



Orkney Islands Council: Update on Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

June 2023

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
1 Applications	7
2 Rough Sleeping	7
3 Reasons for homelessness	8
4 Households.....	9
5 Temporary Accommodation	9
6 Prevention	12
7 Support/Supported accommodation	13
8 Settled accommodation	16
Progress Made in 2022/23.....	21

Executive Summary

Two of the key priorities of the Local Housing Strategy of particular relevance to addressing homelessness are:

- the need for an adequate supply and range of housing options and
- to prevent and alleviate homelessness through early intervention and improved housing options

In 2022/23, the Council received 142 homeless applications, 10 more than in 2021/22 - a rise of 7.6%. However, from 1 April 2023 to 22 June 2023, there have been 43 homeless presentations in comparison to 39 presentations for the same period the previous year. Therefore, at this stage in the year, homeless presentations are currently looking slightly higher than the previous year.

The number of people who slept rough in the previous three months prior to presenting as homeless to the Council remains relatively steady. There is not any long term rooflessness in Orkney.

The Homelessness Service responds quickly to any person identified as sleeping rough.

The three most common reasons for people applying as homeless in Orkney (as in Scotland as a whole) continues to be:

- 'non - violent' dispute within household /relationship breakdown
- asked to leave
- violent/abusive dispute within the household

Single households remain the predominate group of people presenting as homeless, 79% of applicants in 2022/23, higher than the previous year - 72% of applicants.

Single male households were the largest group, making up just under half of all applicants at 47%.

Young single people made up 19% of applications a slight rise from 16% in 2021/22.

The support needs most commonly identified were assistance with housing management tasks /independent living skills and with mental health problems.

There was a decline in the use of B&B in 2022/23 and a decrease in the average time spent in B&B. The Council breached the Unsuitable Accommodation Order regulations on two occasions.

The rate of homeless households leaving temporary accommodation was slightly higher than in 2022/23 than the previous year, being 105 households in comparison to 102 households the year before.

There were, at 31st March 2023, 72 households accommodated in temporary accommodation, in comparison to 47 at 31 March 2022. Under normal circumstances around 45 households would be accommodated in temporary accommodation. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, numbers in temporary accommodation have been significantly higher than was previously the case. However, care needs to be taken with this figure which represents one day. Throughout financial year 2021/22, the number of households in temporary accommodation was generally above 65 households and this has also been true throughout 2022/23. In June 2023, 62 households were in temporary accommodation. In addition to this, 5 households were staying with either friends or family awaiting temporary accommodation and 2 households who are assessed as “homeless at home” and therefore do not require temporary accommodation currently.

There was a slight rise in the numbers of people seeking / provided with housing options information. Homelessness and security of tenure issues were the most common areas for information and advice. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted positively on this given that evictions were suspended.

The Council plans to improve its Housing Options approach by introducing a Housing Options portal. This has been delayed by the impact of COVID-19. The Council will consider, in discussions with other services / organisations, how best to broaden out a housing options approach and what role other services / organisations could play in preventing homelessness.

The Council is committed to maintaining its accreditation, at the National Standard for Information and Advice services along with supporting our partner Orkney CAB to do likewise. During financial year 2022/23 the Council successfully achieved reaccreditation.

The amount and type of supported accommodation provided remains the same. This is specifically targeted at young people where the Council works in partnership with Right There (formerly Ypeople) and Women's Aid Orkney managing supported accommodation to provide support to people from a specific client group being young people and women and their children (if any) who have experienced domestic abuse respectively.

The Council hopes to discuss with Orkney Health and Care the potential for a Housing First model to flexibly meet the needs and support of those people (irrespective of age) who have complex needs and who may require high levels of support including any care experienced young people. Currently, funding is not available to allow this to be an achievable option but possibilities will be explored nevertheless.

There is a Council visiting housing support service available for those with relatively low support needs and there are housing support services provided by third sector organisations.

The waiting time for homeless households to be housed has been marginally lower over the last financial year than was the case for the three years prior to this. This is

likely to be related to 36 new builds which have come on stream in the last financial year.

