

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	9
Report No	HP/27/25

**Committee:** Housing and Property

**Date:** 13 August 2025

**Report Title:** Highland Housing Register Allocations Monitoring Report 2024/25

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - Place

## 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Demand for housing in Highland remains high, a picture that is replicated across Scotland. One of the Council's core commitments under its delivery plan is to increase the numbers of affordable housing across the area. In addition, the Highland Housing Challenge, recognises the need to increase the number of properties across all tenure types in Highland. The actions to support this were agreed as part of the Partnership Action Plan considered at Council in June 2025.
- 1.2 This report sets out the annual performance review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy for 2024/25; this focuses particularly on social housing and provides information on the need for social rented housing across the area and describes how those needs are met through the policy. A summary of the annual performance review is contained within the report, with the detailed report found in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 The report also provides a recommended scope for a policy review of the Allocations Policy as agreed at Council in May 2025.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
  - i. **Note** the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on housing Allocations which demonstrates that the policy is achieving its objectives and that the Highland Housing Partnership continues to provide affordable and secure social housing in Highland communities; and
  - ii. **Approve** the scope of the review of the Allocations Policy, as agreed at Council on 15 May 2025.

### **3 Implications**

- 3.1 **Resource** – There are no specific implications arising from the report.
- 3.2 **Legal** – There are no specific implications arising from the report. Compliance with housing and homelessness legislation will form part of the Allocations Policy review.
- 3.3 **Risk** – There are no specific implications arising from the report.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no specific implications arising from the report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – Housing applications and related published material about access to housing meet the Council's standards in relations to Gaelic.

### **4 Impacts**

- 4.1 In Highland all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an annual update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required. An impact assessment will be required to support the Allocations policy review.

### **5 Housing Demand**

- 5.1 There was a total of 8,767 Housing and Transfer List applications on the Highland Housing Register (HHR) on 31 March 2025 compared to 8,618 in 2023/24. Of all applications held on 31 March 2025, 70.16% are not currently a tenant of a Highland Housing Register landlord. Just over half of these applications are from households privately renting or living with family. Ten per cent of households are defined as homeless under national homelessness legislation.
- 5.2 The continuing need for smaller sized properties is clear. Half of all applicants are single people and 10% are couples, although these figures vary across Highland.
- 5.3 The highest demand for housing in terms of the number of applications remains Inverness, which 40.78% of all applicants have selected as their first choice; this is followed by Lochaber 10.76% and East Ross 8.69%.
- 5.4 Whilst over a quarter of applicants are seeking housing in Inverness, the lack of housing availability means only 11.5% of lets are made there.

- 5.5 The pressure on housing varies across Highland; this means that applicants whose need for housing is less acute can receive offers of housing more quickly in some areas than applicants with more acute needs in other areas. Analysis of the number applying for each house being let indicates that the pressure on social rented housing is greatest in Inverness (11.5%), followed by Badenoch & Strathspey (13.9%) and then Nairn (14.6%).
- 5.6 Information and advice are available to help applicants increase their prospects of a housing offer; this includes other tenure types rather than a specific focus on social housing where the priority remains to provide housing to those in greatest housing need. Information gathered through applications confirms the continued need for officers to promote other options such as low-cost home ownership, mid-market rent, mutual exchange and private renting.
- 5.7 Efforts to increase the supply of affordable rented properties have been considered as part of a number of related projects:-
- the Highland Housing Challenge, the Partnership Action Plan which was approved at Council on 26 June 2025;
  - the Local Housing Strategy 2023–2028;
  - the Strategic Housing Investment Programme 2025-2030 which was approved on 6 November 2024. The Programme has been subsequently submitted and verified by the Scottish Government which provided positive feedback on the content and delivery of affordable housing in Highland. An updated Programme will be provided to November Committee; and
  - the Housing Need and Demand Assessment which was commissioned in June 2025, and which will evidence the housing needs of Highland communities. Members will be invited to attend stakeholder discussions later in 2025 which will focus on the specific housing needs of communities.
- 5.8 This report confirms the demand for social housing in Highland but also recognises that many housing applicants are willing to move into private sector housing if the supply increases in that sector.
- 5.9 Section 6 provides a summary of how the HHR Allocation's Policy is performing and meeting demand in Highland in 2024/25. **Appendix 1** provides more detail of the outcomes achieved.

## **6 Meeting Demand**

- 6.1 Across Highland 1,620 households were housed in 2024/25; this represents a decrease on the previous year, which was 1,738. While HHR stock overall increased by 270 houses, fewer houses became available for re-let; this was a result of improved tenancy sustainment, with tenants remaining in their properties for longer.
- 6.2 The majority of lets continue to be into Council Housing (67%), followed by Albyn (14%); Cairn (9%); Lochaber HA (6%); Lochalsh and Skye HA (3%) and Caledonia (1%); this is broadly reflective of the proportion of properties owned by the social housing partners.

### 6.3 **Homelessness Duties**

Social rented housing providers have a legal duty to give a 'reasonable preference' to priority groups when allocating housing; this includes households who have nowhere safe and secure that they can reasonably stay and so are homeless and households who are living under satisfactory conditions and who have unmet housing needs.

6.4 The [Homelessness Update](#) to May Committee detailed how Highland is meeting its legislative requirements in regard to homelessness and how this compares favourably to the national housing emergency which has highlighted the 10,000 children currently in temporary accommodation in Scotland. The Housing Performance Report to this Committee details the continued pressure of homelessness demand in Highland but also highlights the positive performance around reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation.

