



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2024

HOUSING OPTIONS AND HOMELESSNESS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Report by Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide the Comhairle with an update of housing options and homelessness issues covering the year 2023/24.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Comhairle has a statutory duty towards homeless persons and those threatened with homelessness in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 Part II as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.
- 2.2 There are no legal, financial, equalities or other constraints to the recommendations being implemented.
- 2.3 In the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, a total of 150 households made a homelessness application to the Comhairle in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 Part II as amended, and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003. A further three households were assisted under the housing options approach. Of these, one household went on to make a homeless presentation.
- 2.4 Of all homeless applications made to the Comhairle in 2023-2024, 126 were made to the Stornoway office (six of which were from Harris), with a further 21 applications from Uist and three from Barra.
- 2.5 The Comhairle accepted a duty to permanently accommodate 123 households in this period and discharged its duty to 77 households by providing them with permanent accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle note the contents of the Report.**

Contact Officer: Lorraine Graham Homeless Services Manager 822821
l.graham@cne-siar.gov.uk

Appendix: None.

Background Papers: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20-2023/24 (Revised August 2023)

IMPLICATIONS

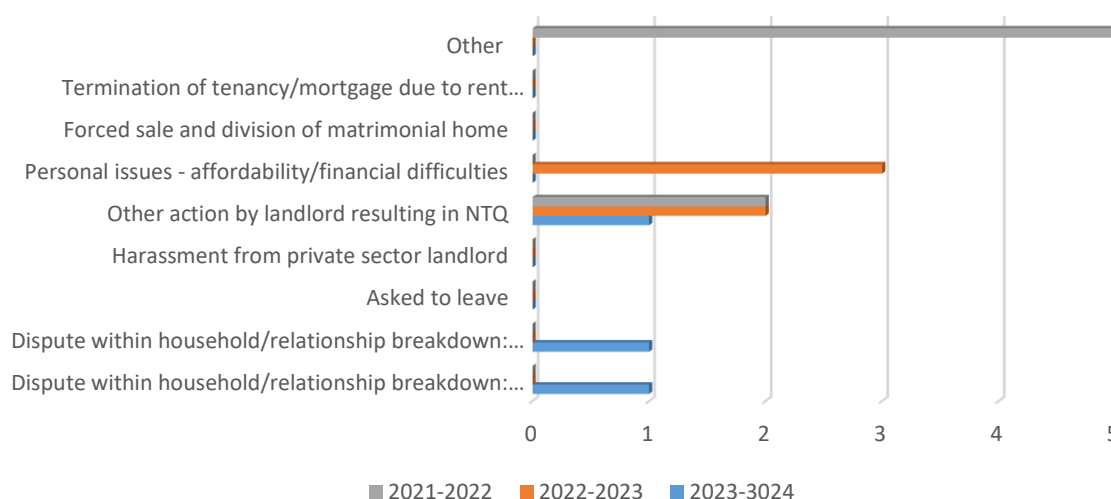
4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	The Comhairle has received £261,000 of funding from the Scottish Government since 2018/19 to assist with implementing a Rapid Rehousing approach to homelessness.
Legal	The Comhairle has a statutory duty towards homeless persons and those threatened with homelessness in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 Part II as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	There are financial and regulatory risks associated with changes to homelessness policy and practice which require to be managed during implementation.
Equalities	If rapid rehousing progresses and a higher number of allocations are made to homeless households then a lower proportion will be made to others in housing need. A full Equality Impact Assessment was completed in October 2019.
Corporate Strategy	Links to the Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Plan.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

HOUSING OPTIONS APPLICATIONS AND OUTCOMES

- 5.1 Any applicant threatened with homelessness presenting to the Service is offered a housing options interview in the first instance in order to attempt to prevent homelessness from happening. The Comhairle has a duty to advise all applicants of their right to a homelessness interview if that is their preferred option. During the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, only three housing options applications were made. Housing Options applications continue to be low, possibly due to the lack of options available locally and the generally held perception that a social tenancy is preferable to a private tenancy.
- 5.2 Reasons given for making a housing options application are shown at Chart 1 below. It is difficult to make any valid statistical analysis due to the low numbers. The reasons given were a dispute within the household/relationship breakdown, both violent and non-violent, and the landlord serving notice for reasons other than rent arrears or antisocial behaviour.

Chart 1 – Reasons given for Housing Options Applications in the Western Isles 2021/22-2023/24

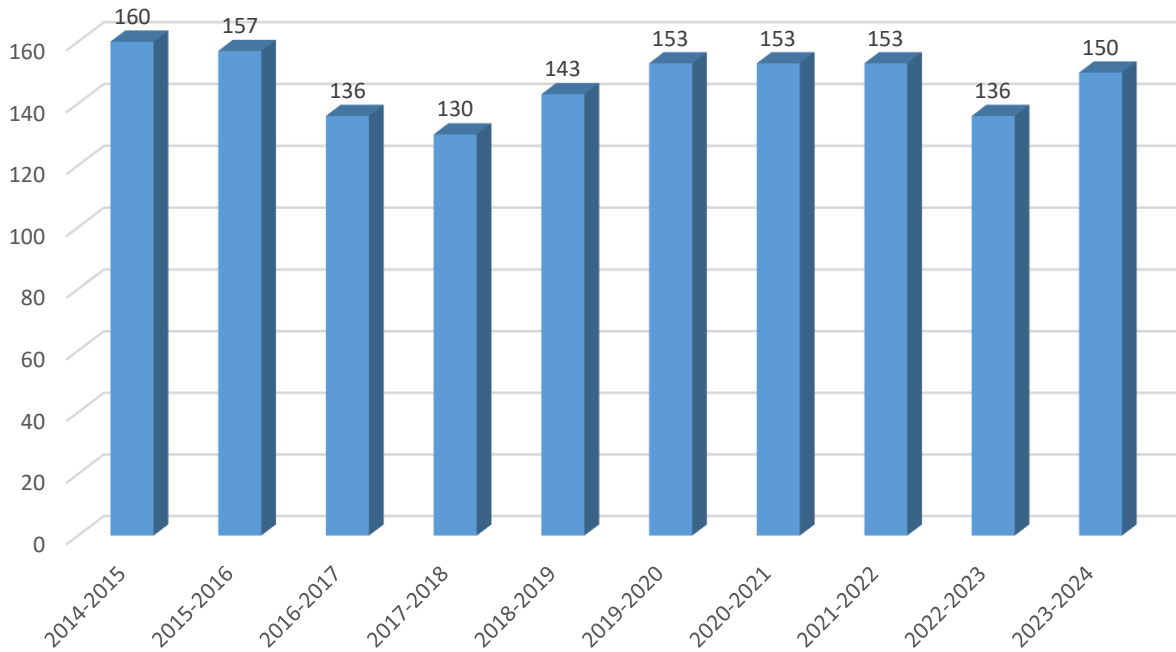


- 5.3 Housing Options applicants are provided with advice and assistance to try and assist them to remain in their present accommodation, if safe to do so, or find alternative accommodation before the applicant actually becomes homeless. This may include general housing advice, the provision of aids and adaptations, benefit maximisation, and financial advice.
- 5.4 Five Housing Options applications were closed during 2023-2024. Two resolved their housing issues and remained in their accommodation while one applicant went on to make a homelessness application to the Comhairle. The other two outcomes are not known.

