councils across Scotland.

### **Community Wind Farm**

The Hoprigshiels community windfarm – “Fishermen Three” – is located near Cockburnspath in the Scottish Borders and is a joint venture between Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) and Community Energy Scotland. By supplying energy to the National Grid, the wind farm creates revenue for BHA of around £20 million over the next 25 years – enough to allow them to build 500 new homes over that period.

The amount of energy the windfarm produced in its first year is equivalent to the annual energy needs of 7,758 homes according to Ofgem figures, meaning it’s powering the equivalent of all of the Berwickshire Housing Association homes, and a further 6,000 households in the area.



For the 2017/18 year of operation, the wind farm paid £18,750 to Cockburnspath Community Fund and £18,750 to Oldhamstocks Community Fund, or £37,500 in total.

### **Scottish Housing Day**

Scottish Housing Day was held again on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 and marked the seventh annual Scottish Housing Day by celebrating the impact that housing makes to the lives of people and communities across the region as well as raising awareness with residents on the housing options available to them. The key focus on Housing Day was sustainable.

Councillor Robin Tatler, Scottish Borders Council Executive Member for Communities and Equalities said:

*“I’m delighted we are recognising the value of social housing by taking part in Scottish Housing Day for another year. The importance of everyone having access to a safe and affordable place to call home has become more significant than ever after the pandemic.”*



Information on housing was again published widely across Scottish Borders Council social media platforms to share advice, information and awareness of all services SBC and partners offer in terms of housing, homelessness and housing related services.

### **Private Landlord Registration**

All private landlords and their agents are required to register with the local authority in which they let their property. Landlord registration allows local authorities to control and regulate who can operate legitimately as a private landlord. This provides Scottish Borders Council with an effective tool for dealing with the worst performing landlords who, by their behaviour and attitude, mismanage their properties or fail to act in respect of their anti-social tenants affecting their own tenants, neighbours and communities.

As of January 2023 there were 4,637 registered landlords, and 7,367 properties in the Scottish Borders. Scottish Borders Council also has 56 licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Whilst the private Rented Sector registered remains relatively stable the last few years have seen a slight decrease in registered properties in the Scottish Borders. Despite this the PRS is still vital in meeting housing need in the Scottish Borders, making up 14% of all properties in the area, compared to 15% nationally.

Statutory guidance emphasises the importance of liaising with private landlords and their tenants, including considering a range of actions to help landlords reach the standards required in privately letting properties, and keeping them informed of any changes in legislation. In recent years emphasis has shifted from registration enforcement to liaison and support services for landlords and tenants. The service provided is focused on engagement, and enforcement is applied as a last resort.

#### **Key engagement activities of the Private Rented Sector Liaison and Enforcement Officer include:**

- Addressing repairing standard issues, advice is provided to landlords following property inspection. Raising awareness of obligation in this regard promotes stewardship, encourages swift remedial action and reduces the requirement for enforcement action which can be divisive.
- Scrutinising prescribed information provided on applications and liaising with landlords where there are anomalies. This is an important point of engagement, landlords are offered guidance on legislation relating to letting properties. Rental properties are being improved as a result and landlords also gain a better understanding of the obligations when letting in the private sector.
- Prescribed information also includes for the provision of Energy Performance Certificates. Landlords are becoming increasingly aware of the need for energy efficiency and proposed future energy standards affecting the rental market. Advice and support is offered through our liaison service.
- To continue providing good quality homes and high management standards in the private rented sector, Scottish Borders Council are committed to support Landlords with information and advice. To support that activity we have partnered with Landlord accreditation to provide tailored annual training events locally and a landlord forum. This presents an opportunity to share best practice and any regulatory change on the horizon.

#### **Key Achievements**

- Landlord Forums:  
Held locally in 2018 & 2019 highlighting changes in the sector both locally and national. Speakers on the day discussed topics such as: Private residential tenancies, Housing and Property Chamber, Letting agent regulation, GDPR, Universal Credit Rollout and proposed energy efficiency standards. Well received and excellently attended in the Scottish Borders. Since, delivery has been affected by COVID-19, however the next landlord forum is planned for autumn of 2023.



- Partnered with LAS to provide local and accredited training events ,
  - Hawick 2019, on Tenancy Agreements and Notices for private landlords and letting agents
  - October 2019, on Property Condition & Property Management
  - November 2022, Online webinars for Tenancy Management, covering communication with tenants and GDPR and antisocial behaviour
- COVID-19 meant that training was moved to a virtual classroom, making it more accessible for many landlords. Two events were held during the pandemic, one on property condition & property management, and another on tenancy management during COVID-19.
- Throughout the pandemic Officers supported landlords by providing the latest Scottish Government Guidance; information on financial help available and how to go about daily landlord activities. This information is also made available on our website and regularly updated throughout the pandemic. Revision of procedure. We always strive to improve on procedure. An example included the introduction of an additional courtesy expiry reminder letter to lessen number of landlords missing their renewal date. This improved renewals and greatly reduced the numbers of complaints raised due to the Scottish Governments automatically applied late fees.
- The introduction of prescribed information within the application for registration has resulted in a large volume of landlords requiring advice in regard to their obligations. A new procedure has been devised ultimately ensuring landlords are proficiency in regard to their requirement to operate and correctly when providing homes in the Scottish Borders.
- As a last resort Rent Penalty Notices are used (RPN) which suspend the rent liability of a tenant living in an unregistered property
- Fit and proper person tests are used to provide a level of assurance that the landlord or agent is a suitable person to let privately rented property. It is a standard that all private landlords are required to uphold throughout the time that they operate as a private landlord.

The Enforcement Officer has dealt with 166 cases in relation to repairs issues and management practices over the same period (an average of 33 per year). The Enforcement Officer has helped to ensure landlords comply with all the legislation and has helped to improve the management and building standards in the private rented sector.

Throughout the year courtesy reminder letters are now sent to landlords prior to the expiration of their registration – with 2,184 courtesy final reminders being sent from 2020/21 to 2022/23. This has resulted in

fewer complaints in regard to late fees being applied. There have also been 1,597 follow up actions taken in relation to late registrations since 2018/19, which includes letters, phone calls and visits. In addition, records in regards to prescribed information are being kept to that targeted advice can be provided to landlords to assist them with these forms, which has been supported by 2,532 instances of support and advice surrounding issues such as prescribed information and tenancies.

The Private Landlord Registration pages on the corporate website are updated to ensure that robust and accurate information is available to members of the public. The Council has also continued to run training events in conjunction with LAS, including moving over to virtual events during the COVID pandemic. It is planned to restart regular in-person forums and training opportunities for landlords in the near future.