In financial year 2022/23, the Council's development programme was very limited and amounted to 8 properties. The year before 36 social rented properties had been developed. The Council responded to a letter from the Scottish Housing Minister asking for homeless households to be housed as a priority throughout the pandemic and continues to prioritise homeless households for permanent rehousing. Accordingly, the Council permanently rehoused 41 homeless households during financial year 2022/23 in comparison to 72 the year before.

The provision of affordable housing is crucial in addressing homelessness and housing need in Orkney. However, Orkney is also experiencing significant challenges in relation to the provision of accommodation for essential workers across the public, private and third sectors. A significant piece of work has been contracted and is underway to establish the extent of the housing challenge and to seek to identify some potential solutions. At the same time work is ongoing around the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to determine what is affordable for the Council to build over the coming years. Orkney Housing Association Ltd is also facing financial challenges. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan will be updated in due course.

This update to the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is reflective of the position at June 2023. In general terms the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on homelessness across Orkney. The situation is being monitored closely but it is clear that the levels of homeless presentations remain steady but significant and the numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation remained significantly higher than that of a "normal" year. However, 8 new builds becoming available for let, in addition to the general turnover of stock meant that the Council was able to permanently rehouse 41 homeless households. Orkney Housing Association Ltd permanently rehoused 21 homeless households. This has assisted greatly. However, a challenging situation with the cost of development locally has meant that no further new build developments are likely to complete this financial year. Every attempt will continue to be made to progress the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan inside available resources, equally the effect of significantly rising build costs has led to a challenging position around the levels of future delivery.

Homelessness in Orkney

Introduction

This is an update on homelessness in Orkney at the end of March 2023 and provides a background to the progress of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP).

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out a number of key priorities for the Council in relation to the future of housing and housing related services in Orkney. Two key priorities have specific pertinence in relation to homelessness and for the progress of the RRTP.

Ensuring an adequate supply of houses

- Ensure that Orkney has a sufficient range, number and type of houses to meet demand and need and offers a suitable range of housing options

Preventing and Alleviating Homelessness

- Improved housing options and early intervention leading to reduced periods of time in temporary accommodation. The provision of housing support as required.

The Council has not been able to progress the RRTP to the extent it would wish, this is, in the main, due to insufficient resources and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is too early to assess what the long term impact of COVID-19 may be on homelessness within Orkney though we have seen consistently high level of applications at the end of March 2023 and a higher level of households in temporary accommodation than would be expected generally.

We would hope however, if sufficient resources continue to be made available, that good progress can be made in implementing the RRTP once the impact of the pandemic has reduced.

There is little change in the reasons for people applying as homeless or in the family composition of the households concerned, with single person households predominating.

1 Applications

The level of homelessness presentations over the last four years is shown in the table below.

Year	Number of Applications
2022/23	142
2021/22	132
2020/21	136
2019/20	118

The level of homelessness applications has risen between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

From 1 April 2023 to 22 June 2023, there have been 43 homeless presentations in comparison to 39 presentations for the same period the previous year. Therefore, at this stage in the year, homeless presentations are currently slightly higher than the previous year.

Table 1 Homeless applications and homeless assessments 2017/18 to 2022/23

Reason	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Homeless applications	134	119	136	132	142
Assessed as homeless	107	93	108	98	114
% assessed as homeless	80%	78%	79%	74.2%	80.2%

(HL1 figures¹)

The proportion of those who initially applied as homeless and who were subsequently assessed as homeless remains relatively constant.

The time taken to assess an applicant, decreased in 2022/23 from 23.5 days to 21.6 days.

Table 2 Average time (days) from assessment to closure for applications assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
114	188	194	189	168

(OIC figs)

2 Rough Sleeping

The number of people who slept rough in the previous three months prior to on presenting as homeless to the Council remains relatively steady – 13 applicants in 2022/23 compared to 9 applicants in 2021/22 and 8 applicants in 2020/21 in comparison to 10 applicants for financial years 2019/20 and 2018/19.