HOMELESSNESS APPLICATIONS

- 6.1 During the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, 150 homelessness applications were made to the Comhairle consisting of 160 adults and 53 children. This is a 10% increase on last year's figure of 136. Unfortunately, it is not possible to make any national comparisons at the date of writing this report as the release of Scotland's homelessness statistics for 2023-2024 has been delayed. However, the mid-year national statistics showed a 3% increase in homelessness applications between April and September 2023. Following five local authorities declaring a housing emergency, the Scottish Government declared a national housing emergency in May 2024. This was partially driven by pressures on homelessness services, including regular breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

Chart 2 – Homeless Applications in the Outer Hebrides 2014/15-2023/24



6.2 The majority of homelessness applications are made to the Stornoway Office which covers Lewis and Harris. Over this period 80% of presentations were from Lewis, 4% from Harris, 14% from Uist and 2% from Barra.

6.3 Numbers rose across all island groups except for a slight decrease in Harris. The highest proportionate increase was in Uist.

Chart 3 – Homeless Presentations by Area 2014/15-2023/24

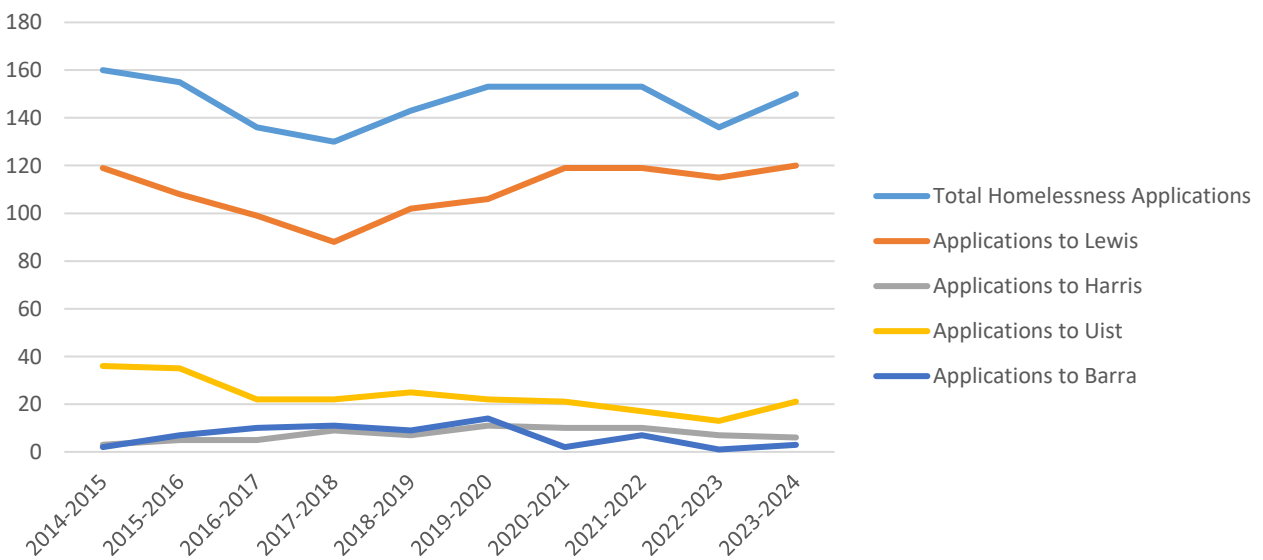


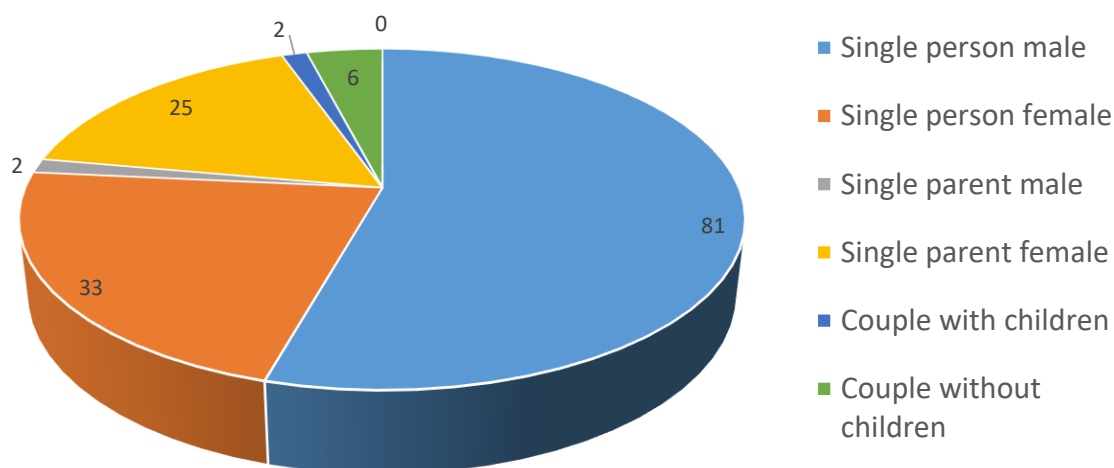
Table 1 – Proportion of homeless presentations to total households in the Outer Hebrides by area 2023/24

	Lewis	Harris	Uist	Barra
Total number of households by area ¹	8,846	911	2,232	587
Total number of households presenting as homeless	120	6	21	3
Proportion of homeless applicants to all homeless households	80%	4%	14%	2%
Proportion of homeless households to all households by area	1.35%	0.66%	0.94%	0.51%

6.4 Of all applications to the Comhairle, 4.9% were classed as repeat presentations. A household is classed as a repeat presentation if they apply within 12 months of a previous application being closed.

6.5 Household types presenting in the Outer Hebrides generally remain consistent proportionately locally. The main household type presenting continues to be single people with 54% of applications being made by single men and 22% by single women.

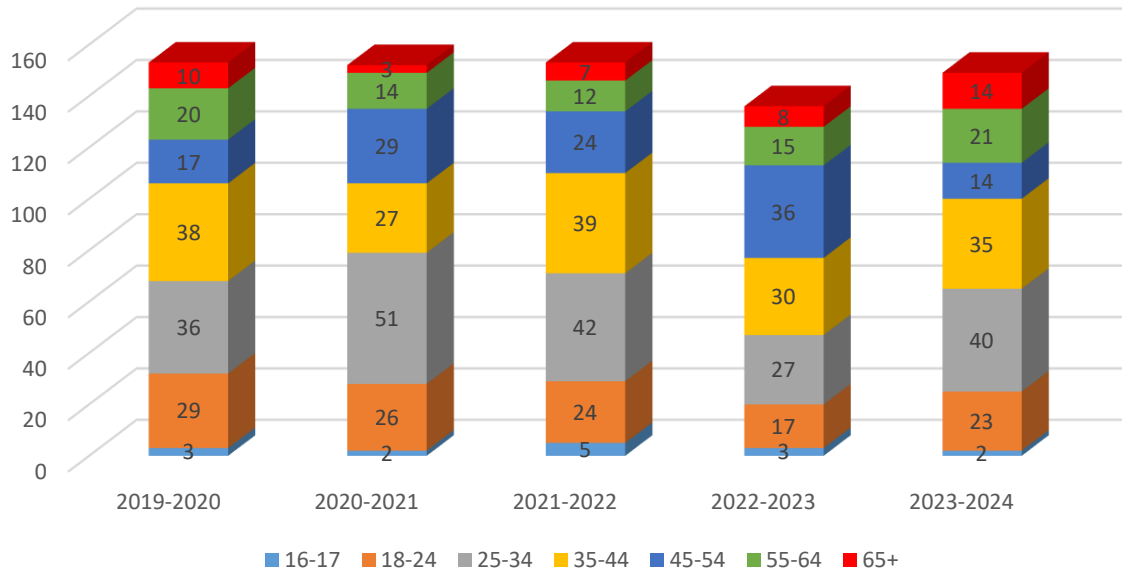
Chart 5 – Homeless Applications in the Outer Hebrides in 2023-2024 by Household Type



¹ Data from 2011 Western Isles Census

6.6 Applications can be broken down further into age ranges over the past five years for the main applicant as shown at Chart 6 below. The overall number of young people (aged 16-24) presenting has increased slightly but remains lower than the figures for the four years preceding last year. Only two households with a main applicant aged 16-17 presented in 2023-2024.