### **Scheme of Assistance**

The Scheme of Assistance helps to achieve the Local Housing Strategy's vision, with particular contribution to Priorities 1, 2 and 4. These priorities are supported through a range of services which:

- Help older people and people with disabilities who are living in the private sector to make adaptations to their homes ensuring that they are able to live in a safe environment within their own property (Priority 4)
- Working with Environmental Health and Building Standards to address disrepair in private sector homes (Priority 2)
- Ensuring that properties in the Private Rented Sector meet the repairing standard and providing advice to both tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities
- Support owners of empty property to bring them back into use (Priority 1 & 2)

The Scheme of Assistance offers:

- Information and advice for private sector housing residents on home repairs, maintenance, improvements and adaptations.
- Common repairs work, engaging with and bringing together multiple owners to resolve complex repairs.
- Working with Building Standards to deliver enforcement work
- Financial help to cover some (or all) of the costs of eligible major adaptations.
- Information and advice to support empty homes owners to bring them back into use.

During the period 2017/18-2022/23 practical assistance was provided to 172 cases, including repair and maintenance, empty homes advice, support to landlords and tenants and enforcement. General information was also provided in regard to private property condition concerns.

The Scheme of assistance also supported Scottish Borders Councils effort to house displaced persons from Ukraine by helping develop a housing standard inspection process and co-ordinating 136 property visits.

### **Missing Shares Scheme**

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 a local authority can consider paying a missing share where the majority of owners have agreed to carry out necessary common repairs and maintenance but they cannot progress the repair because either an owner is unable or is unwilling to pay or it is unreasonable to require the owner to deposit the sum in question or where the owner cannot be identified or found by reasonable inquiry. This can hold up much needed repairs.

Under this scheme and, depending on the circumstances and eligibility criteria, the Council could choose to pay a missing share on behalf of an owner and recover the contribution, which means owners can get on

with repairs. To those with a legal and shared responsibility for repair Missing Shares is intended as a disincentive to non-participation. It allows for administration and interest fees to be applied. To avoid additional costs generally (as reported nationally) this generally results in participation.

In 2019 the Council agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme in the Scottish Borders, initially targeting the Hawick Conservation Area over a two year period. The Missing Shares scheme operates in tandem with the Scheme of Assistance and primarily supports activity through the approved Hawick Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (Hawick CARS). Progress in delivery of the scheme was impacted by COVID-19, and has since been extended until the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025 to mirror the duration of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme.

Currently the pilot is aligned principally to support the activities of CARS. If non-participation in CARS is experienced the threat of missing shares, including associated cost and the additional disincentive of missing out on grants, has meant that provision of a share has remained untested. However as an incentive to act missing shares remains an important mechanism.

Housing works in tandem with CARS in relation to common repair approaches and with instances of support included within the Scheme of Assistance numbers reported. Currently there is one 'live' case where a missing share seems likely, supporting a priority tenement containing 5 'flats' within Hawick town centre

The intention in the first year of the new proposed LHS is to review and update the Scheme of Assistance. Principally to strengthen our approaches to supporting stewardship but also fully exploring options of enforcement as a last resort. This will also include:

- Improved information advice and guidance, including revision to our webpages
- Partnership working with LAS and Underoneroof
- The introduction of the shared repairs app and trusted trader scheme,
- And proposed rollout of missing shares to other priority areas.

## 4. Homelessness

### Addressing Priority 3: Fewer People are affected by Homelessness

#### Key achievements:

- Over the past 6 years the average percentage of unintentionally homeless households accessing settled accommodation has been 80%
- Housing support cases that have been closed by SBC Homelessness housing support service and its commissioned service with a positive outcome continues to be consistently above 75%. With a 6 year average of 79%
- No B&B accommodation was used as temporary accommodation during 2020/21 with very limited used being used to deal with high demands for temporary accommodation
- In 2018/19, a new Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) was established. The key focus of the partnership is on the implementation of the RRTP
- Appointment of the Private Rented Sector Development Officer
- Development of the Scottish Borders RRTP covering a five year period 2019-2024.
- RRTP Officer was appointed in January 2020 with the key role of implementing the aims and objectives of the RRTP
- Housing First pilot was launched in October of 2021. The pilot is funded for 2 years and aims to provide housing and support to 30 households over the two year period.
- Covid-19 had a huge impact on Homelessness Services. (BHHSP) members were on the front line of the crisis and have worked closely throughout the pandemic to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness have continued to receive the services and support they require
- Establishment of Housing Options Protocol for care leavers in 2017/18
- Two Crisis and Housing Intervention Funds were launched in 2020/21 and 2021/22
- The 'Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' (SHORE) was launched nationally in 2017. The information sharing protocol which was adopted in 2019/2020 in the Scottish Borders

#### Homelessness Statistics

The service continues to ensure that it meets its statutory duty in both preventing and assessing homelessness and where it as a duty to assist customers that we ensure the best possible sustainable outcome is obtained. In the Scottish Borders, the number of homeless applications has remained steady since 2011/12 as a result of a proactive approach to prevention through the delivery of the Housing Options approach.

This is set against a challenging local landscape in terms of housing affordability, the cost of living crisis and economic fragility.

Table 5 below shows a breakdown of some of the key homelessness statistics over the past six years.



<b>Table 5: Key Homelessness Statistics</b>						
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No. of approaches to homelessness	862	843	928	767	774	835
No. of people assessed as homelessness	590	629	645	558	578	697
% assessed as homeless	84%	82%	82%	84%	84%	89%
Proportion of homelessness assessments completed within 28 days		87%	83%	86%	89%	85%
% applicants reassessed as homeless in same year	4.5%	3.8%	4.6%	4.9%	2.5%	3%
% young people presenting as homeless	24%	26%	27%	29%	23%	21%
Number accessing Housing Options service	403	268	288	179	774	835
% housing options cases that progress to homeless application	62%	65%	49%	48%	46%	
% unintentionally homeless household access settled accommodation	63%	78%	80%	89%	94%	93%
% RSL lets to homeless households	22%	28%	30%	33%	30%	tbc

### **Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP)**

The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) was established in 2018/19. The BHHSP includes senior officers from Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders with responsibility in homelessness, health and social care, public health, social work, property management and housing strategy. The four locally based Registered Social Landlords have representation from senior officers. The BHHSP has a key focus on the implementation of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

### **Covid-19- Impact**

Work and life changed dramatically in 2020/2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic which brought into sharp focus how closely our home, health and wellbeing are connected. Borders Homelessness and Health Partnership (BHHSP) members have been on the front line of the crisis and have worked closely throughout the pandemic to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness have continued to receive the services and support they require. Homelessness services were delivered by telephone wherever possible, however, given the vulnerable nature of many homeless households, face to face access and support was retained where required.

