



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S
**LOCAL HOUSING
STRATEGY 2023-2028**
ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



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1. Introduction

We are delighted to present our third annual report on the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028, which highlights key achievements and progress from April 2025 to March 2026.

There have been several challenges over several years which have impacted housing delivery and services across our region including the legacy of COVID-19, inflationary pressures, the cost-of-living crisis and global instability. We have a number of challenges in the Scottish Borders which include shortage of private developers, a housing market unable to keep pace with demand, an aging population, homelessness pressures and the rural nature of the region. This led Scottish Borders Council to declare a Housing Emergency in May 2024.

While the scale of challenge remains significant, it is important that we celebrate our achievements which is what this report seeks to do.

This is our fifth LHS that has been developed for the Scottish Borders. It sets out a detailed action plan and provides the monitoring and evaluation framework for reporting annual progress on the delivery of our five strategic outcomes and the new LHS Vision, which is:

“Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community”

Our five strategic outcomes are:

<p>Strategic Outcome 1:</p>  <p>More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive</p>	<p>Strategic Outcome 2:</p>  <p>People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing</p>
<p>Strategic Outcome 3:</p>  <p>Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy</p>	<p>Strategic Outcome 4:</p>  <p>Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage</p>
<p>Strategic Outcome 5:</p>  <p>Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible</p>	

2. More Homes in Sustainable Communities

Addressing Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Increase the supply of alternative tenure housing to meet a broad range of needs.
- Increase construction capacity and skills to support delivery of more homes.
- Implement revised planning policy and practice to ensure it is directive in shaping existing and new places.
- Support the delivery of housing regeneration in communities (including town centres and rural settlements).
- Support the development and implementation of Local Place Plans to help address local housing challenges.
- Reduce the number of empty homes.
- Explore innovative approaches to housing delivery in conjunction with partners.

Housing Emergency Action Plan

SBC declared a Housing Emergency on 30th May 2024.

As a result, a Housing Emergency Action Plan was developed and agreed in April 2025. The Strategic Housing Forum was established and met twice in 2025/26. The Forum effectively acts as a Housing Emergency Programme Board, discussing key strategic housing issues, monitoring delivery against the actions set out in the Housing Emergency Action Plan and agreeing key priorities and actions in response to the Housing Emergency. The next meeting of the forum is in May 2026 and a progress report on the Housing Emergency Action Plan will be taken to committee in June 2026.

Providing Affordable Homes

As part of the LHS 2023-2028 development, the Housing Supply Target for the Scottish Borders was set for the next five years, with an annual target of 370 new homes:

**141 affordable homes
per year**

**229 market (private)
homes per year**

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan sets out the strategic investment priorities for affordable housing over the 5-year period to achieve the outcomes set out in the Local Housing Strategy and meeting the Housing Supply Target for affordable homes.

The SHIP 2026-2031 was approved in October 2025 and proposed an ambitious potential delivery of 1,061 new affordable homes underpinned by an estimated investment of £258m.

94 affordable homes were delivered during 2025/2026

69 of these were new supply affordable homes

The affordable home completions in 2025/26 were as follows:

Provider	Project Completion		Tenure	General Needs	Particular Needs	Total Units
BHA	Open Market Purchases	Various	HA Rent	2		2
EHA	Edgar Court	Westruther	HA Rent	10		10
SBHA	Howdenbank	Jedburgh	HA Rent	42	2	44
SBHA	Valentine Row (HUSK)	Hawick	HA Rent		6	6
SBHA	High Street	Galashiels	HA Rent	2		2
SBHA	Butler Court & Lothian Road (HUSK)	Jedburgh	HA Rent		7	7
SBHA	Open Market Purchase	Various	HA Rent/ MMR	10		10
OMSE	Open Market Shared Equity	Various	HA Rent	6		6
EHG	Empty Homes Grant	Various	MMR	7		
Total				79	15	94



Open Market Purchases

In light of current challenges within the construction sector, RSLs have been exploring different models to increase the supply of much-needed homes. SBHA and Berwickshire Housing Association

have acquired 12 properties during the period, covering towns such as Kelso, Hawick, Peebles, Galashiels and across Berwickshire. Ten of these properties were for social rent and two were for Mid-Market Rent, SBHA have a policy to prioritise these homes as key worker housing.

Supporting Housing Delivery

During 2025/26 we used the Second Homes Council Tax Affordable Housing Investment Budget to support:

- 🏠 The housing development project at Allanbank in Lauder – supporting the delivery of Mid-Market Rent homes on this project
- 🏠 Matching funding for two years for a second empty homes officer post

We used Affordable Housing Policy Developer Contributions to:

- 🏠 To support the delivery of two workshops to strengthen partnership working between housing and health and social care partners. This led to working with Socialudo to deliver these – playing ‘serious games’ in September and November 2025.



Rural Housing Fund

The Rural and Islands Housing Fund aims to increase the supply of affordable housing across all tenures in rural Scotland.

It is anticipated that the Scottish Government will be introducing a new Rural and Island Housing Grant Scheme, offering up to £20 million over four years to help people, including first-time buyers and families purchase affordable homes in the rural and island communities where they want to live. The scheme will also operate alongside the £37 million Rural and Island Housing Fund, which was recently extended to 2028 and continues to support organisations delivering low-cost home ownership options or homes for social rent.

Since 2019/20, the scheme has supported the development of 19 affordable homes in rural parts of the Scottish Borders, providing grants totalling over £1 million. Although there are currently no approved projects there are several pipeline projects highlighted in the SHIP, we will continue to work with and support community groups to access this funding.

Self-Build Register

We established a self-build register in 2024, which is available on the SBC website. As of March 2026, 17 people have registered an interest in acquiring land in our area for self-provided housing.

Edinburgh and the South-East Scotland City Region Deal

The City Region Deal reflects the joint commitment of city region partners and the Scottish Government to deliver the regional housing programme, transforming regional housing supply and driving economic and inclusive growth across Scotland. The regional housing programme aims to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing and housing across all tenures to reverse the housing emergency, increase the supply of quality homes, reduce homelessness and enable inclusive growth to meet the greatest housing need in Scotland. Key priorities are:

Priorities	Mission Statement	Activities
Affordable Housing Delivery	Deliver more affordable homes more quickly across ESES through securing more funding and pursuing innovative delivery methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individually delivering affordable housing programmes Collate Regional SHIP
Strategic Sites Programme	To unlock over 40,000 homes, £30bn GVA and 8,000 jobs, across the seven strategic sites and apply learning to a future pipeline of sites might want to add in something about impact on poverty and inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed the following: Economic Impact Assessment, Strategic Sites Programme Prospectus Document Share best practice through Strategic Site Lead Officers Group
Regional Delivery Alliance	Accelerate the delivery of affordable through cost efficiency and speed, net-zero carbon homes through, aggregated demand, component standardisation and use of modern methods of construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Est. 18 affordable house types and design standard for projects Knowledge Hub Feasibility works across 3 bundles, 5 authorities, 25 sites and 617 units Construction projects across 2 authorities, 2 sites and 109 units Maintain the Regional Pipeline – SHIPs, Strategic Sites and others
Innovative Finance and Infrastructure Delivery Models	Explore new and innovative models to deliver infrastructure and new homes at pace and scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edinburgh Living operational and delivering MMR in Edinburgh Innovative solutions agreed to unlock Granton Waterfront
Housing Emergency Action Plan – Regional Actions	Reversing the local, regional and national housing emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to review all local HEAPs and identify small number of actions that partners can collectively progress or would benefit from regional approach

South East Regional Delivery Alliance

The South East Regional Delivery Alliance (SE-RDA) brings together local authorities, RSLs and industry partners to develop new affordable homes through collaboration. SE-RDA is being delivered by the City Region Deal Housing Partners, alongside Scottish Futures Trust. The following outputs for 2025/26 are:

- Regional pipeline managed
- Coordination of feasibility/design testing

- Regional typologies updated/expanded
- Options for additional funding/resources identified
- Meet the buyer events held with development industry
- Market/costs across region mapped
- Annual benefits evaluation report published
- Report on performance of projects against design and performance standards published
- Regional website and knowledge hub maintained

Tweedbank Expansion Strategic Site

The Tweedbank Strategic Site is anticipated to deliver between 400-550 homes, with affordable homes comprising a key part of the planned mix of housing stock.