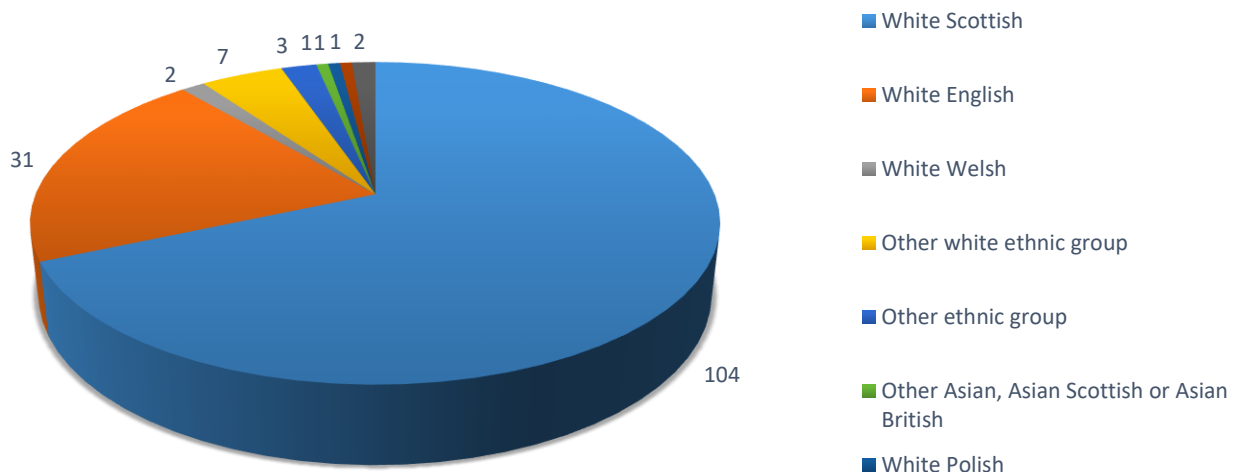
Chart 6 – Homeless Age Groups 2019/20-2023/24



6.7 The Comhairle also records the number of care leavers presenting as homeless. In the year 2023-2024, one young person had been formerly looked after by the Comhairle in the past five years. A further two young people aged under 25 had been formerly looked after five or more years ago.

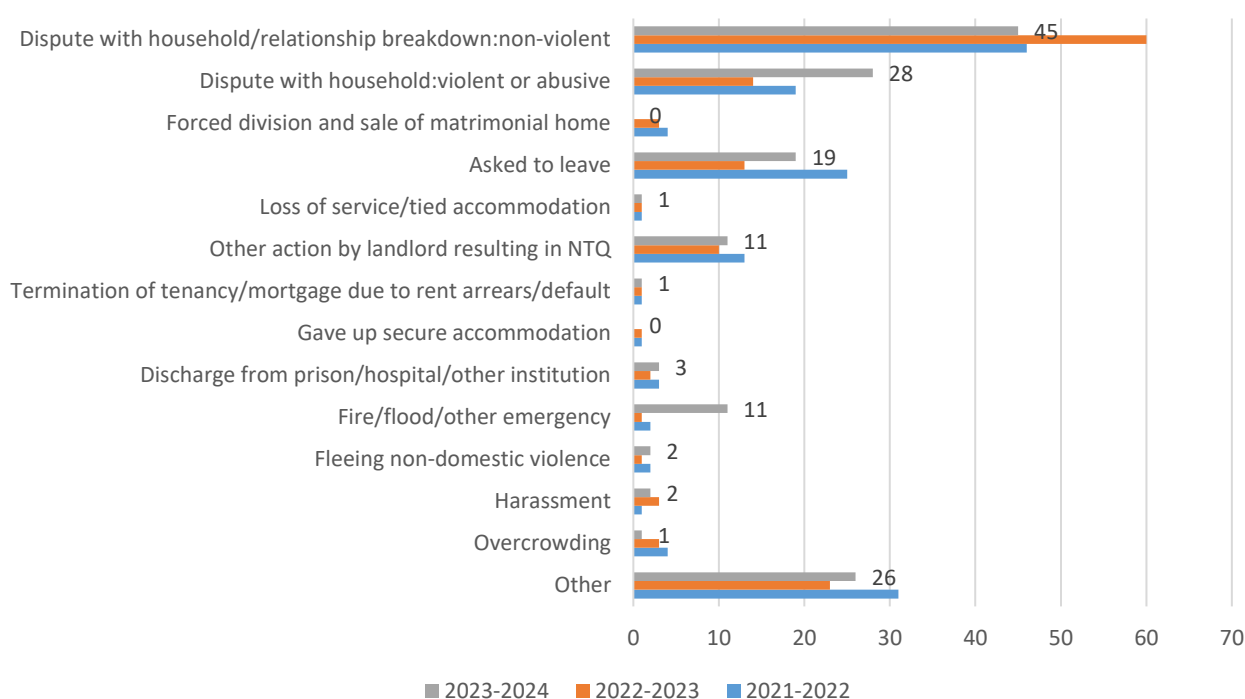
6.8 The ethnic origin of homeless applicants in the Outer Hebrides for 2023-2024 is shown at Chart 7 below. No applicants described themselves as a gypsy/traveller. Seventeen applicants stated that they had a physical disability. It continues to be very difficult to make any detailed analysis of outcomes for homeless applicants by ethnic group given the small numbers presenting from minority groups, but there are no obvious areas for concern.