Early actions in response to the pandemic were focused around ensuring homeless or potentially homeless households within the Scottish Borders had suitable accommodation available to them that allowed them to comply with the imposed lockdown measures. Some of the impacts Covid-19 has had on homelessness services, include:

- 50% increase in the 'Homeless Queue' - the number of applicants assessed as Homeless or TWH open to homelessness services on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 compared to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. This had been reducing prior to the pandemic.
- 40% increase in the number of households residing in temporary homeless accommodation. (31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 compared to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)
- 26 % reduction in available RSL housing stock in 2020/2021 when compared to 2019/2020 (data from 4 main RSL's)

Although there was a reduction in homeless presentations during the pandemic, applications in 2022/23 were in keeping with pre-pandemic. Partners recognise that this may continue to fluctuate as inflationary pressures and the cost of energy and food continue to have an impact.

As part of the national public health response, local authority homelessness services across the country had temporary additional duties to provide temporary accommodation regardless of an applicant's entitlement

to public funds. Within the Scottish Borders temporary homeless accommodation was provided to one household with no recourse to public funds.

Homelessness services and RSLs worked in partnership to significantly increase the stock of temporary homeless accommodation and ensured homeless applicants had continued access to permanent accommodation and support. This action was essential to ensure that households in the Scottish Borders had access to accommodation during the most challenging times. The impacts of the pandemic continue to be longer lasting than anticipated, and the unprecedented demand for temporary accommodation continued throughout 2022/23.

Changes to legislation relating to the Local Connection which were set to be introduced during 2020/2021 were further delayed into 2022/23.

#### Test and Protect

As part of the local Test and Protect response, officers from Public Health, local RSLs, and Scottish Borders Council's Safer Communities, Assets and Infrastructure, and homelessness teams worked together to identify and provision a small number of suitable properties for use as alternative accommodation for individuals or families to self-isolate safely and effectively.

#### East Housing Options HUB

Scottish Borders Council continued to be actively involved with the Scottish Government's East Housing Options HUB which met on a fortnightly basis throughout 2020/2021 and proved to be a vital support during the pandemic response. Funding secured from the East Housing HUB resulted in the launch of a homelessness peer support pilot that is being delivered in conjunction with Penumbra.

#### Evictions

Eviction bans introduced in response to the pandemic remained in place at the end of 2020/2021, subject to three weekly reviews. In 2019/20, 140 statutory homelessness cases were as a result of an action taken by landlords to terminate a tenancy. This reduced significantly in 2020/2021 to 55 applications. The eviction ban has been extended until at least the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2023, it is unknown what the impact of this will be but in order to mitigate this, homeless services and RSLs have continued to provide advice and support to tenants to prevent evictions where possible.

### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG)**

The national Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was reconvened in June 2020 in response to the coronavirus crisis and further recommendations were proposed to the Scottish Government, these recommendations were considered and an updated Ending Homelessness Together action plan was published in early October 2020.

Following this, 'RRTPs and HARSAG 2020 –What Now? A Short guide for local Authorities', was published on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and supports the HARSAG recommendations that the 'responsibilities for addressing and preventing homelessness do not sit solely with local authority homelessness teams' and highlight 'the core relationship between health and home, demonstrating that in order to keep people safe we must work collaboratively across all sectors, but also showing that it's possible to do so – and quickly', the guide reflects the four key themes of the HARSAG recommendations;

1. Prioritise Prevention – 'Where Homelessness is predictable it is preventable'
2. Settled Housing Options – 'We all have the potential to live a good life – and home is the best place from which to build it'
3. Equalities competence – 'The risk and impact of homelessness is not distributed equally, or in the same ways, across society'

4. Responsive systems – ‘To end homelessness in Scotland we need an enabling system with no wrong door’

### **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)**

All 32 local authority areas in Scotland were asked to produce Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) by December 2018, for implementation over the 5 years from April 2019. A ‘first iteration’ RRTP was required to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 31 December 2018 and a finalised RRTP completed and submitted by the end of March 2019, ready for commencing implementation from April 2019.

Rapid rehousing is a key component of the whole-system approach whereby the responsibility for tackling homelessness lies not just with Local Authorities but with housing providers, health and social care partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support. Housing First is a key element of this.

Development of the Scottish Borders RRTP has been led by the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership and has included consultation with key partners including the Borders Housing Alliance and the Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Planning Group. Implementation of the RRTP commenced in March 2019 (2019/20), which includes the development of projects to be launched from late 2020 onwards.



A Rapid Rehousing Development Officer was appointed in January 2020 and has played a key role in the implementation of the RRTP and achieving the aims and objectives of the plan.

Despite the pressures arising from the pandemic, RRTP achievements so far include:

- Introduction of a Housing Intervention fund to improve the housing options available to applicants who are in need of intervention due to rent arrears and who often face the prospect of being homeless.
- Introduction of a Homeless Intervention fund which is accessible by front line workers within the homelessness team to use in the prevention or resolution of homelessness. Given the varying and complex reasons for homelessness, any application which demonstrates a contribution to the prevention or faster resolution of homelessness is considered.
- The launch of a two year Housing First pilot
- A temporary increasing the % of RSL let's allocated to homeless households to support reducing the 'homelessness queue'.
- The introduction of a Crash Pad within the homelessness temporary accommodation stock to improve the management and efficiency of the temporary accommodation stock.
- Recruitment of Private Rented Sector Development Officer
- Formalised relationships with Link Housing who have joined the section 5 protocol and offering SBC first refusal on 100% of their lets in the Scottish Borders
- Working closely with RSLs on their revised allocation policies
- Supporting vulnerable individuals who face barriers to digital inclusivity
- Continuing to build on existing local joint pathway arrangements with partners
- Improving Housing Options and Support in the Private Rented Sector (PRS)

While there have been significant achievements, the COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on implementation of resources and development of the Borders RRTP. As a result of the delays and impact of Covid-19 and updated emerging guidance, it was agreed that the RRTP action plan should undergo a review

to reconsider the priorities of the BHHSP in light of the pandemic. Following the initial response to the pandemic, focus moved to the RRTP and work began on the 'Ending Homelessness Together' commitments, by progressing the Scottish Borders RRTP with our Housing Association and Health and Social Care partners.

The changing landscape brought about by the Covid-19 emergency and Ukrainian programme and the impact this has had on the development of the RRTP. As a result the BHHSP reviewed the RRTP during 2022/2023 and have set the following outcomes for 2023/2024.

<b>Outcome 1:</b>	Fewer Households experience Homelessness
<b>Outcome 2:</b>	Access to housing for homeless or potentially homeless households is improved across all tenures, and people reach a settled housing outcome as quickly as possible.
<b>Outcome 3:</b>	Homeless Households can access the right support at the right time.
<b>Outcome 4:</b>	All Partners actively contribute to preventing homelessness

### **Housing First Service**

Housing First provides general settle housing as a first response to people with complex needs, recognising that a safe and secure home is the best base for recovery. It offers personalise, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address wider needs.

Scottish Borders Council in partnership with Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association, Waverley Housing and Cyrenians launched the Scottish Borders Housing First pilot in October 2021 which was funded to run for two years and aimed to provide housing and support to 30 households over the period.

Referrals for the pilot are currently identified by the SBC's Homelessness Team to address the outstanding demand for this support in that domain, however, referrals may be considered from other sources when supply has met this demand.