The Borders Innovation Park is growing, and major enabling works have opened the

first development parcels at Lowood with a new masterplan that sets out a people centred, low carbon neighbourhood with employment space, retail, community facilities and active travel links. The current masterplan sets out 8.81ha (21.77 acres) of the 34ha estate to deliver 400-550 homes, alongside 2,500m² of commercial floorspace, 1,500m² of retail and flexible community space phased over approximately 15 years.

Enabling works for the Tweedbank Care Village have commenced on site and market testing has been concluded, with a report seeking Council approval to enter into the construction contract for this was considered by Scottish Borders Council on the 29th of January 2026.

Both the report for the Care Village and for the wider Tweedbank Housing Strategic Site were approved on the 29th of January 2026, and work has now begun to enable procurement of a development partner for the site. Once this has been agreed a report will be brought to Council seeking approval to enter into the contract for formal delivery. It is proposed that this report will be presented by October 2026.

Once a partner has been allocated, work to progress development of housing at Zone 4 in Lowood will begin, with a view to securing planning consent for this phase by 31st of March 2027. The £24.0m Care Village will replace existing outdated provision and deliver modern, purpose-built residential care in a dementia friendly, low carbon setting. The project forms a key part of the Council's wider place-based investment at Tweedbank and supports improved health, wellbeing and long-term sustainability of care services.

South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership

The [South of Scotland Housing Action Plan](#), created by the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) was launched in 2024 to help target urgent need for more homes and a greater choice of homes in the area. To this end, the plan focuses on six areas:

- Growing our own
- An accessible and enabling planning environment
- Increasing choice for all
- Prioritising our investment
- Putting the South on the map
- Creating the right conditions



Launch of South of Scotland Housing Prospectus

The South of Scotland Housing Prospectus was launched in June 2025 and outlines unique development opportunities in the region and some of the key sites and partners ready to bring forward development. The prospectus aims to encourage housebuilders and developers to gain a foothold in the region.

The prospectus has been co-produced by the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership with independent property specialists Rettie and Co.



Launch of Key Worker Homes in the South of Scotland

The research on Key Worker Homes was launched in May 2025, the research was carried out by South of Scotland Community Housing in partnership with Dumfries & Galloway Council, Scottish Borders Council, South of Scotland Enterprise and Scottish Futures Trust.



The research has demonstrated that a shortage of the right homes in the right places is having a significant impact upon key worker recruitment and retention in D&G and the Scottish Borders, affecting thousands of staff and posts in health, social care, education, policing and the land-based industries. Based on the evidence, key priorities for action have been identified to deliver more key worker homes where they are most needed, and the report makes a series of recommendations for how these actions can be implemented

Campaign Launched to Encourage South of Scotland Housebuilders to Grow

A new campaign is underway to highlight the support available to ambitious South of Scotland housebuilders looking to start-up, grow, and innovate. The campaign led by SoSE on behalf of, and with input from, the REP will encourage businesses in the construction and housebuilding sector to get in touch to discuss their future plans. Support available includes expert advice, training, mentoring and potentially funding available to assist.

Local Place Plans

The principal aim of Local Place Plans is to strengthen the role of communities in influencing and shaping their local environment. Local Place Plans offer a structured way for communities to contribute to the SHIP process. As part of the Borderlands Place Programme, four communities within the Scottish Borders were identified as priority towns, with £7.2 million of funding available through the Place Programme (£1.8 million per town). The four towns are Eyemouth, Galashiels, Hawick and Jedburgh, all of which have now developed place plans that have been endorsed by the Borderlands Place Programme Partnership.

All four towns are now progressing to the next stage which is to develop a Town Investment Plan. Galashiels and Hawick have formally registered their plans with SBC, and Eyemouth and Jedburgh are in the process of registration. Over 2025/26, workshops have been held in all four towns to discuss across the Council and SoSE all current work ongoing in these towns. One of the key aims of these workshops is to identify any opportunities going forward.

We currently have 15 registered plans, which can be found [here](#).

Scottish Housing Day

We celebrated Scottish Housing Day's 10th anniversary on the 17th of September 2025. This focussed on the importance of good neighbours and communities and how they are key to living well in our homes.



South of Scotland Community Housing

South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) continue to work with local communities in the Borders. In 2025/26 SOSCH has:

- Continued to support Newcastleton and District Community Trust and Stow Community Trust through the completion of feasibility studies. We are continuing to support both groups as they look to progress their projects through next stages of development.
- Begun working with West Linton and Carlops Community Development Trust in undertaking a Housing Need and Demand Assessment to better understand local housing needs.
- Completed research evidencing the demand for key worker homes across the South of Scotland region.
- Won the award for 'Outstanding Contribution' at the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership Awards 2025.

Looking ahead, SOSCH is commencing new research which will support community housing providers and RSLs to collaborate more extensively and effectively as non-market housing providers.

Empty Homes

Our empty homes officer has been working to bring empty homes back into use, the figures below highlight progress in this area within the last year:

- 126 empty homes have been brought back into use through direct officer support as of March 2026. This includes 22 brought back into use in 2025/26.

The Empty Homes Grant Scheme, launched in 2022, secured further funding in October 2024 to extend the allocation for the duration of the current LHS – ending in March 2028. Following the success of the grant scheme, an additional £700k has been allocated to support more owners to bring empty homes back into use.

- The Grant Scheme has supported 27 projects to date, with 15 being made available for affordable rent. There has been a total grant allocation of £626,195.71 which has unlocked investment of over £1.6m.

2023/24

- 1 grant supported property tenanted
- 4 grant supported properties occupied by owners
- Committed spend of £76,943.17

2024/25

- 3 grant supported properties occupied by tenants
- Committed spend of £92,801.73

2025/26

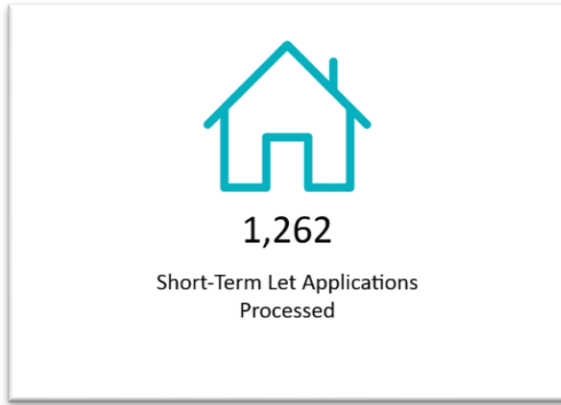
- 7 grant supported properties occupied by tenants
- 2 grant supported properties occupied by owners
- Committed spend of £241,401.02

Of the remaining 10 projects that are still underway, there is a committed spend of £240,049.79. There are currently 18 new grant applications which are under review.

In February 2026, Scottish Borders Council increased its Empty Homes capacity, increasing from 1 FTE to 2 FTEs. This has allowed investigations into reported empty homes to continue but has also allowed the Council to be more proactive in targeting empty homeowners with a view to supporting them to bring their properties back into use.

Short Term Lets and Second Homes

Analysis of short term let licenses and second homes has been undertaken with the view of identifying any areas suffering from housing pressure. This report was circulated for internal consultation in early 2025 and following discussion at the Strategic Housing Forum, it was agreed we would continue to closely monitor short term lets and review on an annual basis.



Private Rented Sector: Landlord Registration

Landlord Registration allows local authorities to control and regulate who can operate legitimately as a private landlord. As of the end of March 2026, we had:

There has been an overall reduction in both the number of landlords and number of registered properties – with 279 fewer properties for rent than in March 2025, and 181 fewer landlords. This continues the trend from the past few years, where numbers of both landlords and registered properties have been steadily decreasing.



Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 1:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
No. of new homes (Market, Affordable/Rent) (HST)	228	370	288	Not available	Not available
No. of new build affordable homes	120	141	177	72	69
Total number of affordable homes delivered	141	150	221	88	87
No. of new Mid-Market Rent properties (RSL)	6	TBC	5	3	2
No. of long-term empty homes	1,730	<1550	1,822	1,737	1,781
No. of Empty Homes brought back into use	37	30 p.a.	30	17	22
No. of Empty Homes Grant applications	18	10 p.a.	8	26	18
No. of Affordable Homes Through Empty Homes Grant	-	N/A	1	3	7
Financial commitment through Empty Homes Grant	£ 274,426.99	N/A	£124,921.42	£550k	£626,196
No. of active properties registered through landlord registration	7,325	Context	7,446	7,258	6,979
No. of people on the self-build register	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	17
No. of live Local Place Plans	0	Context	0	4	15
No. of Short Term Lets	-	N/A	810	1,244	1,308

3. Specialist Housing, Particular Needs and Independent Living

Addressing Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Work in partnership to deliver more accessible homes across tenures.
- Increase the supply of wheelchair housing.
- Provide information, advice and assistance on housing options and adaptations to meet particular needs across tenures.
- Review the Scheme of Assistance ensuring the new Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations is reflected.
- Strengthen joint working with partners in HSCP, NHS, RSLs and others to deliver appropriate housing solutions for individuals with complex needs.
- Strengthen joint working to support key worker and employer led housing opportunities.
- Identify land and funding opportunities to more effectively meet the needs of the Gypsy and Gypsy Traveller community.

Extra Care Housing

There have been no extra care housing developments in 2025/26. Following two reports by Indigo House and Buchan Associates to review current need and to update the extra care housing needs analysis carried out in 2016 work has now begun on a Business Case for extra care housing in Hawick.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target

2 wheelchair accessible home(s) have been built during 2025/26, and a total of 95 wheelchair accessible homes have been built over the last five years – an average of 19 per year.

We continue to work alongside RSLs to ensure the Wheelchair Housing Target is being met and will be met in the future. Some RSLs have committed to 10% wheelchair housing on suitable developments.



Specialist and Supported Accommodation Work Programme

Delivering the right homes in the right places remains a critical priority for the council. This is increasingly challenging due to rurality, an ageing population, rising homelessness, workforce pressures, construction cost inflation, and constrained public funding. There is a growing mismatch between the supply of specialist and supported housing and the scale and complexity of need across housing, health, and social care.

In response, we are working with Health & Social Care, RSLs, and third-sector partners, is progressing a coordinated programme of work to strengthen specialist and supported housing pathways, improve prevention, and reduce reliance on crisis services.

The aim is to ensure people with complex needs can access safe, high-quality, person-centred specialist and supported housing that promotes independence, improves wellbeing, and reduces pressure on homelessness, health, and social care systems. It seeks to move beyond fragmented, reactive responses towards a planned, partnership-led, preventative system underpinned by robust data, shared planning, and stronger cross-sector relationships.

The programme aligns with the findings of the Socialudo work and focuses on strengthening cross-sector relationships across housing, health, social care, and the third sector. It is critical to reducing pressure on temporary accommodation, hospitals, and residential care by enabling earlier, more appropriate housing solutions for people with complex needs; improving independence and outcomes through better-aligned housing, care, and support; delivering stronger value for money by coordinating investment across housing, health, and social care; supporting the Council's response to the declared housing emergency; and ensuring future housing delivery is realistic, affordable, and sustainable within current financial and workforce constraints.

Key Workers

Key workers is a key area of the LHS and as already mentioned in section 2 as part of the Regional South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership, South of Scotland Housing Action Plan. We continue to work with our RSL partners and Health and Social Care on delivering key worker accommodation in the region:

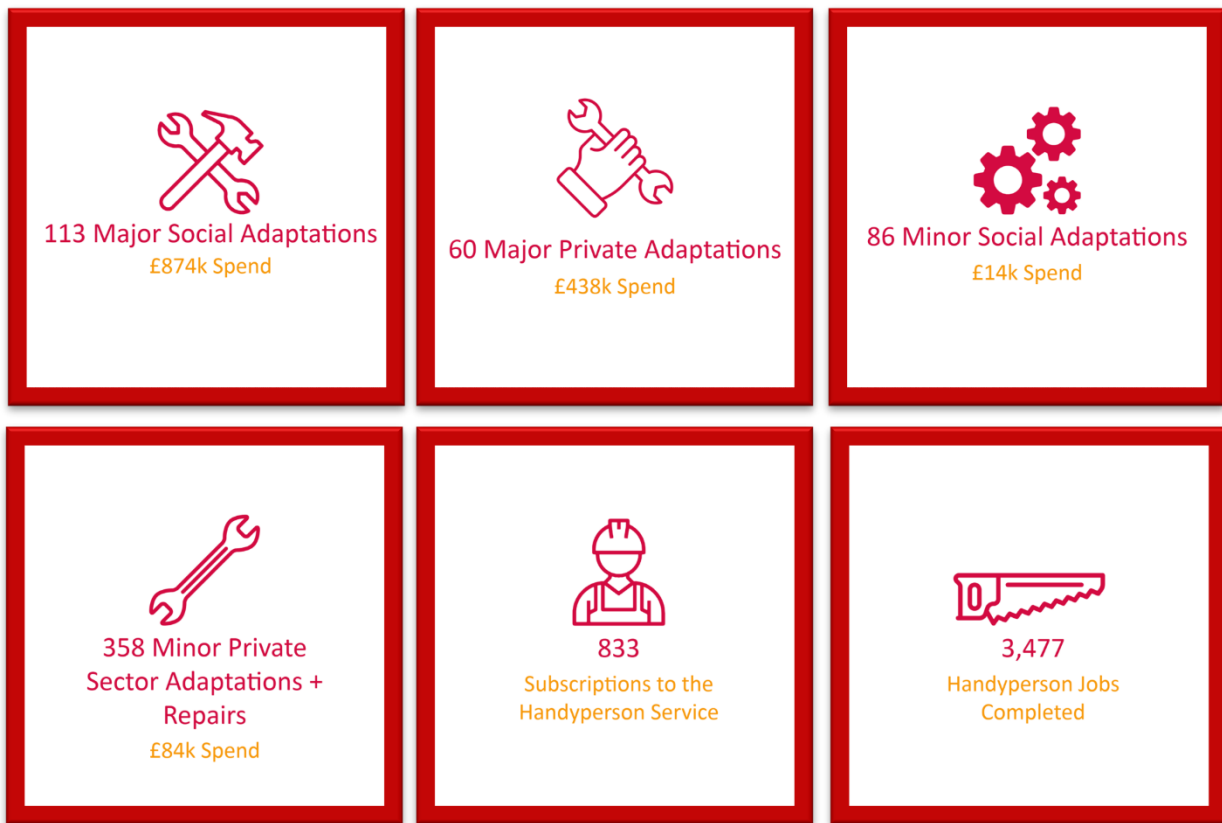
- Eildon Housing Association continue to provide 10 properties at McQueen Gardens for key workers – 5 for NHS Borders and 5 for SBC Adult Social Care. There has been a phased reduction in properties for SBC adult social care in 2025/26, with the hand back process to Eildon Housing Association underway.
- SBHA – have given priority to key workers on their Mid-Market Rent properties. In 2025/26, SBHA acquired an additional 2 properties for Mid-Market Rent.

Scheme of Assistance and Adaptations

Scottish Borders Council operates a Scheme of Assistance which provides advice, guidance and practical support to help people adapt their homes to better meet changing needs, particularly where those needs relate to disability, reduced mobility, ill-health or ageing. The primary focus of the scheme is to support people to live safely, comfortably and independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

Through the Scheme of Assistance, the Council offers support in relation to housing adaptations, helping owners and tenants in the private sector to understand available options, responsibilities and processes. This includes advice on identifying appropriate adaptations, understanding how adaptations may interact with common or shared parts of a building, and signposting to services that can provide technical or practical assistance. The Scheme of Assistance also provides access to private-sector grant funding for major adaptations, where assessed as necessary.

These grants are intended to support more substantial works such as level-access showers, ramps, stairlifts, widened doorways or major internal reconfiguration - where such adaptations are required to enable a person to remain safely and independently in their home. Grant support is typically linked to an assessment of need and is subject to eligibility criteria, ensuring that resources are targeted towards those with the most significant requirements.