Chart 7 - Homeless Applications in the Outer Hebrides by Ethnic Origin 2023-2024



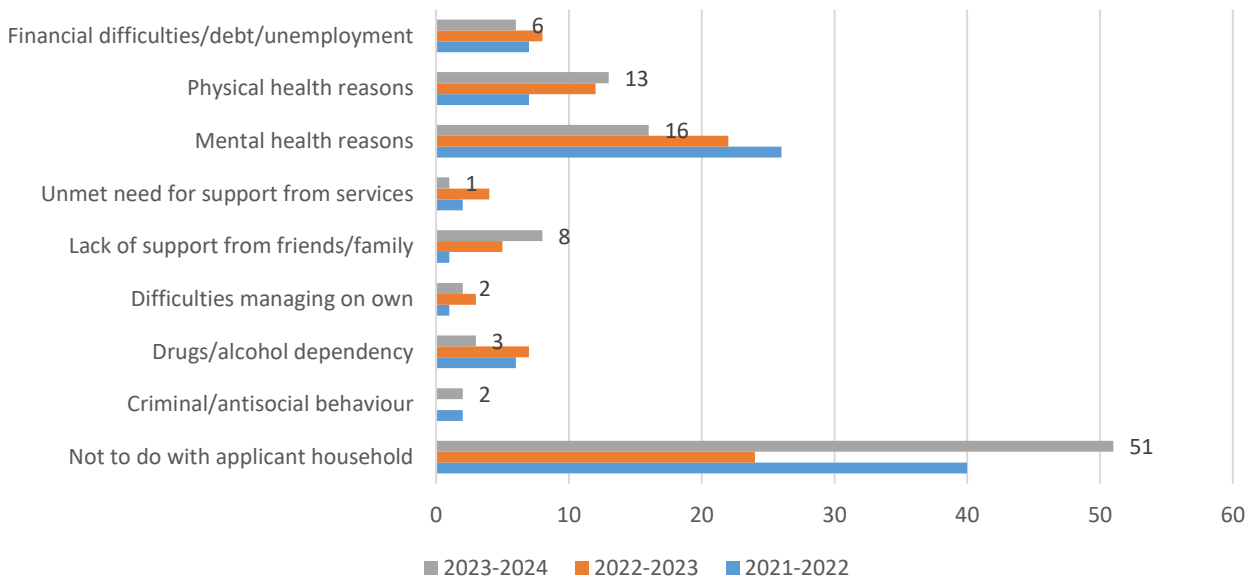
- 6.9 Five applicants stated that they had previously been a member of the armed services, all having served over five years ago.
- 6.10 Sixteen applicants stated that they had slept rough in the three months prior to making a homeless application, with five of these saying that they had slept rough on the preceding night. The Outer Hebrides has no long-term rough sleepers. Almost all instances of rough sleeping involve sleeping in a car or outhouse, or walking around waiting for the Office to open the next day. There were no occasions where the Comhairle failed to provide temporary accommodation for anyone requiring it that night. Some applicants had slept rough in other local authority areas before applying to the Comhairle.
- 6.11 The main reason given for presenting as homeless in the Outer Hebrides, as shown below, is a dispute within the household, with 49% of applicants citing this as the reason for homelessness in 2023/24. Of those who presented due to a relationship breakdown in 2023/24, 38% stated that there was abuse in the relationship. Fleeing domestic violence or abuse was the main cause of homelessness given by females presenting as homeless.
- 6.12 There has been a significant increase in the number of households presenting due to their property being assessed as below tolerable standard. Nine households presented for this reason. The Comhairle will continue to monitor presentations to establish if this is a statistical anomaly or an emerging trend.

Chart 8 – Technical Reasons for Homelessness in the Outer Hebrides 2021/22-2023/24



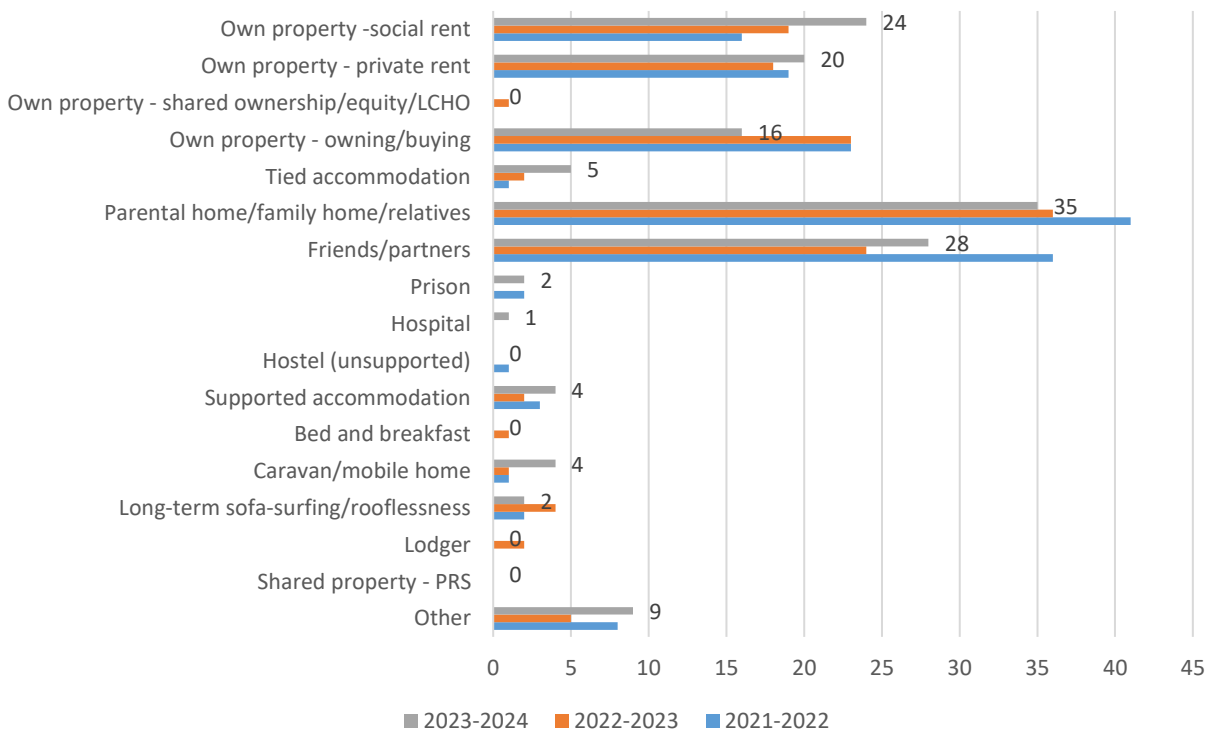
- 6.13 Underlying reasons for failing to maintain the household’s existing accommodation are shown at Chart 9. Only 4% of households stated that financial difficulties, debt or unemployment was a contributing factor to their homelessness although the true figure is likely to be higher than this. The main contributory factors given to the Comhairle were mental health reasons with 11% of all applicants stating that this was a contributing factor to their homelessness, and a physical health reason which was cited by 9% of applicants. Only 2% of all applicants stated that alcohol and/or drug dependency was a factor. This is likely to be due to an unwillingness to disclose full personal circumstances at the initial interview. Support needs are shown at Table 2 on page 14.

Chart 9: Underlying reasons for failing to maintain accommodation in the Outer Hebrides 2021/22-2023/24



6.14 Of the 150 households who applied in 2023-2024, 63 (42%) had been living with friends or relatives while 65 (43%) had been living in their own property (i.e. which they either rented or owned) as shown at Chart 10 below.

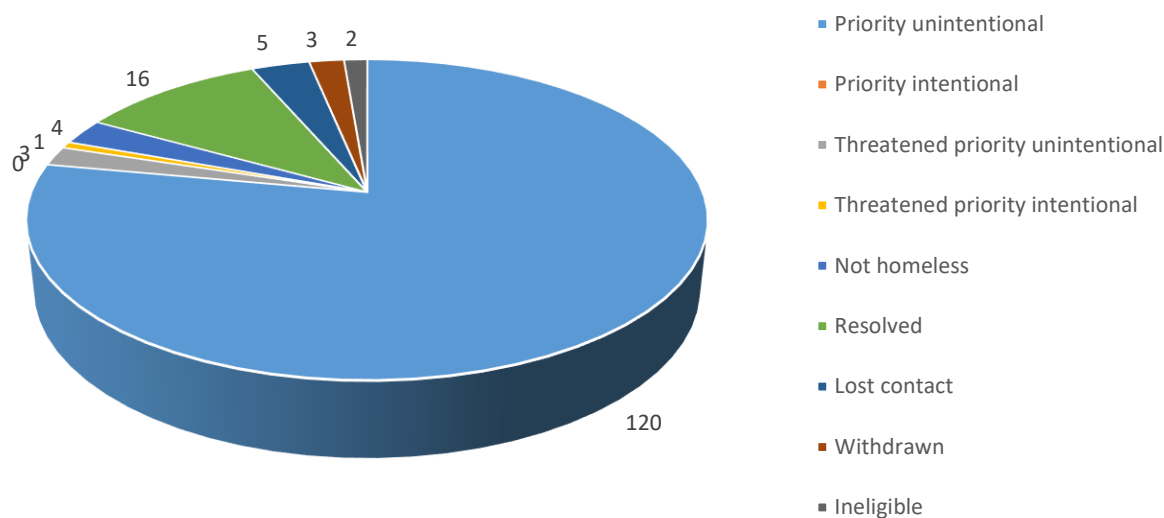
Chart 10 – Prior housing circumstances of applicants in the Outer Hebrides 2021/22-2023/24



HOMELESSNESS ASSESSMENTS

- 7.1 In the year 2023-2024, 19 households resolved their homelessness or withdrew their application prior to an assessment being made, often due to a relationship breakdown being resolved. Four households were assessed as neither homeless nor potentially homeless. Contact was lost with five households prior to an assessment decision being made. A further two households were assessed as ineligible for assistance. Of the remaining 124 households assessed as homeless or potentially homeless, 123 (99.2%) were assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness. Only one (0.8%) was found to be intentionally homeless.