Cyrenians will complete a formal evaluation of the pilot project in 2023. There is already a significant volume of research and evidence available on the Housing First model so this evaluation will focus on factors specific to the Borders pilot project. Evaluation will include consideration of impact on other services, as far as is possible given data sharing limitations. Evaluation will not include detailed savings analysis but it will include indicative figures for potential medium/long term savings.

All partners are in agreement that early indications are that the project is valuable and is making a significant contribution to helping to keep vulnerable people safe, albeit on a small scale at the moment. It is recognised that future funding options need to be considered now if looking to continue beyond pilot period and these need to be scoped out to inform what is required in the medium to long term to retain the project.

To the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023, 10 Housing First tenancies had commenced, making a significant contribution to helping to keep vulnerable people safe.

**'Professional involvement. Team have been helpful and gone out of their way to support our service.'**

**'Always go above and beyond to help.'**

## **Private Rented Sector (PRS)**

A temporary Private Rented Sector Development officer has recently been appointed and will take up post in April 2023. The development officer will embed homelessness prevention principles into the private rented sector in Scottish Borders by taking forward the private sector elements of Rapid Rehousing Transition plan.

The part time, two year temporary post, funded by Ending Homelessness Together funds, will be crucial resource to improve prevention activities for households threatened with homelessness from the private rented sector and improve housing outcomes to the private rented sector in Borders.

The post holder will provide staff with technical, operational support, advice and comprehensive training on the PRS and contribute to policy and strategic change, improvement and development. This includes creating positive relationships with private landlords and other key council departments (i.e. Housing Strategy and Environmental Health) to assess, plan, deliver and evaluate new ways of working.

## **Temporary Accommodation**

As a stock transfer local authority, a strong partnership approach to the provision of temporary accommodation in the Scottish Borders is essential – with 150 properties (owned by the council or sublet from Registered Social Landlords) in 2022/23 which are used as temporary accommodation for homeless people. Table 6 below highlights some of the key figures of people entering temporary accommodation.

	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Number of self-contained temporary accommodation spaces	107	104	106	119	129	150
Number of supported accommodation spaces	8 spaces	8 spaces	8 spaces	2 spaces (reduced due to Covid)	2 spaces	2 spaces
% of households who occupied B&B accommodation	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Average total time (days) spent in temporary accommodation	137	151	135	136	163	169

SBC have experienced continued high demand for temporary accommodation after Covid in line with the national trend. In meeting this unprecedented demand SBC have increased temporary accommodation stock levels to 150 temporary accommodation units as at 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023. 316 temporary accommodation placement began during 2022/2023, compared to 247 in 2021/2022. The average time spent in temporary accommodation was 169 days. On average, the time spent in accommodation has increased by one month when compared to pre pandemic.

This is in contrast to the aims and objectives outlined within RRTP, however SBC remain committed to the reduction in temporary accommodation numbers and use. The impacts of the pandemic continue to be longer lasting than anticipated and the unprecedented demand for temporary accommodation continued throughout 2022/23.

In line with National pressures SBC have experienced consistent challenges around managing void properties. These include supply-chain delays for materials, service and trade shortages and the impact of increased pressure on utility companies.

SBC have an excellent record in not having to utilise bed & breakfast accommodation, however during the height of the demands on temporary accommodation, bed and breakfast accommodation was used on seven occasions. While SBC have utilised bed & breakfast accommodation within the period due to these have been kept to a minimal level.

## **Housing Support**

The Housing Support Service forms part of the Council’s Homelessness and Financial Support Team and consists of an internal Housing Support team and a commissioned service. Housing Support offers accessible, flexible and personalised support to individuals in critical need to enable them to secure, establish, manage and maintain their home. The team’s objectives are:

- Prevent homelessness through the provision of person centred housing support
- Prepare individuals/households for independent living, and help them maintain their housing independence.
- Assist and support households towards securing suitable, affordable, sustainable permanent accommodation
- Support households regardless of accommodation status i.e. in temporary accommodation, at home and no fixed abode
- Promote the health, wellbeing and social integration of homeless households

Table 7 below shows the number of referrals each year as well as the percentage of cases which have been closed due to successful intervention.

<b>Table 7 – Referrals and % of Cases Closed</b>						
	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
No. of referrals received to Housing Support services(inclusive of Commissioned service(s))	476	592	388 <sup>1</sup>	261	265	301
No. of cases open within Housing Support Services(inclusive of Commissioned service(s))	278	296	395	386	415	470
Case closed with positive outcome recorded as a proportion of total number of housing support cases closed by SBC Homelessness housing support service and its commissioned service(s)	73%	74%	80%	85%	83%	79%

The Housing support Team continue to seek feedback from the people who received support. Here are some examples of this feedback over the past six years,

‘At a time in my life which I found extremely challenging it was incredible to find such a wonderful and kind team of people to help get safely through it! I felt truly blessed.’

‘Can’t believe the support I got’

Partner feedback is often sought as well as people receiving housing support. Below are a few comments from partners who were asked what they felt the Housing Support Team were doing well and what was working:

<sup>1</sup> Please note new method is being used. Previous years have included some double counting between services – e.g. 358 received internally and 252 by Commissioned services = 610 (however 218 referral were direct referral to commissioned services from internal service therefore total = 388.

'I feel the service is a vital component of homelessness services and we rely on their hard work and expertise to support vulnerable clients in their resettlement. Without them I have no doubt there would be a massive increase in the failure of tenancies and people would struggle to maintain them.'

'Great communication, partnership working, active problem solving and ability to look for solutions out of the norm'

'Huge amount of knowledge and skill with regards to all tenancy issues. Provide flexibility and compassion for services users and an understanding as to the complexities of working with particularly vulnerable and at times challenging service users.'

'Good joint working - and communication with the Justice Service.'

'It is a great service that is essential for other professionals and service users alike'

'Individualised support provision where tenant's needs are identified.'

### **Ukrainian Crisis**

The crisis in Ukraine continues to exert pressure on the housing sector in the Borders, by increasing the demand for rental accommodation in areas which are experiencing low turnover. Frontline officers continue to provide housing advice, assistance and support to displaced Ukrainian's entering the UK. Since the start of 2022, 15 families who travelled under the Ukraine Family Visa scheme, have been assisted via the statutory homelessness route, to resettle close to existing family members within the Scottish Borders.

### **Partnership Working**

Scottish Borders Council continues to work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and other providers to ensure a wide range of services are available to ensure that fewer people are affected by homelessness.