There were eight applicants who were roofless the night before presenting in 2022/23, two applicants in 2021/22, three applicants in 2020/21 in comparison with five applicants in 2019/20, half the number of those presenting in 2018/19.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2019-2020/>

Table 3 Homelessness presentations where applicant slept rough 2017/18-2022/23

When	At least once during the last 3 months					The night before				
	Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No	10	10	8	9	13	10	5	3	2	8

(HL1 figs)

Rooflessness is likely to be a one off situation and there is no chronic rough sleeping on Orkney. If it comes to the Council's attention that someone is roofless then the person is directly approached and offered assistance.

3 Reasons for homelessness

The three most common reasons for people applying as homeless in Orkney (as in Scotland as a whole) continues to be:

- 'non - violent' dispute within household /relationship breakdown
- asked to leave
- violent/abusive dispute within the household

Table 4 Reasons for applying as homeless in Orkney, 2018/19 to 2022/23

Reason	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent	58	52	46	54	60
Dispute within household: violent or abusive	18	13	13	21	15
Asked to leave	31	19	38	20	25
Harassment/abuse outwith the home	5	7	7	4	6
Mortgage default /rent arrears	1	2	1	1	0
Other Action by landlord	3	3	4	2	3
Secure accommodation given up	5	3	3	3	5
Loss of service / tied accommodation	0	2	4	2	4
Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution	2	0	1	1	1
Emergency (fire, flood, etc)	0	1	1	1	1
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	1	2	1	0	0
Overcrowding	1	1	4	0	1
Other reason	9	13	13	23	21
Total	134	118	136	132	142

(OIC figures)

People subject to harassment or abuse from outwith their home was the fourth most common reason for applying to the Council.

4 Households

Single households remain the predominate group of people presenting as homeless, representing 79% of applicants in 2022/23, higher than the previous year - 72% of applicants.

- Single male households were the largest group, making up just under half of all applicants at 47%;
- Single female applicants stood at 32% and 16% of applicants were single parents (94.1% of which were women).
- Twenty-four percent of households contained children, the vast majority in single parent households

Table 5 Household type of homeless applicants in Orkney, 2017/18 to 2022/23

Household	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
single male 16-24	19	11	23	12	15
single male 25-64	42	46	43	49	51
single male 65+	3	3	1	0	1
Single males	64	60	67	61	67
single female 16-24	14	13	12	9	12
single female 25-64	25	19	21	24	31
single female 65+	1	2	7	1	2
Single females	40	34	40	34	45
couple	5	3	6	5	4
couple with children	0	1	1	5	2
single female parent	17	19	18	26	22
single male parent	4	0	1	1	1
Other	4	1	3	0	1
Total	134	118	136	132	142

(OIC figs)

Young single people made up 19% of applications up from the previous year where they made up 16% of applications. The proportion of young people per 1,000 of the total population presenting as homeless to the Council, was only very slightly higher than the Scottish average at 14.3 per thousand of population, in comparison to 11.7 for 2021/22 and 19.5 the previous year.

5 Temporary Accommodation

The majority of the temporary accommodation in use for homeless households is self contained Council properties taken from our general needs stock. There are a few properties from Orkney Housing Association Ltd. All the accommodation is situated on mainland Orkney. It is as follows (and includes temporary accommodation for young people):

- 52 self contained properties, 3 shared in Kirkwall

- 4 self contained properties in Finstown
- 14 self contained, 3 shared in Stromness
- 7 self contained in St Margaret's Hope
- 1 self contained property in Orphir

The majority are one bedroom properties reflecting the domination of single person households.

Bed and Breakfast - a few establishments may be used. All these establishments are Visit Scotland accredited after being subject to their quality assurance checks.

See section on Supported Accommodation for further information.

Fewer people moved out of temporary accommodation than moved in during 2022/23. The level of homeless households exiting temporary accommodation was higher due to the level of households allocated permanent accommodation, partially due to the level of new build completions and the request from the Scottish Housing Minister.