Chart 11– Assessment of homeless applications 2023-2024



LOCAL CONNECTION

- 8.1 As of 29 November 2022, local connection provisions for the referral of applicants to another authority were suspended for all those applying having come from another local authority in Scotland. Referrals may still be made to authorities outwith Scotland but the Comhairle now has a duty to permanently accommodate any unintentionally homeless household who presents to this authority from anywhere within Scotland. The Scottish Government have maintained regular contact with local authorities to monitor the impact of these changes, and movement between local authorities is being recorded. To date, there has been little impact for the Comhairle. In 2023-2024, 10 households with no local connection made a homelessness application to the Comhairle. However, 7 of these were from outwith Scotland. No applications were recorded elsewhere in Scotland from households leaving the Outer Hebrides to present as homeless.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

- 9.1 There are presently 67 temporary accommodation units in operation throughout the Outer Hebrides. The Comhairle leases 29 of these from HHP and owns the remaining 38, of which 24 are based in The Acres. Fifty-one households were being accommodated on 31 March 2024.
- 9.2 In 2023/24, the Comhairle accommodated 11 homeless households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation with an average length of stay of four days, an increase on the one day's length of stay for 2022/23 but still an overall decrease of 87.5% since 2019/20. The Comhairle has continued to reduce its use of Bed and Breakfasts for temporary accommodation (an aim which was temporarily inhibited by the impact of the pandemic) and there was only one breach of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in 2023/24 with a stay of 14 days. The Order is breached when any household

is accommodated in what is legally classed as unsuitable accommodation for more than seven days, with a few exceptions such as being accommodated due to a fire or flood.

9.3 A further 103 households were provided with furnished temporary accommodation, 46 of these in The Acres. It should be noted that these figures reflect households whose cases have been closed in the year. The average length of stay in self-contained accommodation was 231 days, and 172 days for The Acres. The overall lengths of stay for households in temporary accommodation decreased slightly by 1.6% in 2023/24 from 190 days to 187 days.

Chart 12 - Numbers of cases closed in the year provided with temporary accommodation in the Outer Hebrides 2019/20-2023/24 (weeks)

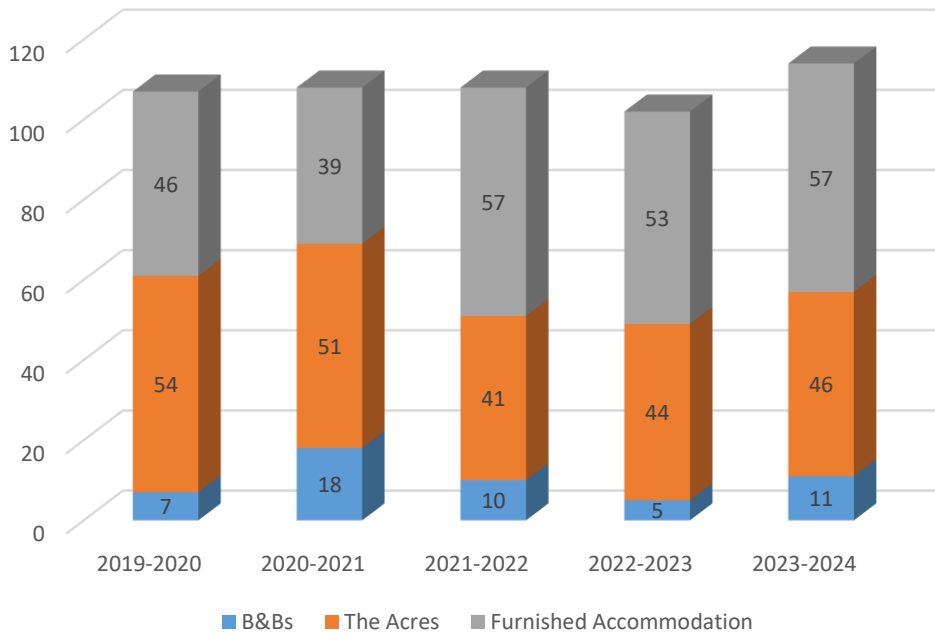
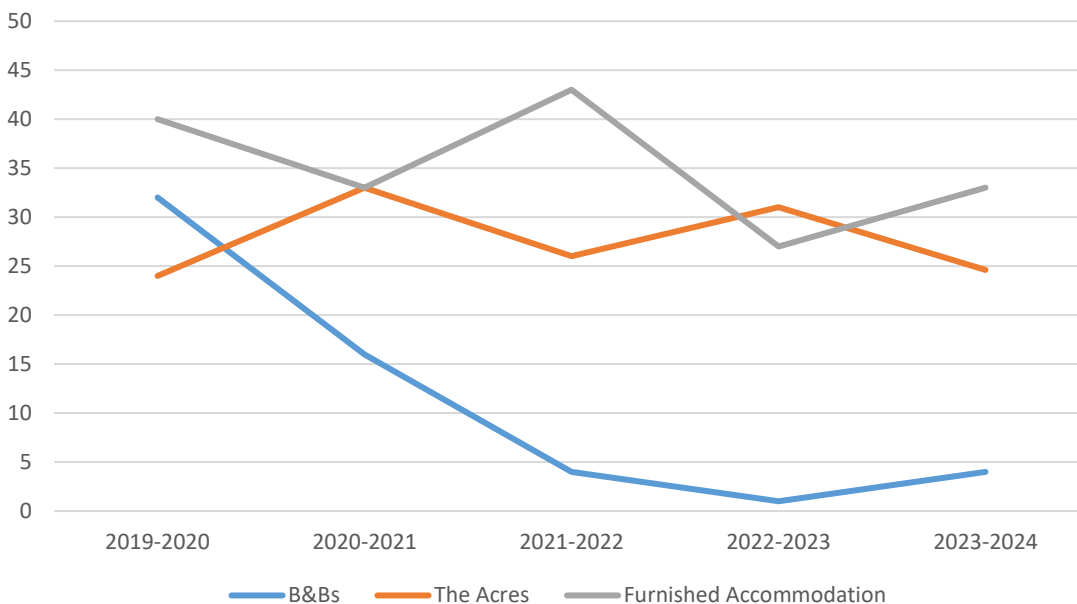