Examples of partnership working over the past six years includes:

- The 'Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers in the Scottish Borders', which was developed and implemented in partnership with the four locally based Registered Social Landlords in 2017/2018
- During 2018/2019 SBC continued to work with RSL partners, Four Square, and the Scottish Prison Service to implement the locally agreed arrangements for SHORE.
- The "flipping" of temporary accommodation into RSL permanent tenancies has been recently piloted and although applied in only a small number of cases so far, it has produced successful results and is a tool that could be developed and utilised further where this outcome would benefit the tenant and reduce disruption on the household.
- The Through Care and After Care Supported Accommodation Project reach its 10 year anniversary in 2019/20.
- In May 2019 Scottish Borders Housing Association implemented a new allocations policy which changed the way in which homeless applicants were allocated permanent housing.
- In October 2020 Eildon Housing Association implemented a new allocations policy changing the way in which homeless applicants were allocated permanent housing. Early indications in regard to this new allocations policy are encouraging both in regards to preventing and resolving homelessness.

- In 2020/21, SBC and Link Housing Association implemented a Section 5 protocol, which seeks to maximise the choice of homes available to homeless applicants and provide better opportunities to meet homeless households' needs.
- From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) changed their system that they used to let homes. Working together with six other social housing landlords across Scotland to create a new lettings service called These Homes.
- In 2020/21, SBHA introduced changes to their engagement strategy, increasing the use of emails, social media and texts to reach tenants regarding their rent arrears.
- In 2022/23 45% of all SBHA lets went to section 5 homeless applicants and SBHA continues to support the Housing First Programme.

### Permanent Housing

Close working relationships with RSL partners continued throughout 2022/2023, to accelerate the allocation of permanent lets to homeless household in order to reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation and reduce increasing the homelessness queue. During 2022/2023, approximately 40% of RSL lets were allocated to homeless households, compared to the 30% in 2021/2022.

### BeWell

Berwickshire Housing Association's Financial Inclusion Team assisted their tenants in obtaining £150,421 of backdated benefits in 2020/21, with a further £898,131 of benefits gains over the following year. In addition Berwickshire Housing Association developed a tenancy support service to support tenants who may have additional mental health and wellbeing support needs. The 18 month pilot project, called 'BeWell', was funded by BHA with additional funding from the Lintel trust. The project launched in 2021/22 and was to be delivered in partnership with Penumbra.

BeWell aims to:

- Promote independent living by addressing key factors that risk tenancy sustainment;
- Work in partnership with Penumbra to provide the range of emotional and practical supports that customers of Berwickshire Housing Association need;
- Reduce tenancy breakdown and rent arrears for customers of Berwickshire Housing Association;
- Reduce the number of voids created by tenancy breakdown
- Maximise access to BHA's tenancy support teams including the Financial Inclusion, Customer Accounts and Befriending services;
- Connect people rapidly to community-based personal and social support networks so that they feel safe and secure in their homes.

### These Homes

Berwickshire Housing Association have been working together with six other social housing landlords across Scotland to create a new lettings service called These Homes. These Homes will replace the HomeHunt service currently used to advertise, allocate and let BHA homes. The new digital lettings service will look very different to HomeHunt but will still work in a similar way in that a prospective tenant will need to register and apply for the properties they want to be considered for.

### Care Leavers

The Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers in the Scottish Borders, which was developed and implemented in partnership between Scottish Borders Council and the four locally based Registered Social Landlords in 2017/2018, seeks to ensure that the priority accommodation and support needs of care leavers are recognised in order that their needs for suitable housing are met in a planned and sustainable way. Key partners continue to support the 'Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: Improving Care Leavers Housing Pathways' to ensure that the housing needs of our care leavers are met in a planned co-ordinated way.

Continued application of the protocol across the last 6 years has seen the number of statutory homelessness applications received from care leavers fall by 28% since the introduction of the Protocol.

### **Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) Standards**

The Scottish Borders Council Homeless Service is the interface point for people leaving prison who have no fixed address.

<b>Table 8: No of statutory homeless applications where the last settled address is recorded as Prison</b>				
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
28	34	21	23	24

In November 2017 the ‘Sustainable Housing On Release for Everyone’ (SHORE) standards were launched nationally. The new standards are intended to ensure that the housing needs of individuals in prison are addressed from an early stage, in a consistent way across Scotland, regardless of where they come from, their housing status and how long they have been in prison or young offenders’ institution.

The SHORE standards were launched nationally in November 2017.

Across the 6 year period of the LHS, the Council has continued to work with RSLs, the Scottish Prison Service and other partners to implement the standards locally, including the implementation of a new information sharing protocol in 2019/20 in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service. The protocol has improved information sharing arrangements contributing to the aspirations of SHORE, allowing for earlier intervention both in terms of the prevention and resolution of homelessness.



A multi-agency working group was established in 2021/22, with key actions such as:

- Further development of the information sharing protocol to allow the sharing of information from the Scottish Prison Service with the four local RSL’s to promote homeless prevention activities.
- Developing a shared understanding of homelessness prevention activities when a tenant is incarcerated to ensure a consistent approach and support the no wrong door initiative.
- Explored the potential to launch bail supervision and home leave accommodation pilot which will be jointly managed by Justice and Homelessness Services. Working with local RSLs, 2 properties have been identified in 2022/23 to be used for this purpose.
- In partnership with Waverley Housing, a property was acquired that will provide a bail supervision and home leave accommodation property. The yearlong pilot will operate during 2023/24, and will allow for a full assessment of a person’s housing and support needs in a managed environment.

### **Crisis and Housing Intervention Funds**

One of two proposed Crisis Intervention Funds was launched in 2020/21. A total of £30,000 RRTP funding per annum has been committed to the Crisis Intervention Funds for the duration of the RRTP. The funds will be administered by Scottish Borders Councils with applications accepted from Homelessness and RSL officers.

The Housing Intervention Fund which launched in February 2020, the aim of the fund is to improve the housing options available to applicants who are in need of intervention due to rent arrears and who often face the prospect of being homeless. More often than not, by this stage, there has been a breakdown in communication with their landlords and/or a lack of engagement from the applicant to address the debt.

Prior to making an application, reasonable steps should be taken to address rent arrears by other means. Homelessness Officers work in collaboration with both the applicant and other interested parties to bridge that gap and help the customer remain in their tenancy. The applicant's landlord and the homelessness team are required to work together to ensure reasonable milestones are met by the applicant that aim to address the underlying cause of the arrears. There were 7 applications to the fund in the first year 2020/21, and 13 applications in the second years 2021/22. In 2022/23 there have been 15 applications to the fund. A total of £48,598 has been spent.

The second fund to launch in 2021/2022 was the Homelessness Intervention Fund accessible by front line workers within homelessness services to use in the prevention or resolution of homelessness. This fund has been very well used, including assisting applicants to access identification documents, allowing them to open a bank account enables better budgeting skills, attend community based activities to assist them to integrate into their locality.

### **Crash Pad**

A Crash Pad was established within the temporary homeless accommodation portfolio and became operational in April 2021. The Crash Pad is a self-contained property that can accommodate households on a short term basis (one or two nights), this will allow for improved assessment of need prior to allocation of temporary accommodation and aims to result in suitable temporary accommodation being provided in the first instance.