Type of Major Adaptation – Private Sector	Number Completed
Automatic Door Opener	1
Closomat	1
Curved Stair Lift	4
Door Widening	1
External Ramp	1
Graded External Steps	1
Level Access Shower	18
Permanent Ramp with Level Threshold Door	1
Platform Lift, Ground Works & Low Threshold Door	1
Ramped Access	2
Straight Stair Lift	16
Tracking Hoist	4
Wet Floor Shower Room	9
Total	60

Care and Repair

In delivering adaptation support, Scottish Borders Council commissions Eildon Housing Association to provide the Borders Care and Repair Service. This service offers independent, person-centred advice and practical assistance to older and disabled people living in the private sector across the Scottish Borders, helping them to repair, improve or adapt their homes. The aim of the Borders Care and Repair Service is:

“To provide a Care and Repair Service to assist older or disabled residents of the Scottish Borders, living in the private sector, by offering independent advice and assistance to help repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and safety in their own home and community, in accordance with Scottish National Care and Repair Standards.”



In 2025, the Borders Care & Repair service celebrated 20 years of the dedicated service. Over that time £13.8 million of adaptations have been made to homes across the Borders, ensuring older residents can continue to live independent and productive lives. Most individuals receiving the Care and Repair service reported that it positively supported their independence and expressed overall satisfaction with the service provision. A large proportion also indicated that the interventions provided made them feel less likely to have a fall at home, and reduced feelings of anxiety around home safety. 97% of surveyed service users described the overall service provided by Care and Repair as "Very Good".

Gypsy Traveller Site Provision

Work has been undertaken through a call for sites to explore potential opportunities for Gypsy/Traveller site provision across the Scottish Borders. This approach supports national guidance, which seeks to ensure that Gypsy/Traveller communities have access to safe, culturally appropriate places to live and travel, while also helping to manage and reduce the incidence of unauthorised encampments.

Further work to understand the viability of future site provision is ongoing and includes:

- Development of a business case to assess feasibility and long-term sustainability
- Engagement with other local authorities to better understand their approaches to Gypsy/Traveller site provision
- Financial analysis to inform potential delivery and funding models

The outcomes of this work will help inform future decisions on whether and how site provision may be taken forward.

Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 2:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
No. of Wheelchair Accessible Homes built	6 RSL	20 p.a. 15 RSL	38 RSL	1 RSL	2 RSL
No. of particular needs homes built	10	40 p.a.	38	4	15
No. of adaptations funded to existing homes	674	530 p.a.	705	573	614
No. of private major adaptations	68	80 p.a.	63	69	60
No. of social rented major adaptations	170	120 p.a.	167	87	113
No. of private minor adaptations + repairs	353	300 p.a.	384	299	358
No. of social minor adaptations + repairs	88	110 p.a.	100	121	86
Private Sector Major Adaptations Budget	£450k	N/A	£525k	£500k	£500k
No. receiving community alarm or other TEC options	1,265	1,500 p.a.	1,268	1,265	tbc
Number of additional permanent sites provided for Gypsy Travellers	0	1	0	0	0

4. Climate Change, Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

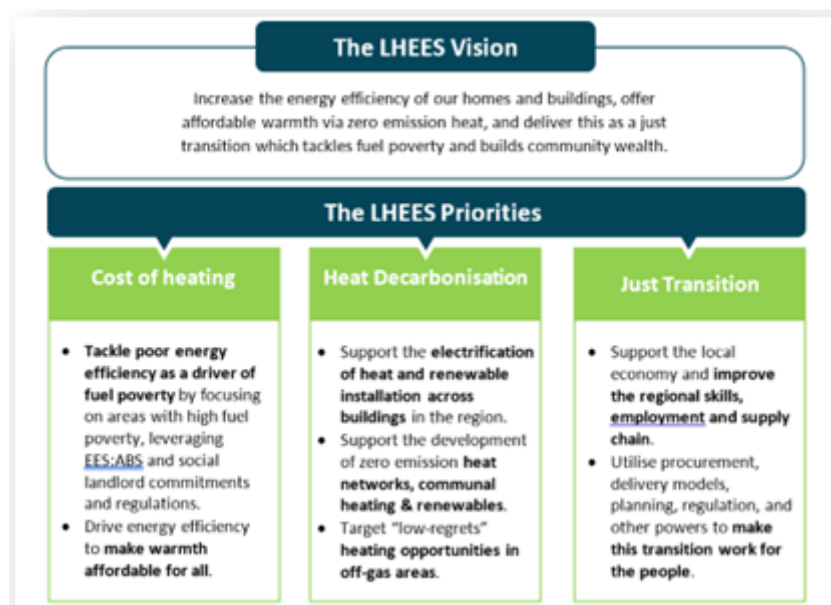
Addressing Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Work with partners to improve energy efficiency across all tenures
- Develop Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy for the Scottish Borders
- Implement a public engagement strategy for heat in buildings
- Work with partners to develop the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency & zero emissions heating systems
- Explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home
- Adapt and retrofit existing homes to improve their energy efficiency
- Consider next steps from CLES report including development of joint initiatives with regional partners

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy 2024/25-2028/29 was approved by Executive Committee on the 30th of May 2024.



LHEES Ongoing Delivery

We have now completed year 2 of the initial 5-year LHEES. At the close of the second year of delivery, we are still very much in the early year stages of LHEES and future opportunities developing. As these emerge and we are able to consolidate energy efficiency and decarbonisation activity in our region, we will start to see the benefits and potential. The LHEES remains flexible, adaptive and responsive to the region's needs, particularly in line with Heat Network developments and the emerging focus on Place Plans and community led initiatives.

Year 2 has continued to build strong foundations for long-term delivery and builds on year 1 activity. Key achievements include:

- Securing funding for regional projects (HNSU & Borderlands and additional EES:ABS)
- Identifying strategic Heat Network zones
- Completing village retrofit pilots
- Delivering significant EES:ABS energy efficiency measures
- Developing a shared evidence base with SOSE, RSLs, universities and REMP
- Building supply chain and local capacity

Croft Street Wastewater Feasibility

Feasibility work was previously completed in Croft Street, Galashiels, to assess the viability of a heat network to deliver waste heat from the sewerage system. We now have 12 months of data, which suggests that a local Heat Network is viable. This insight and data is available to local RSLs or other developers looking at options for Galashiels projects where a renewable technology could be utilised for heating. It could also prove useful to town centre developments in housing, care or hospitality.

LHEES Pilot Project by Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP)

We secured funding to develop an LHEES pilot project, supported by SUP. This sought to support the "self-funding" market and offer a service that supports households throughout the retrofit process.

This led to a shortlist of villages, with Swinton being chosen, and the lessons learned can be shared and used by other villages. Retrofit projects and support are a key part of the LHEES and we expect to undertake more of these with local communities.

Borderlands Energy Investment Programme Funding Application

Borderlands Energy Investment Programme presented an exciting opportunity to accelerate the regions transition to net zero by strategically investing in projects that support carbon reduction, local high value jobs, businesses and skills development and are replicable in other areas of the Borderland's region.

The Council led a submission looking at a Borders Rural Retrofit Programme. The project comprises a community retrofit programme in rural areas, targeting private homeowners. Work will be commissioned from local trades and professions wherever possible, build quality will be monitored to ensure high standards, and the process will be closely monitored to ensure the outcomes are widely shared and replicable.

SBC were invited progress to the next stage of the award process, and a full business case is now required to be developed and submitted to allow access to the funding.

If successful we will be able to access £1.7m of funding to develop and deliver the project over several years. . We have begun work to develop the project, populate the initial Outline Business Case, identify and engage local stakeholders and potential delivery partners. Submission date for the business case is Autumn 2026.

South of Scotland Heat Network Prospectus

In July of 2025, South of Scotland Enterprise – in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Councils – launched the South of Scotland Heat Networks Prospectus. This document outlines a series of significant economic, environmental and social benefits that heat networks might help to deliver.

District heat networks tend to be viable in town centres, campus environments or industrial areas, whereas Shared Heat Collector Networks can be viable at a wide range of scales, all the way down to small blocks of flats or rows of cottages.



The 19 potential networks proposed would cover 2,400 domestic and non-domestic properties in the South of Scotland and would help tackle fuel poverty and decarbonisation and provide new jobs and retention of wealth in the region.