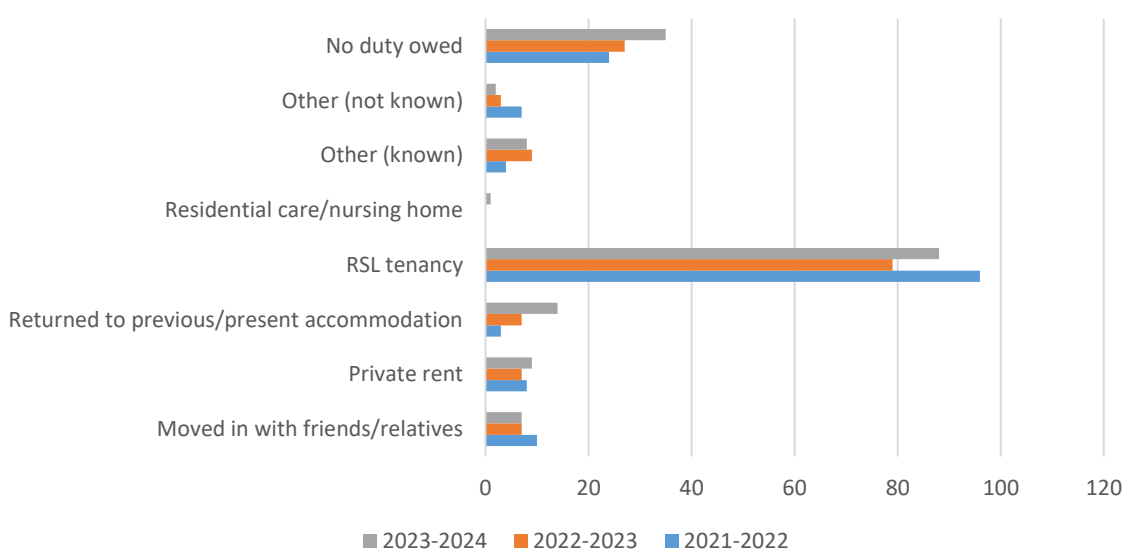
Chart 13 - Lengths of stay in temporary accommodation in the Outer Hebrides for closed cases 2019/20-2023/24 (weeks)



PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

10.1 At the date of writing this report, 75 households were waiting for an offer of permanent housing in order for the Comhairle’s duty to them to be fully discharged. This is a 1.3% decrease in the numbers waiting compared to the same date in 2022/23. In the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, 77 homeless households were provided with a permanent tenancy by HHP under homelessness legislation. This figure represents 36% of all allocations made in the Outer Hebrides, which is a 24% increase from the proportion of all allocations made in the Outer Hebrides in the preceding year. A further nine households were provided with permanent housing elsewhere. This total of 86 households represents 70% of the proportion of new homeless demand in the year, an increase on the 67% of the preceding year. Chart 14 shows the housing outcomes for all cases closed in 2021/22 to 2023/24.

Chart 14 - Known outcomes for homeless households in the Outer Hebrides for cases closed in 2021/22 – 2023/24.



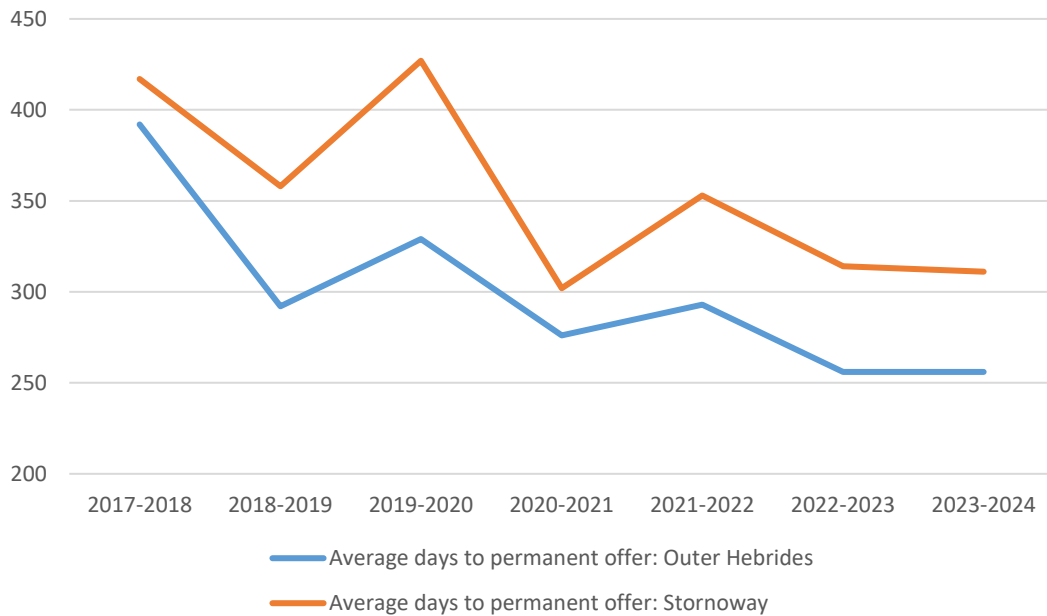
10.2 Stornoway continues to be the most pressurised area. Of all social housing allocations made in 2023/24 in Stornoway, 58% were to statutory homeless households. This was the first year that HHP exceeded the agreed 50% target. The greatest pressure is on the two-apartment list. In 2023/24, HHP allocated 38 two-apartment properties in total, of which 25, or 66%, were made to statutory homeless. At the date of writing this report, 29 homeless households are awaiting an offer of a two-apartment property in Stornoway. This is an increase of 26% on the preceding year and reflects the ongoing pressures. Waiting list times for two and five apartment properties are the longest historically and this impacts on the number of allocations that HHP are able to make. However, pressure has decreased on the three-apartment list. There are currently 13 households waiting for an offer of a three-apartment property in Stornoway, a 24% decrease on the same date in the preceding year.

10.3 In order to seek to address some of the pressure on the two-apartment list, and to progress towards rapid rehousing, HHP agreed to allocate 25, two-apartment properties in Stornoway in the year up to the end of May 2024 and have committed to the same for a further year. This temporary target will be reviewed again after 12 months.

10.4 The average length of time taken to make a first offer of permanent housing to statutory homeless households was 250 days in 2023/24, a 2% increase on the 245 days taken in 2022/23. It took an average of 256 days, the same as the preceding year, for all priority homeless households to be housed as some households wait for a second offer of housing. HHP aim to make a first offer of permanent housing to

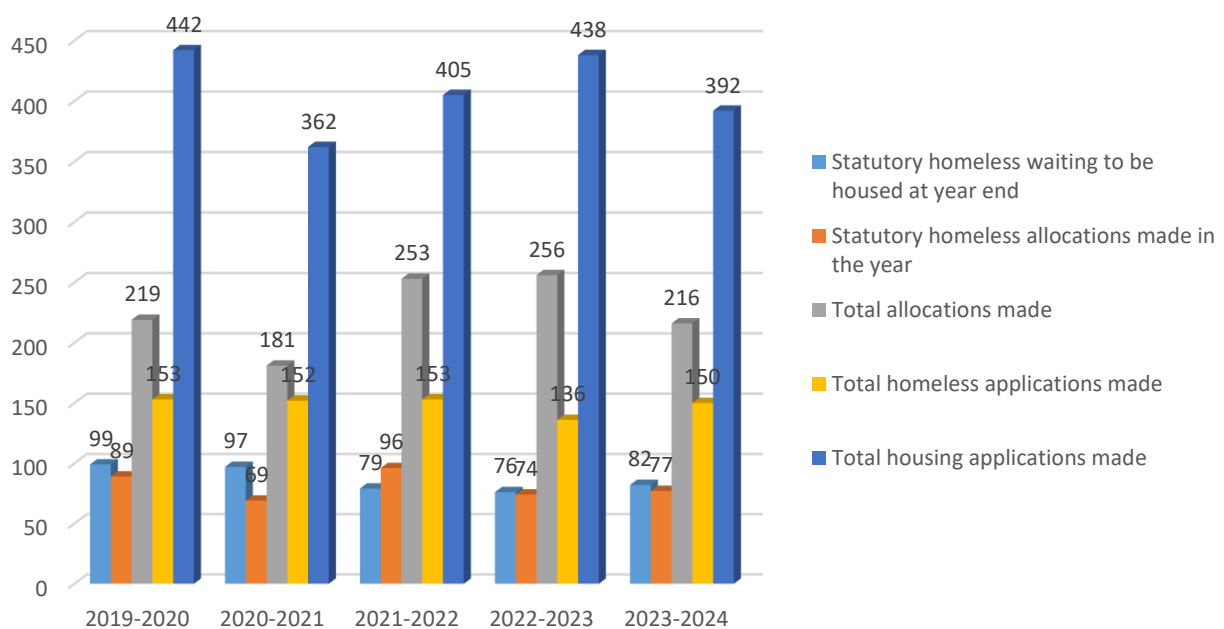
25% of statutory homeless cases within three months from the date of the Comhairle’s homelessness decision. In 2023/24, 44% of first offers were made within three months. Of these, 43% of first offers were made within three months across Lewis and Harris, and 4% of first offers were made within three months in Uist and Barra. Although the decrease in waiting times has slowed, the overall trend is still downwards.