This will improve the customer's experience of homelessness, make more efficient use of the wider temporary accommodation stock and reduce Scottish Borders Council's risk of breaching the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

### **Digital Inclusion**

Housing access and housing stability can be greatly improved for those who have consistent access to the range of services that are offered digitally. Homeless applicants are often digitally excluded and assessment processes have been reviewed to help identify homeless or potentially homeless households who require additional support in this area.

As part of RRTP action to improve digital access, a successful application to Connecting Scotland Programme was submitted, with 10 packages being awarded to homeless households and 237 packages to RSL tenants in 2020/21, and in 2021/22 facilitated the provision of 20 iPads, 28 Chromebooks and 51 Wi-Fi devices to 56 households in the Borders.

The RRTP will continue to explore ways of getting homeless households digitally included throughout its lifespan.

### **Housing Options Toolkit**

The Housing Options Training Toolkit was launched in early 2022 with licenses being provided to around 2,700 local authority staff across Scotland. The project to produce the toolkit originated in the Housing Options Hub network as a joint procurement across all 32 local authorities and Glasgow Housing Association, the first of its kind in Scotland.

The Housing Options Toolkit was rolled out to frontline homelessness services in 2022/23.

### **Peer Mentoring**

A short-term peer support pilot was delivered in collaboration with Penumbra and concluded in August 2022. The Peer Support project aimed to provide social, emotional or practical help to those experiencing homelessness. Peers were recruited to work in service and use their experience to help other people who are facing similar challenges, and work towards breaking down barriers and access support networks.

The recruitment process for the project proved challenging with several rounds of unsuccessful recruitment, however, a suitable applicant was appointed and the pilot was delivered for 5 months.

16 people received peer support during the pilot. Self-reported improvements were recorded in the following areas;

- Mental health
- Life skills
- Exercise and activity
- Purpose and direction
- Social networks
- Participation and control
- Self-management
- Hope for the future

Although there are no current plans to mainstream this activity in the format of the pilot, the lessons learned from the project will inform other areas of the RRTP.

### **Scottish Housing Day**



Scottish Housing in 2019 was all about promoting Housing as a Human Right. It was held on the 18th of September 2019. To mark Scottish Housing Day, Scottish Borders Council joined up with RSLs, other Local Authorities and other organisations across Scotland to promote Housing as a Human Right.

Councilor Mark Rowley, SBC's Executive Member for Business and Economic Development at the time said:

“Everyone should have access to a safe, secure and affordable home and Scottish Housing Day brings together the entire housing sector to celebrate the positive impact that good quality housing makes to the lives of people and communities right across Scotland, as well as highlighting the range of housing options that are available”.

Throughout the day information on housing was publicised across the Council's social media platforms to provide information, advice and awareness of all the services the council offers in relation to homelessness, housing and other housing related services. A bake sale was held at Council HQ reception in Newtown St Boswells, raising a total of £315 for Home Basics. Home Basics is a small local charity which helps families on low incomes in the Scottish Borders furnish their homes.



## 5. Support to Live Independently

Addressing Priority 4: More people are supported to live independently in their own homes

### Key Achievements:

- The “Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People Housing, Care and Support 2018-28” identifies a number of developments for older people across Borders that are “no longer fit for purpose”.
- Responding to the Community Equipment and Housing Adaptations: Draft Guidance
- Housing needs and aspirations of young people study was carried out in 2018-2019 and identified a five year action plan
- Wheelchair housing study was carried out in 2019/2020 and identified an annual target of 20 homes with proposed delivery being divided into 15 by Registered Social Landlords with the balance provided by the private sector.
- 61 wheelchair standard homes delivered
- RSLs have spent £2.334m over the period, on 593 adaptations across their stock
- Over the past 6 years, £1.257m has been spent on major adaptations under the Scheme of Assistance
- Care & Repair have project managed 1,967 minor adaptations and repairs, and 403 major adaptations over the six year period of the last LHS. There have been 22,572 visits by a handyperson
- Over the 6 years of the LHS there were a total of 366 households supported with adaptations to their homes through grants.
- Housing Contribution Statement 2018 was developed and linked in with the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2018-2022
- 69 units of extra care housing have been delivered in the past five years, in Galashiels and Duns.
- Work has started on the former Kelso High School to convert it into 35 additional flats, which are expected to be completed in early 2023

### Health and Social Care Integration

Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership launched in April 2015. The partnership is responsible for planning and commissioning integrated services and overseeing their delivery. These services are all adult social care, primary and community health care services and elements of hospital care which will offer the best opportunities for service redesign. The partnership has a key relationship with acute services in relation to unplanned hospital admissions and will continue to work in partnership with Community Planning Partners.

The Housing Strategy Team developed a Housing Contribution Statement in 2016 and then again in 2018, the 2018 Contribution Statement was linked to the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategy Plan 2018-2022.

Work is currently underway in development the next strategic plan. The Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Strategic Framework has been developed to improve the outcomes of the local community, by taking an approach based on the needs of communities to prioritise areas where there will be the biggest impacts on the health and wellbeing outcomes of people in the Scottish Borders.

The Strategic Framework covers the period 2023-2028 and sets out how health and social care services are commissioned and provided over the next three years to improve and support the health and wellbeing of the people of the Scottish Borders. Throughout 2022/ 23 there has been a wide range of consultation and engagement between Health and Social Care and Housing, which has resulted in the housing being embedded into the Framework, meaning there is no separate Housing Contribution Statement.

## **Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People’s Housing, Care and Support 2018-2028**

Working with commissioned consultants, along with our strategic partners, the Council have developed an Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People’s Housing, Care and Support 2018-2028, which was launched at an event in Tweed Horizons in June 2018. This recognises that most people want to remain living in the community for as long as possible. Scottish Borders partners agree that suitable housing has a pivotal role to play in helping to meet older peoples’ health and well- being. As well as offering security and independence, housing provides the residential setting within which other elements of care and support services will be delivered. Getting the residential setting right also provides a basis for reforming services, allowing partners to better meet need as demands increase in the future.

The plan sets out how over the next 10 years the Scottish Borders Health and Social Care partners will aspire to deliver:

- 400 extra care houses (including 60 in a new retirement campus)
- 300 new build houses suitable for older people for sale and in the rented sector
- Existing housing, refurbished or remodeled - 300 houses in the social rented sector
- Housing support on site to be offered to 300 more older households across housing sectors
- Over 8,000 adaptations and small repairs to enable people to stay in their own home
- A minimum of an additional 20 specialist dementia spaces to meet the need identified in the emerging Dementia Strategy
- Investment in telecare / telehealth for over 800 households.

A number of key outcomes and an action plan as well as governance arrangements have been agreed. Governance, monitoring and evaluation of the Plan will be led by the Council’s Corporate Management Team, with regular reports on achievement against the action plan and target also being provided to the Integrated Joint Board.