Table 6 Households entering and exiting temporary accommodation

Year	Entering	Exiting	Net difference
2020/21	114	56	58
2021/22	99	117	-18
2022/23	110	105	5

(HL1 fig)

The Council tries to avoid the use of B&B to house homeless households however, there are times when its use is not avoidable but every effort is made to keep its use to a minimum and we are endeavouring to plan for the imminent changes to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

There was a decrease in the use of B&B in 2022/23 and a decrease in the average number of nights spent in B&B. This was a result of there being insufficient temporary accommodation. There were two breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order regulations in comparison to none the year before.

Table 7 Number of nights and average time spent in B&B 2018/19 to 2022/23

Year	Number of nights	Average duration - nights
2018 to 2019	21.	2.1
2019 to 2020	149	4.8
2020 to 2021	55	6.1
2021 to 2022	266	5.2
2022 to 2023	182	4.9

(OIC figs)

The B&B establishments used by the Council, have been accredited by Visit Scotland where they are required to meet quality assurance checks.

The time spent in temporary accommodation was lower 2022/23 than was the case the year before. However, the time spent in temporary accommodation in 2021/22 was higher than was the case for the year before, reflecting the decrease in the supply of houses to let; and, the rate at which homeless households left temporary accommodation in 2021/22 was lower than in 2020/21.

Table 8 Average total time (days) spent in temporary accommodation, by household type

Year	Single Person	Single Parent	Couple	Couple with Children	Other	Other with Children	No HL1	All
2019/20	203	168	102	-	246	158	-	193
2020/21	194	205	190	113	-	-	-	194
2021/22	213	170	201	89	-	-	-	168
2022/23	208	142	59	116	-	-	-	195

(HL1 figs)

Traditionally, the number of households in temporary accommodation remains relatively constant. However, at the end of December 2020, the number of households in temporary accommodation increased to 64 households - an increase of 19 households since the end March 2020. At the end of March 2022, the number of households in temporary accommodation was 47 households but this was reflective of a substantial number of new builds coming on stream. This decline was temporary, quickly rising again.

As at 31st March 2023, 72 households were accommodated in temporary accommodation. This was a substantially higher number of households than in 2021/22 which was 47 households.

Table 9 Number of households in temporary accommodation

Year - as of	Number of households
31 March 2019	45 households
31 March 2020	45 households
31 March 2021	69 households
31 March 2022	47 households
31 March 2023	72 households

(OIC figs)

The Council was unable to flip any properties in 2022/23 in comparison to four in 2021/22 i.e. turning a temporary tenancy into a permanent let. The difficulty in flipping during 2022/23 was due to a lack of suitable properties or households. However, four second hand properties were purchased in late March 2023 and 2 of these will be furnished, equipped and added to our stock of temporary

accommodation with a view to 'flipping' a similar number of tenancies when appropriate and feasible.

By June 2023, 64 households were in temporary accommodation. In addition to this, 5 households were staying with either friends or family awaiting temporary accommodation and 2 households who are assessed as "homeless at home" and therefore do not require temporary accommodation. In effect this equates as 71 households in temporary accommodation representing an increase of 7% on the figures for June 2022.

In order to endeavour to meet the increased demand, the Council sought assistance with permanently rehousing households from Orkney Housing Association Ltd and separately increased its stock of temporary accommodation by 9 units during financial year 2022/23. Three were purchased on 31 March 2023. While no tenancies were flipped in 2022/23, it is expected that some tenancies will be flipped in 2023/24.

6 Prevention

As noted above one of our Local Housing Strategy's key priorities "is to prevent and alleviate homelessness through early intervention and improved housing options". We remain committed to this goal. This was similarly highlighted in our Housing Contribution Statement which highlights the need:

- for better and shared baseline information of the housing and support needs from people with long term, multiple health conditions and complex needs.
- to develop, with health and care teams, better shared assessment processes which would allow for links with housing support plans and the housing allocation process.

It is hoped that such developments would assist in preventing any potential homelessness.