Chart 15 – Average waiting times (days) to being permanently housed for cases closed in the year 2017/18 – 2023/24



10.5 Chart 17 below illustrates housing trends over the past five years and the associated pressures on waiting lists. The series ‘statutory homeless waiting to be housed’ represents the number recorded on 31 March each year. Although this year’s figure was an increase from the previous year, the number at the date of writing this report had decreased again to 75 households, as discussed at 10.1.

Chart 16 – Housing and homelessness trends 2019/20-2023/24



- 10.6 In the period 2023/24, nine statutory homeless households were accommodated permanently through the private sector. This represented 7.4% of all new homeless demand. Using both social and private lets as housing outcomes for statutory homeless, the Comhairle housed 77% of the new homeless demand for the year.

HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT PROVISION

- 11.1 The Homeless Support Service continues to provide support to homeless and potentially homeless households. Where relevant, support continues through to a permanent tenancy until all benefits and utilities are sorted and the household is settled. Unfortunately, records of new referrals from 1 April 2023 to 6 November 2023 were lost as a result of the Comhairle's cyber-attack. Ten new referrals were made to this service between 7 November 2023 and 31 March 2024.
- 11.2 The Comhairle also works closely with partner agencies in the statutory and third sectors to make referrals for support as appropriate. These include Adult Services, Education and Children's Services, Health, Hebrides Alpha, Dochas, Cothrom, Western Isles Citizen's Advice Bureau, Eilean Siar Food Bank, Uist and Barra Foodbank, and local Churches.
- 11.3 The Comhairle has made good progress in the development of Housing First Support with the first HHP tenancy commencing in 2020, and eight tenancies in place by the end of March 2024. One client 'stood down' from Housing First and a further one sadly passed away. Housing First moves away from the 'tenancy readiness' culture and language and removes barriers to accessing social housing such as requiring detailed tenancy histories. Where support needs are identified, these are addressed in the person's own settled home following the six principles of Housing First which have been well evaluated and proven to have very high levels of success. Housing First support is offered to homeless people with multiple and complex needs and or a pattern of repeat homelessness, and partnership working is integral to its success. Clients can re-engage with support if required, and this has been the case for one client in the past year. There have been no failed Housing First tenancies.
- 11.4 The Comhairle continues to provide assistance to homeless households securing a permanent tenancy by recycling second hand furniture offered by the general public. This supplements any provision secured through the Welfare Fund. Homeless clients are also assisted to access food parcels from local schemes. Tesco and the Coop regularly provide produce due to go out of date to The Acres. The High Free Church provide lunch to the residents on Sundays. Food parcels are distributed to all homeless households in temporary accommodation at Christmas, and Christmas gifts are supplied by Martin's Memorial Church.
- 11.5 Tenancy sustainment levels continue to be high with 94.5% of the 73 homeless applicants housed permanently under homelessness legislation in 2022-2023 sustaining their tenancy for more than one year. Only one of the 4 tenancies that were not sustained would be regarded as a failed tenancy as the rest were given up for positive reasons, such as moving in with a partner or moving away for employment. For all households housed by HHP from the general waiting list in 2022-2023, 88.5% sustained their tenancy for more than one year.
- 11.6 Households applying as homeless are asked if they have any of a number of support needs. In 2023/24, 46% of applicants stated that they required support due to a mental health issue. This is higher than the figure of 33% for 2022/23. A further 10% stated that they required support due to a drug or alcohol dependency, but this is likely to be lower than the actual figure due to an initial failure or unwillingness to disclose. Applications from households with multiple and complex needs have increased. Of all households who identified a support need, 48 had more than one need, 32% of all homeless households. This is an increase from the 25% recorded in 2022/23 and reflects the ongoing pressures experienced in securing appropriate support provision for homeless households.

11.7 The Homelessness Service have worked in partnership with HHP and Education and Children’s Services to transfer two units of temporary accommodation for use as supported accommodation for young people, both care leavers and vulnerable young people who require support to transition to a permanent tenancy.

Table 2 – Support needs as identified by household when making homeless application 2021/22-2023/24

Support Need	Number of applicants		
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Mental health	67	50	69
Learning disability	8	5	7
Physical disability	18	11	17
Medical condition	34	29	50
Drug or alcohol dependency	11	12	15
Basic housing management/independent living skills	8	10	8

NORTH AND ISLANDS HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING OPTIONS HUB

12.1 The Comhairle participates in the North & Islands Homelessness and Housing Options Hub which continues to meet monthly by MS Teams in order to update each other on homelessness matters. Meetings are attended by at least one Scottish Government Official. The Scottish Government has provided funding to cover at least administrative costs. This funding has been reduced from around £10,000 to £5,000 per year.

RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLAN 2019/20-2023/24

13.1 The Comhairle is currently preparing its response to the Scottish Government with respect to an overview of the progress and challenges relating to its Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which has now reached its five-year conclusion. This response has been requested by 11 October 2024. While there has been good progress in most areas, the fundamental aspirations of rapid rehousing have not been fully achieved and, given the current national housing emergency, it is clear that this is the case generally across Scotland’s local authorities.

13.2 The Scottish Government provided funding to assist local authorities with implementing and progressing their RRTPs. The Comhairle received £50,000 for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. The majority of this funding has, to date, been allocated to Housing First and to employing staff to facilitate this. While the Comhairle is committed to continuing with the principles of rapid rehousing it will be

difficult to fully achieve this without ongoing funding. The Scottish Government have advised that some level of funding will be made available for 2024/25.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION DUTIES

14.1 The Housing (Scotland) Bill, introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 26 March 2024, includes new prevention of homelessness duties for public bodies, including a new role to ‘ask and act’ about an individual’s housing situation. At present, local authorities have a duty to assist anyone threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days. The new Bill extends this duty to 6 months. The Scottish Government have advised that detailed guidance will accompany the forthcoming legislation.

REVIEWS AND COMPLAINTS

15.1 There were no appeals against homeless determinations or against offers of temporary or permanent accommodation in 2023/24.