### **Housing Event – Re-Thinking Older People’s Housing**

In June 2018, Housing, Health and Social Care held an event to launch the Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People’s Housing Care and Support; Re-Thinking Older People’s Housing. The event brought together a wide range of expert speakers from across Scotland looking at the pressing issues, the challenges and how we consider the future beyond the horizon.

The key themes of the event included:

- Housing Supply
- Construction/Skills Challenges
- Care and Support – Service Reforms
- Tele Healthcare – Innovation
- Supporting Independent Living

The event was a huge success and stimulated a wide discussion with some of the key stakeholders in the Scottish Borders.



### **Extra Care Housing**

The “Integrated strategic plan for Older People’s Housing Care and Support 2018-28” sets out a number of strategic actions, in particular development of Extra Care Housing in the main towns within the Scottish

Borders. This helps to tackle “not fit for purpose” older people’s housing and supports the delivery of 300 new homes for older people.

Following a needs assessment exercise, the Council agreed a delivery framework to provide new extra care housing developments in Duns, Eyemouth, Galashiels, Hawick, Kelso and Peebles. Delivery of these developments is now being overseen as one work stream of the Integrated Strategic Plan for Older Peoples’ Housing Care and Support arrangements.

Progress has been made in extra care housing over the 6 year period. In February of 2021, Trust Housing completed construction of the Longfield Crescent development at Todlaw in Duns, and worked with the Council to promote the development, the services it provides and allocate tenancies. Additionally, 39 units were completed at Wilkie Gardens in Galashiels by Eildon Housing Association in November 2021, with work on the former Kelso High School underway which is planned to form another 36 flats – estimated to be completed mid-2023.



**Wilkie Gardens, Galashiels**



**ECH Housing at Todlaw, Duns**

The Integrated Strategic Plan for Older Peoples Housing Care and Support 2018-28 also identified the issue of ‘not fit for purpose’ older person’s housing. Council staff met with RSLs who had stock that was affected by this issue, and most have developed asset management and investment strategies. It was planned that RSLs would bring forward project proposals to address these issues, through modernisation and/or remodelling. Eildon Housing Association completed a project in Elm Court Hawick in August of 2022, with another at Oakwood Galashiels under construction. Cairn Housing Association also completed a project at Abbotsford Court Galashiels in 2021/22. Berwickshire Housing Association are considering additional potential remodelling opportunities for their development at Gowanlea in Coldstream.

### **Wheelchair Accessible Housing Study**

As part of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) Guidance 2018, local authorities are required to support a greater focus on wheelchair accessible housing, providing a position statement in the SHIP on the following:

- What their current evidence base tells them about the requirement for wheelchair accessible housing, and any plans to develop this work further.
- The approach, if any, they have set in their Local Housing Strategy/ Local Development Plan to wheelchair accessible housing including any target/ quota that the local authority currently has in place.
- The number of affordable wheelchair accessible houses they plan to deliver over the five years as part of their broader plans for specialist provision.

In response the Council’s Housing Strategy Team commissioned consultants to investigate:

- The numbers, profile and views of wheelchair users and other people with substantial mobility issues who are likely to require wheelchair or similar forms of accessible housing.
- The current stock of housing suitable for wheelchair users, particularly in the social housing sector.
- The challenges wheelchair users and their families experience in securing a suitable home and the factors that have contributed to this.
- Current and potential shortfalls in the provision of wheelchair accessible homes with particular emphasis on affordable housing provision.

Following the delivery of the finalised report “A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders” in January 2020, work has continued to engage stakeholders. The final report identified a wide range of issues and challenges which will need to be addressed at national as well as local levels, by Scottish Borders Council and partners. It is intended that the action plan will now be delivered and integrated with the Local Housing Strategy 2018-2023 actions through the LHS monitoring and reporting processes.

Informed by the above report the Executive Committee agreed to set an annual Wheelchair Accessible Housing target of 20 homes with the proposed delivery being divided into 15 by Registered Social Landlords with the rest of the balance being provided by the private sector. This target is currently reflected in the Scottish Borders Council current Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023-2028.

### **Wheelchair Housing Delivery**

Over the period 55 wheelchair accessible homes have been delivered. This is provided in great detail:

- 2019/20 – 5 units have been delivered which meet wheelchair accessible housing standards. Units were delivered by Berwickshire Housing Association at The Glebe in Chirnside as well as at Todlaw Park in Duns. Eildon Housing Association also provided properties at Howdenburn in Jedburgh and the former GP surgery in Town Yetholm.
- 2020/21 – 2 new build homes were completed to wheelchair accessible housing standards. These were delivered by Trust Housing Association at the new Extra Care Housing development at Longfield Crescent in Duns.
- 2021-2022 – 48 wheelchair standard homes were delivered. These were located as follows, 2 houses at Beanburn Phase 1 in Ayton by Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association delivered 7 flats at Huddersfield Street Galashiels and all 39 flats within the Wilkie Gardens Extra Care Housing development in Galashiels.
- 2022-23 – 6 wheelchair accessible homes were built as part of the McQueen Gardens site in Galashiels by Eildon Housing Association

RSLs have demonstrated their support and willingness to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible homes through the Affordable Housing programme, and it is envisaged that RSL funding bids to the Community Renewal Fund may potentially also contribute to boosting delivery of new homes. Therefore it is anticipated that increased numbers of wheelchair accessible homes will be delivered by RSLs in future years. However effort will have to be made to encourage delivery of wheelchair accessible homes from the private house builders.

### **HNDA Specialist Provision**

As part of the development of the third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) a sub group has been established to work specifically on the Special Housing Provision section. The third Housing Need and Demand Assessment for the South East Scotland Area received robust and credible status on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

Specialist Provision refers to three broad categories of need covering six types of housing or housing-related provision. These support independent living for as long as possible and help to enable people to live well and with dignity.

Category of Housing Need	Type of Housing Provision
Property Needs	1. Accessible and adapted housing 2. Wheelchair housing 3. Non-permanent housing e.g. for students, migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees
Care and Support Needs	4. Supported provision e.g. care homes, sheltered housing, hostels and refuges 5. Care/ support services for independent living
Locational or Land Needs <sup>2</sup>	6. Site provision e.g. sites/ pitches for Gypsy/ Travellers and sites for Travelling Showpeople, city centre locations for student accommodation

The group worked on developing a comprehensive specialist housing section of the HNDA3 that meets all the core outputs:

- Identifies the contribution that Specialist Provision plays in enabling people to live well, with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Identifies any gaps/shortfalls in that provision and the future level and type of provision required.
- Considers evidence regarding property needs, care and support needs and locational/land needs.
- Undertakes consultation with all appropriate stakeholders who represent the views of those people who this chapter may impact upon and reports on the finding of such consultation.
- Gives due consideration to the provision of the Equality Act (2010).