Heat Network Support Unit – Scottish Government

Scottish Borders Council led on a joint bid with Dumfries and Galloway Council and South of Scotland Enterprise to the HNSU to access funding to develop the Prospectus into a practical and feasible delivery model that “bundles” opportunities in the region to present a larger project that may be attractive to developers and investors. We were successful in this application, and were awarded £150k with 10% matched, to develop a suite of feasible local smaller Heat Networks and how they would logically be progressed to next stage. The model would be sized appropriately to smaller regional Heat Networks.

Along with the experts from Scottish Government, Scottish Futures Trust and Zero Waste Scotland we are having regular sessions to progress both the individual projects and the wider overall project. Understanding the barriers, costs, needs and gaps to enable subsequent “real time” project delivery. We are now at the point where we are appointing technical support consultancy to consolidate and map the next steps and deliverables.

Construction Sector Forum

Our Construction Sector Forum is growing, this supports regional supply chain activity and information sharing. This forum has also prompted the development of a Trusted Trader website.

As of the end of 2026 there were 17 trusted traders signed up to the website.



Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS)

EES:ABS continues to be delivered across the Borders, reflecting our committed focus to the introduction of renewable technologies for the region, as well as retrofit insulation that suits common wall construction. We were awarded £1.827 from Scottish Government for 2025/26 for energy efficiency measures. On the back of strong performance delivering EES:ABS we applied to Scottish Government for additional funding to enable more homes in the region to benefit. We are delighted to have received an additional £379,000 to put towards 25/26 schemes

We work with Changeworks, the leading environmental charity working with Local Authorities across Scotland, who act as our managing agent to support delivery. Two students from high schools across the Borders recently took part in a work experience placement with Changeworks, where they had the opportunity to get involved in all aspects of the organisation's work

Forecasted completions for 2025/26 are as follows:

- Solar PV & Battery: 50 completions
- Air Source Heat Pumps: 20 completions
- Internal Wall Insulation: 45 completions

We have positively impacted people's lives during 2025/26, for example installing air source heat pumps. One of our [Evaluating Scottish Borders Council's Area Based Scheme](#) provides detail on how this technology helped a homeowner, and they stated:

"My husband felt the cold more as he has an illness, but since our new heating system was installed he is far more comfortable."

One of our contractor's community benefits contributions this year was the installation of IWI in Duns community hall. The community hall in Duns was identified as being in urgent need of energy efficiency upgrades. Prior to the works, it was described as having "the thermal value of a tin shed," with visitors often keeping their coats on due to the lack of adequate heating and insulation.



Figure 1 Before



Figure 2 After

BCA Ltd has now installed Internal Wall Insulation throughout the hall. As a result of these improvements, the building is significantly warmer, more comfortable, and more welcoming for users. The upgrades will deliver long-term energy-efficiency benefits and improve conditions for the many community groups that rely on the facility.

The estimated cost for the hall to undertake these works independently would have been approximately £7,500.

Other work is ongoing to Complete Community benefits with our contractor Union Technical.

Home Energy Scotland (HES) share their quarterly reports with us, which provide an update to local authorities and partners on the work of Home Energy Scotland. It highlights how the service supports households and communities by improving energy efficiency, reducing fuel poverty and helping to meet climate targets. It also demonstrates the impact of its free advice and support programmes. In 2025/26 HES supported 4,173 households in the Scottish Borders. HES also has well established partnerships within the region including Sustainable Borders, which lead them to receiving 156 referrals from partners via our online referral portal.

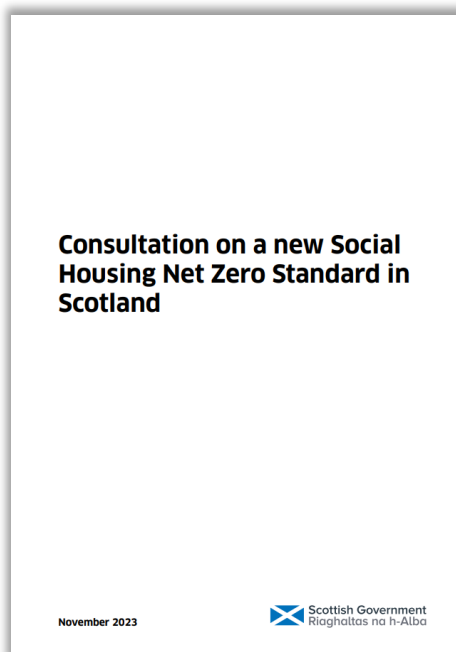
HES Report Data	2025-26			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Engagement (Scottish Borders)	1129	857	1128	1059
Event Specific Engagement	179	-	-	-
Owner Occupied	818	603	533	729
Social Tenants	10	7	19	15
WHS Referrals (Scottish Borders)	35	77	82	103
Measures installed	208	134	178	185
HES Grant and Loan Referrals	80	76	83	108

EESHS 2 Standard / Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS)

EESHS2 followed on from the standards set out in the original EESHS and outlined that all social housing should meet EPC B, or be as energy efficient as possible, by December 2032 within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent. It also stipulated that no social housing below EPC D should be re-let from December 2025.

The two core components are fabric first improvements and a clean heating requirement, with a shift away from polluting fossil fuel systems (like gas or oil boilers) to clean alternatives.

Currently, the Social Housing Net Zero Standard, which is designed to supersede EESHS2, has been delayed with no indicative date when it will be published. This has left social housing providers without clear guidance on how to proceed with retrofit projects. This final standard was consulted on during March 2024, but its formal publication was paused to align with the wider Heat in Buildings Act.



The Heat in Buildings Act is a proposed piece of legislation aimed at transitioning homes and businesses away from fossil fuel heating to clean systems like heat pumps or heat networks to reach net-zero by 2045. In autumn 2025 Scottish Government announced that the formal introduction of the bill would be paused until after the Scottish parliament elections in May of 2026.

Registered Social Landlords

Local RSLs in partnership with South of Scotland Enterprise, Changeworks and Built Environment – Smarter Transformation (BE-ST) have submitted a bid for £3.4m to further improve the local response to decarbonisation of homes.

Local Energy Advice Forum (LEAF)

Starting in March 2025, we created the Local Energy Advice Forum. This forum aims to bring together various local energy advice organizations and housing associations to discuss their valuable contributions to the community. The primary focus is on sharing insights, best practices. Since our first meeting in March 2025, the group has shared valuable information and broadened our understanding of the challenges facing advice services. It has also given members an opportunity to exchange guidance, insights, and experience. Sharing best practice with front line services is key to ensuring consistent and aligned advice, with LEAF meetings proving particularly helpful around energy price cap updates.

Building Assessment Report (BARs)

The role of a Building Assessment Report (BAR) is to help assess the suitability of a non-domestic property for connecting to a heat network, as defined in Part 5 of the Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021.

As an owner of non-domestic stock, we are required to complete BARS on our own properties. This was completed in partnership with our Estates team in late 2024, with all properties requiring a BAR having received one. These are logged and can be reviewed as part of wider LHEES and Heat Network scoping. We continue to receive external BARS, which will also be included in regional scoping.

Currently the volume and proximity of BARS in the region is not sufficient to present or dictate a Heat Network location.

Fully Funded Green Skills Training

Green Skills Training was launched in 2024 by Borders College, intending to enhance the skills of the workforce of the region to align with evolving property standards. These free courses have been run from early-mid 2024.

Climate View Platform

WeSBC adopted a new digital platform to effectively monitor carbon emissions, and real-time and forecast reductions. Councils use the Climate View Platform to plan, execute and track effective climate action at an area-wide level.

Working with Scottish Climate Intelligence Service using the platform to support capacity building and implementation of climate action. The platform will support local authorities to move existing climate action plans online and use the platform to design, implement and improve area-wide emissions reduction programmes, focusing on effective climate solutions. This is an insightful way to track LHEES and building stock activity in the longer term. To support this, data has been provided from EES:ABS to populate Climate View and start to track and interpret the outputs. The more we are able to fill in, the better the outputs.