There has been a slight rise in the numbers of people seeking / provided with housing options information and advice. However there has been a decline in the number of type II cases and it is not yet entirely clear why there has been such a decline in housing options work though the lack of other housing options could well be a factor, resource constraints in having insufficient time to fully explore other options may also play a part. During financial year 2022/23, just 3 type II housing options cases existed, and 10 the year before. This was partially due to the suspension of evictions meaning that staff did not require to undertake casework to prevent homelessness in the usual manner.

Table 10 Number of households receiving housing options/advice and information

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number	31	19	22	18	22

(OIC figs)

The Council's housing service is accredited in the National Standards in Information and Advice to provide Type 1 and Type 11 and the Council has maintained its accreditation since 2008. The Council supports Orkney CAB in also maintaining its accreditations. The Council successfully underwent a reaccreditation inspection during 2022/23.

In 2022/23 the most common information provided was on housing options across tenures this was generally at Type 1 level. Housing Options (general and private sector), harassment and illegal eviction, security of tenure and homelessness were the most common areas of information and advice provided.

The Council is hoping to introduce a housing options portal to enhance effectiveness of our work in this area. Due to COVID-19 the introduction has been delayed. The portal offers the opportunity to explore the possibility of broadening out the housing options approach to other organisations (with appropriate training). Also, there is a need for discussions with other services such as health and social care services regarding their potential role in preventing homelessness, for example by identifying responding to any issues that could lead to future homelessness.

7 Support/Supported accommodation

The support needs most commonly identified were assistance with housing management tasks /independent living skills and those with mental health problems.

Mental health as an issue for homeless households was the most prominent form of support needs recorded in 2022/23 which stood at 14% of applicants, this compares with the Scottish average of 30%².

²

Scottish Government - Main Tables to Homelessness in Scotland: 2022/23, Table 19

Table 11 Support needs identified for households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness 2020/21 - 2021/22

Year	Mental Health		Learning Disability		Physical Disability		Medical Condition		Drug/Alcohol Dependent		Housing Management	
	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23
single person	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	11
single parent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
couple without child	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1
couple with child	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-64												
Single Person	11	13	1	2	2	8	3	6	5	4	2	5
Single Parent	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Couple without Child	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Couple with Child	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
65+												
Single Person	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Single Parent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Couple without Child	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Couple with Child	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	16	20	1	2	2	9	4	8	6	6	10	19

(OIC figs)

Issues relating to the mental health of some young people, in particular care experienced young people has been identified also in Orkney Health and Care's mental health strategy.

Regarding care experienced young people Orkney Health and Care identified the need to assess the range of supported accommodation provisions which may meet the varied needs of young care leavers. The Council works in partnership with Children and Families to ensure that there is accommodation available to young people leaving care and that they do not go through the homelessness route.

There has been no increase in the amount and type of supported accommodation provided in recent years. The supported accommodation provision comprises - for young people:

- Three units with shared kitchen (Kirkwall)
- Four separate rooms, one of which has en-suite facilities and a shared kitchen area (Stromness).
- Six move on self contained properties (Kirkwall).

Women's Aid refuge - three self contained flats within the refuge and four properties which are used as move on accommodation, owned by Orkney Housing Association Ltd and managed by the Council

The Housing / Homelessness Service plan to discuss with Orkney Health and Care how best to meet the housing and support needs of those young people who have complex needs and who may require high levels of support including any care experienced young people. There is also a need to consider options for those people (irrespective of age) with complex needs. Therefore, this will include exploring the potential of a flexible Housing First model. While there is no funding to deliver this, explorations will still take place.

The Council's Housing Service provides a visiting/floating housing support service available to those with relatively low support needs. For those in temporary accommodation, this includes resettlement support and assistance, where necessary, with tenancy sustainment. The Council has a positive relationship with third sector organisations that provide also housing support services to which the Council makes referrals.

8 Settled accommodation

In relation to housing for let in Orkney the proportion of both social sector and private sector housing to rent is lower than the Scottish average.

The 2019 figures estimated that the private rented sector made up 10% of the housing stock in Orkney compared to 14% in Scotland as a whole and the social sector comprised 15% of the stock compared to 23% of Scottish housing³.