15.2 There were two formal complaints made about the Homelessness Service in 2023/24. These were resolved at stage 1 of the complaint procedure.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

16.1 The Homelessness Service User Questionnaire has 3 stages: initial interview, temporary accommodation and an exit questionnaire. Return rates are variable and generally low. Of all responses received, 100% were satisfied or very satisfied with the initial interview, 100% were satisfied or very satisfied with their temporary accommodation, and 100% rated the overall service as excellent as shown in the following charts:

Chart 17 - Initial Interview satisfaction ratings 2023-2024 (22 returns)

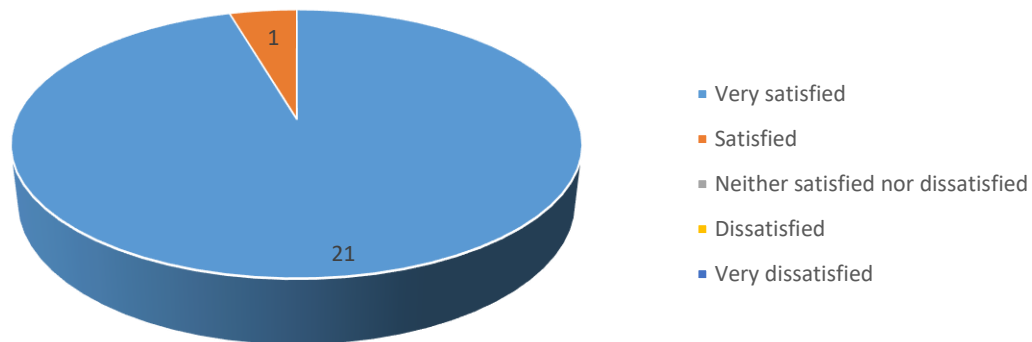


Chart 18 – Temporary Accommodation satisfaction ratings 2023-2024 (2 returns)

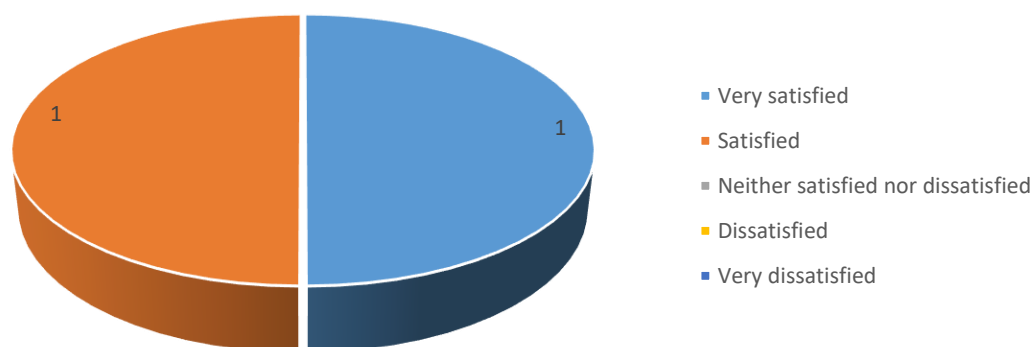
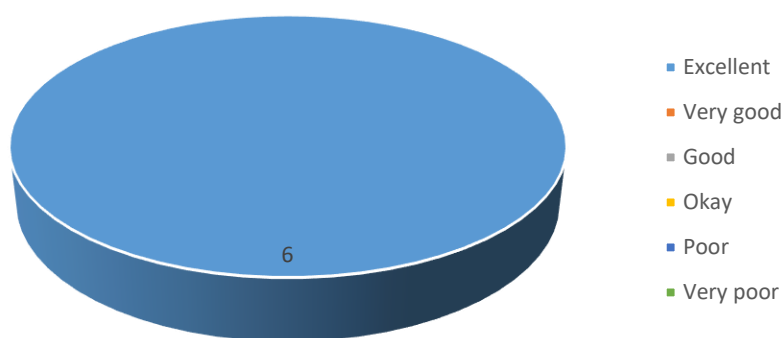


Chart 19 - Exit Questionnaire overall satisfaction ratings 2023-2024 (6 returns)



16.2 The Comhairle’s homelessness standards and targets are illustrated in the table below. In 2023-2024 the Comhairle at least met 7 out of the 10 relevant targets.

Table 3 – Homelessness Performance Management Framework

Standard	Type	Actual 2021- 2022	Actual 2022- 2023	Target 2023- 2024	Actual 2023- 2024
Initial Interview					
Interview applicants within 1 working day (unless applicant specifies otherwise)	CNES ²	98%	100%	90%	100%
Determinations					
Applicants to be advised of homelessness decision within 28 days of interview	SG ³ /SHRIP ⁴	87%	90%	80%	90%
Reduction in number of Lost Contacts	SHRIP	3.2%	2.8%	10%	3.7%
%age of homeless cases reassessed within 12 months of completion of duty	SPI ⁵	2.3%	4.4%	n/a	49%

² Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

³ Scottish Government

⁴ Scottish Housing Regulator Improvement Plan

⁵ Statutory Performance Indicator

Standard	Type	Actual 2021- 2022	Actual 2022- 2023	Target 2023- 2024	Actual 2023- 2024
Temporary Accommodation					
Roofless applicants accommodated immediately if presenting out of hours	SG	100%	100%	100%	100%
All applicants requiring temporary accommodation provided with it	SG	100%	100%	100%	100%
Breaches of unsuitable accommodation order	SG	4	1	0	1
Permanent Accommodation					
90 days to first offer	CNES	29%	42%	25%	44%
Second offer within 90 days of first offer	CNES	52%	42%	90%	67%
%age of priority need households housed	SPI	76%	73%	n/a	84%
Tenancy Sustainment for over 12 months	CNES	100%	99%	100%	99%
Appeals					
Appeal heard within 14 working days of receipt of appeal	CNES	n/a	n/a	100%	n/a
Applicant informed of decision within 3 working days of appeal	CNES	n/a	n/a	100%	n/a
Complaints					
Complainant advised of outcome within 21 days of receipt of complaint	CNES	n/a	100%	100%	100%

CONCLUSION

- 17.1 Homelessness applications in the Outer Hebrides increased by 10% for the period of 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The average length of time taken for homeless households to be provided with permanent accommodation remained the same as for the preceding year at 256 days. Overall lengths of stay in temporary accommodation decreased slightly to 187 days. While the overall proportion of allocations being made to statutory homeless households increased, due to a decrease in overall lets available for allocation this did not translate into the same increase in actual allocations made. However, the backlog of those awaiting a permanent offer did decrease slightly.
- 17.2 There are ongoing pressures on the two and five-apartment waiting lists, but HHP have committed to continue their target of allocating at least 25 two-apartment properties in Stornoway to statutory homeless households in the year up to the end of May 2025. As a result of this commitment, despite the increase in homeless applications for 2023/24, the homeless list for two-apartment properties in Stornoway has reduced by 15% over the past three years.
- 17.3 There has been some good progress in achieving the overall aims of the Comhairle's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Eight Housing First tenancies were in operation in the Outer Hebrides at the end of March 2024, and both waiting times to a permanent offer and lengths of stay in temporary accommodation have reduced. However, ongoing pressures on housing have prevented the core aspirations of rapid rehousing from being fully realised within the initial five-year timeframe. It is also unlikely that they will be achieved within the extended seven-year timeframe. However, the Comhairle will continue to work with partners towards these ends. The forthcoming Homelessness Prevention Duties offer an opportunity to ameliorate existing pressures, but it is anticipated that comprehensive guidance for all public bodies and appreciable funding will be required if they are to prove effective in resolving housing issues prior to homelessness occurring.
- 17.4 If the Comhairle is to continue to meet its statutory duties and to provide a good service to homeless households the Homelessness Service continues to be a vital resource.