Several SBC officers are now involved in inputting data and activity in Climate View. We are starting to see the value and outputs of the decarbonisation forecast tool. EES:ABS, Estate, travel, transport, LHEES delivery areas etc

- SBC onboarding a digital tool for real-time carbon tracking
- EES:ABS data already integrated
- Will later include the full council estate to guide estate decarbonisation

Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

ECO was a UK government initiative aimed at reducing carbon emissions and tackling fuel poverty by requiring energy suppliers to fund energy efficiency improvements in low-income and vulnerable households. ECO4 ran until March 2025 with an annual budget of approximately £1 billion. There is plans for a similar initiative to replace ECO in the future.

ECO Flex extends this by allowing local councils to approve referrals for households that may not meet standard ECO criteria.

In partnership with the Energy Agency, we have made significant progress:

- 204 ECO Flex referrals completed, delivering 537 energy-saving measures
- £3.81 million in total investment
- £ 406,349 estimated annual fuel bill savings
- 957 tonnes of carbon savings

The Borders is particularly well-suited for ECO due to its rural nature, older housing stock and high number of off-gas heating systems. We have agreed to maintain 10 pre-approved contractors and have the option of adding more if there is interest. This ensures quality by only working with vetted installers and prioritising Scottish and local firms.

Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 3:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total number of households supported by EES-ABS	138	150	88	77	Tbc
Total number of measures installed through EES-ABS	225	220	165	143	Tbc
EES-ABS investment/allocation in Scottish Borders	£1,806,000	£1,827,840	£1,824,000	£1,824,000	£1,827,000
Total no. of homes in the social rented sector retrofitted with specific measures introduced to improve energy efficiency	699	Context	735	tbc	tbc
% of owner-occupied stock compliant with EPC C or higher	30%	>30%	30%	33%	35%
% of privately rented stock compliant with EPC C or higher	22%	100%	22%	23%	28%
% of RSL stock EPC C or above	77%	Context	77%	78%	79%
% of RSL stock that is EESSH 1 compliant	92%	100%	92%	tbc	N/A
% of RSL stock that is EESSH 2 compliant	-	-	-	-	N/A
No. of households in Fuel Poverty	29% (SHCS 2017-19)	<29%	29% (SHCS)	29% (SHCS)	29% (SHCS)
Number of feasibility studies relating to heat networks	1	3	1	tbc	tbc
Number of ECO Flex referrals	0	tbc	0	241	0

5. Condition and Built Heritage

Addressing Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Provide holistic advice and assistance to owners/tenants to undertake house condition/energy improvement/home safety works and co-ordinate or explore funding options.
- Provide supporting information and assistance to owners and landlords to meet existing and future house condition standards in private housing.
- Review and develop the Scheme of Assistance to provide a more coordinated and collaborative approach to house condition standards.
- Work to better coordinate the partnership approach to Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) Housing, which is complementary to the Scheme of Assistance.
- Continue to implement Missing Shares and consider expansion of Missing Shares provision.
- Ensure activity in relation to repairs, maintenance, energy efficiency improvements and conversion are sensitive to the built heritage.

Private Landlord Engagement

We continue to undertake a variety of engagement activities with landlords in the Scottish Borders over the year 2024/25. There was no Private Rented Sector – Landlord Registration Officer in place from May until November 2025 so figures for engagement are lower than the previous year’s annual report.

548

Courtesy Final Reminder Letters Sent Prior to Landlord Expiration

52

Follow up actions in relation to late registration during the year (letters, phone calls and visits)

Provision of information and advice on maintenance, repairs and improvements

The strengthening of the Council’s private sector team will allow us to further develop this assistance, including how a more coordinated and collaborative approach to housing condition standards across the Council can be provided.

To assist homeowners, we have developed partnerships with external organisations, including Novoville, by supporting the use of their Shared Repairs App. This app-based tool is designed to help owners organise and deliver common repairs within their tenement, guiding them through each stage of the process.

In February 2026, Under One Roof - a charity dedicated to providing free, impartial information to tenement flat owners on maintenance, common repairs and retrofit -delivered a webinar in partnership with Scottish Borders Council. The session supported flat owners by outlining the correct procedures for organising repairs and offering the opportunity to have specific queries answered by Under One Roof's tenement expert. The webinar also allowed us to highlight the support available through our Scheme of Assistance, including the recently launched Scottish Borders wide Missing Share Scheme.

We continue to explore further opportunities to work with Under One Roof, including the provision of a webinar focused on damp and mould to support owners with upcoming legislative changes.

Missing Shares Scheme

Responsible homeowners in tenement buildings can often face difficulties progressing essential common repairs when one or more owners are unwilling or unable to contribute their share. This can lead to delays, stalled projects, further deterioration and escalated costs of repair.

To support owners in these situations, and to enhance the assistance offered through our Scheme of Assistance while maintaining the core principle that homeowners hold primary responsibility for the upkeep of their properties, the Council approved the introduction of a Scottish Borders wide Missing Share Scheme. The additional staffing resource required to develop and administer the scheme has now been put in place, and the scheme officially launched in February 2026.

Although wider promotion of the new scheme is planned for the first quarter of 2026/27, a payment of over £4,000 has already been committed to support common roof repairs to a tenement in Hawick. This long-standing repair had previously stalled because one owner was unable to contribute their share, resulting in ongoing water ingress to the top floor flat. The provision of the missing share has enabled the repair works to proceed.

Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

The Hawick CARS Scheme ran from 2019 until 2025, delivering repairs and improvement throughout the Conservation area and building skills and community capacity in the local area.

Over the period the scheme has delivered £2.4m of total investment, £1.314m of HES grant, £1.085m of private/match funding and delivered on 26 projects in the Conservation Area whilst helping to remove 3 buildings from the Buildings at Risk Register.

The scheme has also encouraged 423 people to participate in skills and education events, with 12 such events held over the period.

Physical Regeneration

The Liberal Club, 26 High Street and Round Close have seen significant works and investment through the scheme, reinstating traditional materials, restoring stonework and encouraging independent investment from adjacent owners. The Liberal Club is still on site, but 26 High Street and Round Close (SBC Funded) have now been removed from the Buildings at Risk Register.

Skills, Education and Awareness

A total of 423 people engaged in heritage skills or education activities in partnership with organisations such as Borders College, Scottish Lime Centre Trust and Hawick High School.

Indicator	Result
Individuals Trained	423
Apprenticeships Support	6
School Pupils Engaged	160
Heritage Events Held	12
Businesses Using Traditional Methods Post-CARS	12

One of the most enduring outcomes is the fostering of a locally embedded maintenance and repair culture, which will be enhanced through the issuing of a Maintenance Manual.

Economic and Community Impacts

Direct economic turnover has been modest, but wider effects were substantial.

- 75% of surveyed residents and businesses said Hawick looked “better cared for.”
- 67% of grantees reported improved confidence in the town’s future
- 50% of non-grantees recognised visible improvement and greater community pride

Wider Economic Context

Employment land audits (2018-2024) show stable land use and local activity. While Hawick’s retail base continues to contract in line with national trends, the CARS has visibly improved the town centre.

- Footfall recovery (+48% from 2021)
- Declining vacancy (-4% since 2021)
- Local supply chain capture (around 80%)

Compared to other Borders towns, Hawick shows a stronger recovery trajectory after COVID, suggesting heritage-led investment accelerates resilience.

Lessons for Future Programmes

Theme	Lesson Learned	Recommended Action
Governance	Maintain consistent steering-group oversight, even during disruption	Schedule quarterly meetings and remove alternatives
Administration	Simplify and accelerate payment processes	Pre-approve vendor setup and provide standard VAT templates
Communication	Improve public awareness through visible branding and outreach hubs	Use High Street pop-up base for visibility
Financial Management	Build contingency to manage inflation and scope changes	Include 10% budget flexibility with HES review
Partnerships	Fund a dedicated outreach role, not rely on volunteers	Ensure paid capacity in future schemes
Skills Legacy	Link training apprenticeships to ongoing H&PP or SBC contracts, acknowledging this will be largely funded by private contractors	Formal partnership with local trades network
Maintenance	Encourage post-grant cyclical maintenance	Develop “Fabric First” campaign and owner checklists and ensuring Maintenance Manual is in place

Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 4:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of owners supported through Missing Shares scheme	10	10	25	17	38
No. of private sector properties provided with advice and practical assistance	48	30 p.a.	130	112	123
No. of s29 Dangerous Building Cases (Domestic)	16	<16	0	27	tbc
No. of s30 Dangerous Building Notices served	1	<1	0	0	tbc
No. of Under One Roof events hosted with Borders residents	1	2	1	0	1
No. of contractors signed up to Trusted Trader Scheme	4	10	12	20	17
No of individual CARS building grants awarded	25	Context	1	18	26
Town centre buildings supported through CARS	5	Context	1	8	tbc
Percentage of RSL dwellings that meet the SHQS	77%	100%	86%	86%	TBC
No. of RPN's issued	7	<5	2	2	0
No. of cases heard by the tribunal	6	Context	0	0	0
No. of repairing standard related visits	28	<30	42	24	24
No. of follow up actions to expired landlords (phone calls, letters, online checks)	381	<280	379	110	52
No. of Active Registrations on the Trusted Trader Scheme	-	N/A	-	20	17

6. Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

Addressing Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible.