The demand for social housing in Orkney remains high. The Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd operate a joint housing list which stood at 1235 in August 2023. The greatest demand was for Kirkwall with 780 applicants on the waiting list. A similar situation exists for homeless households.

The waiting time for smaller homeless households to be housed (one and two bedroom properties) is the highest it has been in the last five years. The same is not true for homeless households waiting for a three bedroom property. The longer waiting time highlighted may in part be due to the delay in some new build coming on stream and the historic imbalance of required house size and demand including from homeless households.

Table 12 Homeless households waiting time by size of property, 2017/18 to 2022/23

Year	Waiting time for one bed	No of House holds	Waiting time for two bed	No of House holds	Waiting time for three bed	No of House holds
2018/19	5.9 months	37	3.3 months	15	3.2 months	6
2019/20	8.2 months	42	4.1 months	19	8.6 months	2
2020/21	9.2 months	40	5.4 months	15	11.6 months	5
2021/22	9 months	42	5.3 months	17	8.9 months	13
2022/23	10.2 months	36	5.4 months	20	5.4 months	7

(OIC figs)

- In 2022/23 the Council let 80 properties, 41 of which were to homeless households – 51% of lets. 25 properties were on the Orkney mainland, outwith Kirkwall and Stromness and the isles, this is 31% of the total properties which became vacant. Nine homeless households were housed within these areas. The majority of homeless households are waiting for a one bedroomed property in Kirkwall. Last year 33 one bedroomed properties became available and 26 were allocated to homeless households, this equates to 79%.
- OHAL let 76 properties of which 21 were let to homeless households – 28% of lets
- This compares to 2021/22 the Council let 118 properties, 72 of which were to homeless households - 61% of our lets

^{3 3} <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-stock-by-tenure/>

- OHAL let 85 properties of which 23 were to homeless households, 27% of their lets in 2021/22.⁴

Table 13 Outcomes for households assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness, 2020/21 to 2022/23

Year	LA tenancy	RSL tenancy	Private rented tenancy	Returned to previous/ present accommodation	Moved-in with friends/ relatives	Other - known	Not Known - contact maintained	All outcomes
2020/21	27	36	12	14	10	6	10	115
2021/22	73	27	4	4	3	2	4	117
2022/23	43	23	3	21	7	6	9	112

(HL1 figs)

The greatest number of lets to homeless households was in Kirkwall with 63% of Council lets in Kirkwall. Care needs to be taken with these figures as the ability to house homeless households is affected by the size and area of vacancies which arise. The predominant need is for one bedroom properties and insufficient vacancies of this size arise. Currently 36 homeless households are waiting for a one bedroom property in Kirkwall. The majority of social housing developments detailed in the Council's SHIP are planned for Kirkwall where the highest demand for social rented housing lies.

As with other homeless households, young people are predominately housed in settled accommodation in the social sector - 63% of those housed.

Table 14 Outcomes for young households assessed as unintentionally homeless and contact maintained 2020/21 and 2022/23.⁵

Year	LA tenancy	Private rented tenancy	Returned to previous accommodation/ Moved-in with friends/relatives / other known	RSL	All
2022/23	9	1	6	5	21
2021/22	24	2	3	7	36
2020/21	1	2	2	4	9

(HL1 figs)

During financial year 2022/23, there was a slight decline in the percentage of lets to homeless households – 51% in comparison to 61% the year before. The figure of 61% in 2021/22 represented a significant rise from 2020/21 where 34% of lets went to homeless households. If figures for Kirkwall alone are considered these would be 63% in comparison to 69% the year before. The Council wishes to see some

⁴ These percentages are based on a mix of OIC, OHAL and HL1 figures
Scottish Government figures; <https://www.gov.scot/publications/youth-homelessness-statistics-2019-to-2020/>

increase in the proportion of social housing being let to homeless households in general. We have undertaken a review of our section 5 agreement with Orkney Housing Association Ltd and will consider options for increasing the proportion of our lets made to homeless households accordingly.