### **Gypsy Travellers Needs Analysis**

SBC recently commissioned consultants to carry out engagement work with the Gypsy Traveller community in the Scottish Borders and to identify the housing needs and requirements of the Gypsy and Traveller community across the region. This was part of the early engagement work of this LHS 2023-2028. The purpose of engagement and needs analysis was to provide an evidence base to inform SBCs approach to meeting current accommodation needs for the GT population and projected needs from 2023-2028.

The assessment undertaken by Altair reviewed the following data sources; national and local data, surveys with households residing at Victoria Park and Innerleithen sites, a survey of those attending the St Boswells Fair and one response to an open survey.

A stakeholder workshop was held on 18th August 2022 attended by stakeholders from Scottish Government, COSLA, NHS Borders, Police, SBC (housing, planning, social care, safer communities, estates, homelessness and legal), Fire and Rescue and Education.

In summary the engagement and needs analysis undertaken concludes the following:

- It is clear that the length of seasonal provision is not enough to fully meet the needs and there is a strong message of ensuring that any future provision accommodates travelling needs.
- The inability to offer provision to those occupying unauthorised encampments has been a source of frustration in providing appropriate support to the Gypsy/Traveller community.
- The consideration of a location for a future site should address the need of the Gypsy/Traveller community to access services and amenities and be informed by the locations of unauthorised encampments, which present across the central Borders area.

<sup>2</sup> At SDP and local authority level Gypsy/Traveller issues are a requirement of SPP given cross border issues here. Locational need may also be for non-permanent accommodation e.g. student accommodation in town centres or near the college/university. Other more innovative or aspirational 'locational need' may be for certain types of Specialist Provision e.g. properties within close proximity to shops and services or in groups (villages) to allow support services to be managed and delivered more effectively. With the health and social care agenda, this may come more to the fore so that in future there will be more planning collaboration over the provision of nursing/care homes, residential homes etc.

- In taking further steps towards site development a thorough and robust engagement process both for the Gypsy/Traveller community and the settled community will be required.
- That in relation to future delivery of services to the Gypsy/Traveller community, adequate training is given to officers and face to face engagement techniques are prioritised.
- Consideration should be given to the different ethnic groups encompassed within Gypsy and Travellers, which is an umbrella term.

This analysis has indicated an estimated unmet need for an additional site provision of 28 pitches. Estimated additional household formation identifies an anticipated future need for 3 additional pitches. This had led to short working group who have been working on a project plan to identify any site provision in the Scottish Borders which led to a “call for sites” in February 2023. Responses to this are due by the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

### **Borders Care and Repair**



Caring, Committed, Connected, Creative

Scottish Borders Council has a contract with Eildon Housing Association to deliver the Borders Care and Repair Service.

The aim of the service is to enable older people and people with disabilities living in the private sector to have warm, well maintained and safe home. Care & Repair helps to achieve this by:

- Providing help and advice on housing repairs, improvements and adaptations, and to ensure the work is carried out in accordance with The Care & Repair Standards.
- Providing a Home Handyman service to help to support community care groups (prioritising older people and people with disabilities), to continue to live at home through the provision of practical household help and support.

The service is available to:

- Home owners over 60 years of age
- Private tenants over 60 years of age
- Disabled owners or private tenants of any age



### **Disabled Adaptation Outcomes**

A major adaptation involves permanent changes to the structure of a person’s home. These works are subject to mandatory grant provision and are prioritised for financial assistance by Scottish Borders Council. These include:

- Provision of standard amenities which can include an extension to provide any or all of the standard amenities
- Provision of structural adaptations with the exception of extensions, to provide living accommodation

Over the 6 year period of the LHS a total of £1,257,704 was spent on major adaptations throughout the region in the private sector. The COVID pandemic had an impact on the delivery of these services for multiple years, but despite this there were still 403 major adaptations delivered over the period in the private sector. There were also a total of 1,967 small adaptations and repairs carried out with a total spend of £415,707, and 22,572 instances of practical assistance from the handyman service. Over the 6 years of the LHS there were a total of 366 households supported with adaptations to their homes through grants.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Small Adaptations & Repairs	331	421	400	264	199	353
Handyperson	4,154	4,058	4,060	2,643	3,931	3,726
Major Adaptations	85	94	82	41	33	68
Households Awarded Grants	85	79	74	36	31	61

In 2011 there was a significant move to the development of a ‘One Stop Shop’ model for all adaptations in the Borders, which was achieved through an agreement with each of the four larger Registered Social Landlords. This provides a consistent adaptation service to all people in the Borders regardless of tenure. Through the One Stop Shop approach, Care and Repair effectively spend the funding awarded from the Scottish Government national budget, referred to as Stage 3 funding, for each of the RSLs. Table 10 below details the number of major adaptations and spend by each RSL over the 6 year period.

RSL	Number Completed	Spend
Berwickshire Housing Association	99	£435,527
Eildon Housing Association	160	£575,309
Scottish Borders Housing Association	264	£1,082,702
Waverley Housing	70	£240,786
<b>Total</b>	593	£2,334,324

During 2021/22, Borders Care and Repair were awarded £5,000 to supply and install smoke alarms, supporting those on low incomes to meet the new Scottish Government legislation on fire safety and detection. Funding came from the Scottish Government and was distributed by Care and Repair Scotland. Access to funding was for those aged over 60 or any age with a disability who owned their own home, property was council tax band A-C and with a qualifying benefit of either Pension Credit or Employment Support Allowance.

Borders Care and Repair assisted 21 households by the end of March 2022, fitting a total of 78 units. Work was then carried forward into 2022/23, with an additional £10,000 funding.

### **Personalising Services**

Scottish Borders Housing Association’s Strategic Plan has a commitment to personalising services to ensure those at risk can access support. During the COVID pandemic welfare calls were made to 4,500 tenants and regular welfare checks were maintained with those who had requested them. Using Customer insight data SBHA were able to prioritise their response initially to those shielding, elderly or those with a disability. Referrals made into the community assistance hubs and resilience groups where required. SBHA reduced the number of tenants who over £1,000 in arrears. This has been the result of a change in engagement strategy, email, social media and text has been utilized to reach out to tenants. Normally there is a 5% engagement rate from high risk cases as SBHA proceed with enforcement, however this increased to over 90% during the lockdowns.

## **Connecting Scotland**

RSLs throughout the region have taken part in the Connecting Scotland Initiative allowing them to distribute iPads and Chromebooks to tenants through the scheme enabling them to be digitally connected. Team members were trained as digital champions to offer support to Tenants to get online and use devices.

## **Housing Proactive, OK Each Day**

Berwickshire Housing Association launched a new service across Independent Living homes in partnership with Alertacall, called Housing Proactive, Ok Each Day. This service is the first step towards Berwickshire Housing Association reviewing their overall approach to supporting customers to live independently at home within their local communities for longer. It marks the first step in preparations for the Analogue to Digital switchover.

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

#### HOUSING STRATEGY, POLICY & DEVELOPMENT

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