Key Actions for Delivery

- Continue to Implement Rapid Rehousing
- Improve access to housing for homeless or potentially homeless households across all tenures
- People who experience homelessness reach a settled housing outcome as quickly as possible
- Ensure homeless households can access the right support at the right time
- All partners actively contribute to preventing homelessness

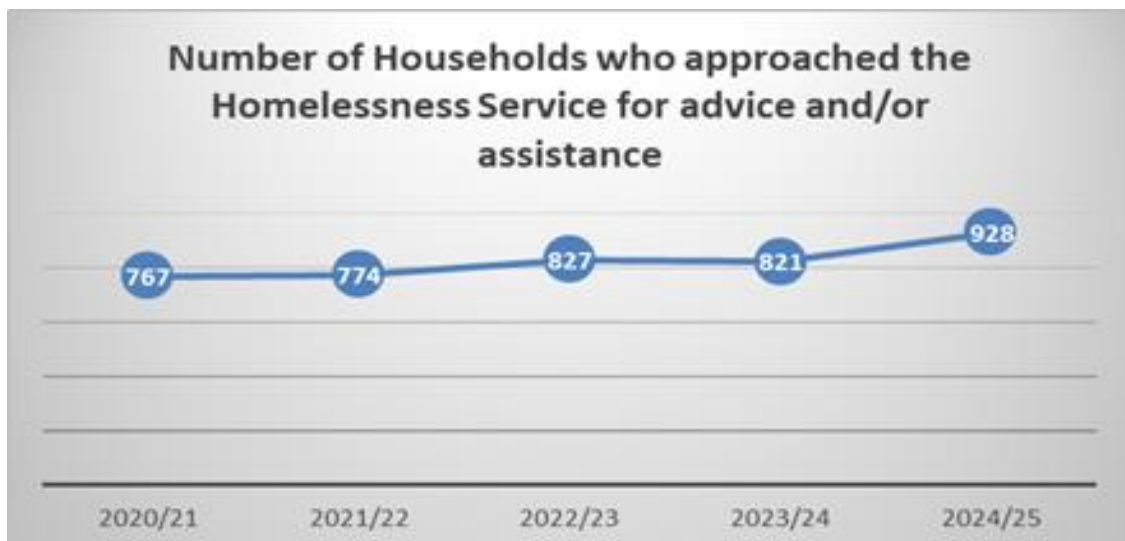
Positive outcomes

Positive outcomes up to March 2026 include:

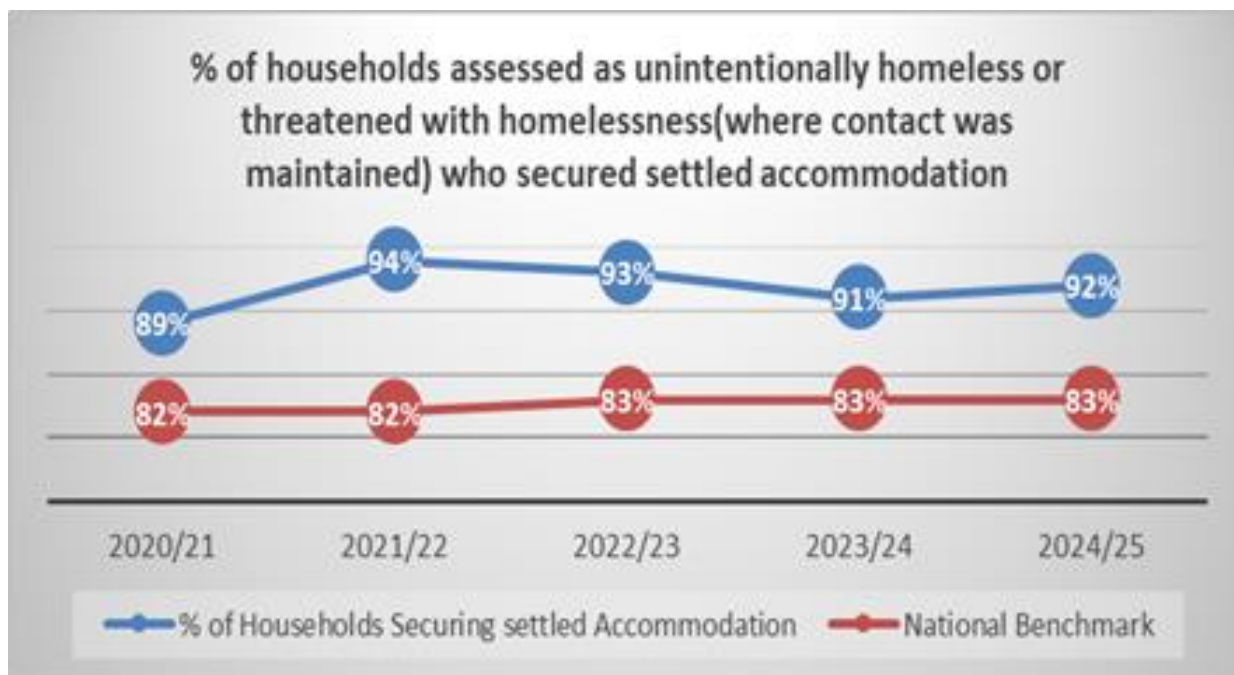
- The level of repeat homelessness applications in the Scottish Borders remains low, with 3% of applicants assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness having applied within the previous year.
- 91% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless, where there was a known outcome, secured settled accommodation
- 45% of RSL lets went to homeless households.

Homeless Service Demand

The number of people seeking homelessness advice or assistance has risen each year since the pandemic, and projections indicate that demand in 2025/26 will remain broadly in line with 2024/25 levels.



The proportion of households assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness who secured settled accommodation in either Social Housing, Private Rented Housing or Owner/Occupied housing has continued to be significantly above the national average as shown in the chart below.



At the end of 2025/26 91% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness who secured settled accommodation in either Social Housing, Private Rented Housing or Owner/Occupied housing, against a national average of 83%.

Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)

The Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) links into the Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Plan and allows us to consider how permanent and settled housing options are secured for every potentially homeless and homeless household



The Scottish Borders RRTP is overseen by the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP). Meeting every two months, the BHHSP brings together senior representatives from Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders, covering areas such as homelessness, health and social care, public health, the Alcohol and Drug Partnership, social work, and housing strategy. It also includes the four local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) that collectively own most of the social rented housing stock in the region.

The vision for Rapid Rehousing in the Scottish Borders is:

- Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, but where homelessness cannot be prevented a settled, mainstream housing outcome is secured as quickly as possible.

- When temporary accommodation is needed it will be mainstream, furnished accommodation within a community, and time spent in it will be minimal, with as few transitions as possible.
- Housing First will be the default support model for people with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantages. All partners will work to ensure tenancies are supported and sustained.

RRTP Outcomes:	
Outcome 1:	Fewer Households experience homelessness
Outcome 2:	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.
Outcome 3:	Homeless Households can access the right support at the right time.
Outcome 4:	All Partners actively contribute to preventing homelessness

Youth Homelessness Pathways

Officers from the Homeless Service have joined the weekly Social Work huddle in the Hawick locality to discuss and agree a joint approach to homelessness prevention for vulnerable young people. Links have also been established with Hawick High School, which is hosting a regular meeting attended by officers to engage with young people and discuss housing related issues.