The Council's new allocations policy which was scheduled for introduction in April 2021 has been delayed due to COVID-19. The process of implementation is underway and it is anticipated to be implemented later this financial year (2023/24). Once implemented, we will be reviewing its implementation to assess what, if any, impact it has on housing homeless households.

Securing settled accommodation in the private rented sector currently plays a very limited role in housing homeless households, where issues such as the sector's size and affordability play a part. Orkney has experienced significant pressure on its housing system in general and currently a piece of work is underway to assess the housing needs of essential workers in Orkney.

Pressures such as high demand from incoming workers and the growth of Air B&B can affect the numbers of properties available to rent and also the cost of the rent. Training was offered in April 2021, to any new landlords who wished to enter the sector. Changes to the licensing of short term lets nationally may also impact on the number of properties available for long term let. The outcome of the Council's contracted research into the housing needs of essential workers will be presented to our Education, Leisure and Housing Committee during 2023/24.

The Council operates a rent deposit scheme to assist some of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in accessing this sector. The number of participating landlords has declined in recent years and if sufficient resources were available, the Council would wish to re-engage with private landlords in order to increase their participation where relevant.

Orkney Islands Property Developments Ltd (OIPDL) is a private sector company which provides a range of rented accommodation including some general lets and student accommodation. OIPDL is a registered Letting Agency. The Council has a good relationship with OIPDL and means to explore the potential for closer partnership working with OIPDL, for example, in relation to increasing access to the private rented sector.

The Council has been supporting Islands Development Trusts in an effort to attract funding for housing. Several island communities have been successful in attracting funding from the Scottish Land Fund and the Scottish Government's Rural and Islands Housing Fund. In addition the Council has supplemented funding available from the Scottish Government, with a specific grant, funded by COVID-19 funding. This is available to island development trusts to assist with development of funding.

While the demand for isles housing does not match that on mainland Orkney, in particular Kirkwall, nevertheless there is a healthy demand for housing on some of the isles, which may in time be increased by the feasibility of working from home. The provision of affordable housing can mean that the housing needs of those who would choose to remain or move to the isles if there was access to affordable

housing can be met, leading to more sustainable communities and lessen potential demand on mainland Orkney, especially Kirkwall.

The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2020/21 to 2025/26 aimed to have 297 affordable housing properties, completed by the Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd by the end of the plan. During 2022/23 the Council completed 8 new builds and Orkney Housing Association Ltd completed 23 social housing units. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan is currently under review and so is the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. Both the Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd are experiencing affordability issues affecting the ongoing development of housing. The Council expects to complete 14 units of social housing in March 2024.

Progress Made in 2022/23

- Provision of some additional resource to assist with the drafting and delivery of the RRTP and closely related key documents;
- Achieved re-accreditation at the National Standards for Information and Advice Providers;
- Expansion of our joint processes for those who experience domestic abuse including development of policy documentation;
- Consider potential to flip properties while considering the cost – 0 cases during 2022/23;
- Temporary accommodation – sourcing additional with a view to rotating (or flipping) – 9 cases during 2022/23 (three purchased on 31 March 2023);
- Moratorium on temporary accommodation rents to endeavour to improve affordability;
- Settled accommodation – provision of additional social rented housing;
- Provision of additional resource to assist with the drafting of a range of strategic documents and assessment of housing need and demand across a range of needs groups with a view to expanding provision of accommodation more generally (began summer 2022 and will continue certainly till June 2024).

Details of the above are covered in our RRTP monitoring report – activity and funding template.

This update to the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is reflective of the position at June 2023. In general terms the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on homelessness across Orkney. The situation is being monitored closely but it is already clear that the levels of homeless presentations remain steady and throughout the pandemic, significantly increased numbers of homeless households have been in temporary accommodation than during a “normal” year. The completion of 8 new build Council properties during 2022/23 along with homeless households being prioritised for permanent rehousing, has assisted but meantime the number of households in temporary accommodation has not declined significantly. The outcome of and response to the research on the housing needs of essential workers in Orkney, may assist with ensuring clarity around housing pressures. The development of a new Local Housing Strategy during 2023/24 may also assist with seeking to reduce homelessness.