Work is also underway to strengthen engagement with Scottish Borders Youth Hubs, exploring opportunities to support the work they are doing with vulnerable young people at a local level. Housing advice and homelessness workshops are being developed in collaboration with these organisations. This work aims to identify young people at risk of homelessness early and ensure homeless prevention, support, and advice are readily available.

Youth Homelessness Data shows an increase in homeless clients aged 16-24 years.

% of Assessed Homeless Clients each year aged 16-24 years			No of clients
2021-2022	% total of clients aged 16-24	14%	94
2022-2023	% total of clients aged 16-24	14%	113
2023-2024	% total of clients aged 16-24	20%	153
2024-2025	% total of clients aged 16-24	20%	148
2025-2026	% total of clients aged 16-24	22%	178

Rock Trust Art Therapy

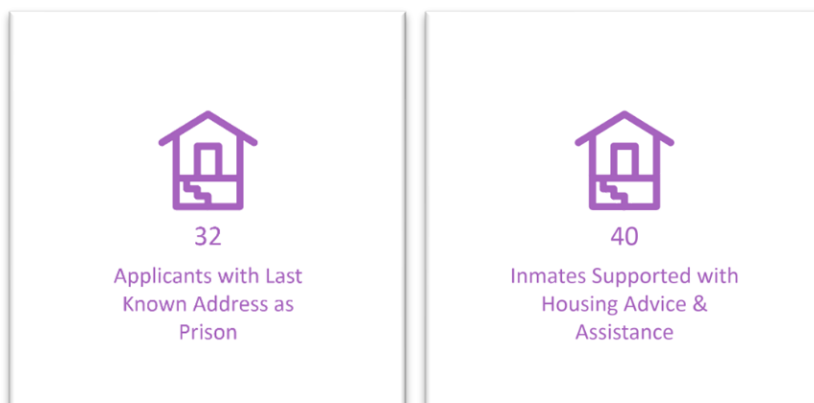
The partnership with Rock Trust Youth Homelessness Organisation has continued from 2024/25 into 2025/26. Homeless Services are working collaboratively with Rock Trust and have offered up to six young people aged 16–24 access to Art and Talk Therapy sessions. The project is due to conclude at the end of March 2026, after which a review will be undertaken to assess the impact, the service has had on clients experiencing challenges with their mental health and wellbeing.

- The therapist was able to continue delivering the service beyond March 2026, with referrals ongoing, and regular reviews of client progress taking place through meetings with the art therapist.
- The partnership with Rock Trust has developed well following the initial trial in the Scottish Borders. There is scope to further strengthen this relationship by exploring additional services the organisation could offer in the region, such as their Youth Homelessness Advice Hub, Upstream Projects, Rent Deposit Service and Nightstop.

Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) Standards

Following a successful pilot and significant foundation-building over recent years, the SHORE process has now been fully mainstreamed within the Case Management Officer Team. This transition marked an important shift from a resource-intensive, specialist model to an embedded operational approach aligned with our core homelessness functions.

There were understandable concerns that, with reduced dedicated resource and the absorption of SHORE into day-to-day practice, we might lose elements of the previous ‘gold standard’ model. However, through careful planning, procedural refinement and ongoing oversight, we have adapted the process to ensure it remains purposeful, proportionate and deliverable within existing capacity. As part of this mainstreaming, operational adjustments and pragmatic tweaks have been introduced to maintain effectiveness, strengthen accountability and ensure we continue to deliver meaningful pre-release engagement and prevention activity within the resources available.



Crisis and Homeless Intervention Funding (CIF)

Our Crisis and Homeless Intervention Funds are two discretionary funds aimed at preventing homelessness for households in rent arrears, as well as promoting tenancy sustainment. Through these funds we:



Private Rented Sector

The Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS) has been reviewed to align with private tenancy deposit criteria and offers clients access to support when securing a private tenancy, where a deposit payment is a barrier to accessing this option of rehousing.

New private sector advice leaflets have been developed for homeless service users, these include:

- DGS Leaflet
- Information for private landlords
- Information for Tenants
- Renting Privately- Guide for Tenants
- Tied Accommodation
- First Tier Tribunal
- Letting Agency Contact List

A Rent Deposit Fund was launched in December 2025, as a targeted Rapid Rehousing initiative to relieve pressure on temporary accommodation, and widen housing options for clients considering a private tenancy option. By removing the financial barrier of upfront deposit costs, the project has provided a practical and achievable path into settled accommodation for households who meet Private Tenancy criteria. This project has further developed positive working relationships with the Scottish Borders Private Rented Sector.

- During Q4 of 2025/26, a total of six homeless clients accessed the Rent Deposit Fund to support them to secure private tenancies. Three of these clients also required one month's rent in advance. The full allocation of £5,000 was utilised by the deadline of the 31st of March 2026.
- The council's Deposit Guarantee Scheme was not accessed by any homeless clients in 2025/26

Housing First Service

The Housing First pilot launched in the Scottish Borders in 2021 marked a significant shift toward supporting people with complex needs by providing immediate access to settled, independent housing and wrap-around, person-centred support. Although the pilot itself is no longer operating in its original project form, the core principles of Housing First, such as rapid access to permanent accommodation, choice and control for participants, and coordinated support across services are now embedded within frontline homelessness operations through the region's wider strategic housing approach.



Housing Support

Throughout 25/26 the Housing Support team have continued to provide vital service provision to supported people. 197 new referrals have been received into service. 72% of cases have been closed due to interventions being successfully completed. There were 320 cases open within Housing Support Services during the reporting period.

We continue to seek the views of our partners, staff and supported people during 25/26 to improve practices, identify service development opportunities and contribute to improvement planning. The feedback incorporates different areas of service delivery, accessibility, communication, partnership working, quality of service and responsiveness.

‘ Without the support of Sam and homeless I would not be here, the support of homeless was lifeline to me when I felt all other agencies had let me down’

‘It is not an overexaggeration to say she has helped save my life. In times I was unable to think straight or cope with the demands of sorting out life admin she took over with ease and made sure I was always taken care of and supported.’

‘My experience overall has been nothing short of life changing. I think empathy and the ability to listen are extremely important when dealing with homeless applicants as this is a situation nobody ever thinks or can imagine what it is like to find themselves in.’

Temporary Accommodation

While we continue to manage the increased volume and cost of temporary accommodation, we are working to ensure we provide suitable temporary accommodation options to homeless applicants and as a result, in 2025-26 there were 39 breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

Maxmill Park in Kelso which provided 14 individual properties for homeless applicants on a temporary basis, was fully decommissioned in April 2025. The development was no longer meeting the standard and model of temporary accommodation to support homeless applicants. A range of additional community-based properties have been procured from Registered Social Landlords, assisting the homeless service to support applicants in their local communities where they have access to vital services.

Veterans

Scottish Borders Council continues to establish local links with charities in the Scottish Borders supporting veterans. Joint working is ongoing, to support veterans who are homeless and in housing need.

Key Performance Indicators for Strategic Outcome 5:

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
No. of households who approached the homelessness service for advice and/or assistance	827	Context	821	928	904
Proportion of households who approached the homelessness service assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness	95%	Context	690 (84%)	637 (69%)	667 (74%)
% Repeat statutory homeless presentations (1 year)	4%	5%	4%	4%	3%
Total no. of individual homeless households referred to RSLs under section 5	642	Context	446	645	651
Proportion of RSL lets to homeless households (locally based RSL's)	39%	50% (24/25)	41%	43%	45%
No. of statutory homeless cases open at close of period, who had an unintentionally Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness (TWH) decision at close of period	327	Context	338	334	390
No of Bed and Breakfast placements starting in period	7	0	13	33	162
No. of Households in temporary accommodation at close of period	116	Reduction (24/25)	129	120	148
% of households requiring temporary or emergency accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average total time spent in temporary accommodation (days)	169	<10% p.a.	166	184	84
No. of breaches to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order	1	0	0	0	39
No of people who received Housing Support in the period (both homeless service and commissioned service)	470	Context	590	792	657
Proportion of all housing support cases closed due to successfully completed intervention. (Homeless and commissioned service data)	79%	80%	82%	80%	73%
No. of tenancies commenced where the tenant is supported by Housing First	3	15 (23/24)	5	3	-

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