6.5 The Council and HHR partners are continuing to meet statutory duties to house households who are homeless. Across Highland, 855 lets – 53% of all lets – went to households with points which reflect their homelessness status; this is a 3% increase from 2023/24 and reflects the commitment to reduce the time a household is homeless and to move households into secure affordable tenancies as quickly as possible.

6.6 In areas where there is a greater demand for housing, homeless points play a more significant role in leading to a let; for example, the Highland Council across five housing areas allocated more than 53% of stock to homeless households in Inverness (72%); Dingwall (73%); Badenoch and Strathspey (65%); Nairn (72%) and Portree (71%).

### 6.7 **Letting Based on Need**

Analysis of the proportion of lets to the other various housing needs groups, compared to demand from applicants with those needs, shows that the HHR Allocations Policy is largely meeting its objective to provide housing to those with the greatest needs. A fifth of those who were housed had been living in housing which was unsuitable due to their health needs. Nearly a fifth had been living in overcrowded housing.

6.8 As well as approaches directly from applicants, HHR partners are committed to assisting with other policy priorities. A total of 16 households were helped to move into their first 'independent living' tenancy, many via our Protocol with NHS Highland, for clients with complex continuing health care and support needs. In addition, 16 care-experienced young people were housed through the Highland Protocol which supports our Corporate Parenting commitments and duties.

### 6.9 **Specific Commitments**

Highland supports the Armed Forces, including through the Armed Forces Covenant, which recognises the needs of this group. As at 31 March 2025, there were 16 applications from serving members and 94 applications from former members of the British Armed Forces.

- 6.10 Over 8 out of 10 applicants housed had additional points which recognised they had a particular 'Need to Reside' in that community either because they work or are already established there; this could include key workers, although we do not specifically record this. The Need to Reside category is specific to Highland and is not widely used by most local authorities; it does, however, help the HHR recognise the housing needs of individuals particular to a local community. Whilst Highland has adopted Need to Reside, this is not legally allowed to relate to the length of time someone has stayed within a specific location.
- 6.11 It should also be noted that while the Allocations Policy follows national guidance and allocates to households based on need and does not take income and employment into account, all HHR partners allocated houses to key workers in 2024/25. A new key worker statement was agreed as part of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan in November 2024. The policy review detailed at section 7 of this report proposes efforts to quantify this in due course.
- 6.12 **Inclusion**  
The HHR monitors equalities information to make sure it is providing equality of access and ensuring there is no discrimination for protected groups. 60% of all applicants described themselves as White Scottish. This group accounted for 68% of those housed applicants, 6.25% of lets went to non-British/White and 1% of lets went to other ethnic minorities.
- 6.13 Highland's social housing providers remain committed to working with the Scottish and UK Government in delivering services to households who form part of humanitarian and resettlement programmes; this included the allocation of 11 tenancies to Ukrainian Displaced Persons and the allocation of three houses to enable Children's Services to meet legislative requirements around Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in 2024/25.
- 6.14 More information on the outcomes achieved in 2024/25 is provided within **Appendix 1**.

## 7 Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy

7.1 The current Allocations Policy was approved at Housing and Property Committee in April 2023.

7.2 The main policy changes approved were as follows and have been introduced on a phased basis over the last two years:-

- changes to the priority given to applicants at **risk of homelessness** so this points category matches the points awarded to homeless households. As part of the focus on homelessness prevention, priority is now applied to applicants with the least security of tenure (for example, private renters with a notice to quit);
- an increase in **overcrowding** points to assist parents in terms of increased access to their child/children;
- reducing **under-occupation** in HHR tenancies by awarding points to tenants who want to move to a smaller house;
- supporting vulnerable groups and delivering on our Corporate Parenting responsibilities by increasing point awards to **applicants leaving a care setting**, both applicants with health/accessibility needs and through-care young people; and
- amending the **need to reside** category to comply with Scottish Government guidance which states that social landlords cannot take account of the length of time an applicant has been resident in an area when they are allocating housing. The new policy, however, continues to recognise that applicants will have a relationship to a particular area if the applicant lives in a community as their main residence, are employed within a community or have been offered permanent employment within the community.

7.3 On 15 May 2025, Council agreed that options for a review of the Allocations Policy be explored to ensure local housing need in Highland was being met. The recommended scope of the review is outlined below:-

- ensure **ongoing compliance with existing legislation** and an assessment of proposed legislative changes around homelessness prevention, private residential tenancies and domestic abuse in the Housing Scotland Act;
- assessment of the impact of the existing policy to ensure that those **applicants most in need of housing are being prioritised** consistently in line with policy;
- review of the **need to reside** category to make sure the policy gets the balance right between helping communities and making sure people in the greatest need of housing get housed; this review will include analysis of the letting areas where current applicants have a Need to Reside award; and
- review of the **key worker** definition in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2025-2030, approved at Committee on 6 November 2024. The type of key worker will vary depending on what is required to sustain a successful community and reflective of the current definition: "A worker who fulfils a role regarded as vital for the community, especially in the health, education, security and infrastructure sectors." Addressing key worker housing need is not limited to the Allocations Policy and it will be a key objective as the Council develops a mid-market rent model.

7.4 The approach to review is proposed to be as follows:-

- Desk based research:-
  - review of legislative requirements and policy context; and
  - review of data/evidence of existing operational practice
- Engagement with key stakeholders to understand local circumstances and context to inform and shape the policy review:-
  - engagement with local housing management teams and HHR partners;
  - engagement with Members on an area basis; and
  - engagement with tenant forum
- Review workshops to consider the information gathered and potential areas for amendment:-
  - Highland Housing Partnership Members
  - Member workshop to review the evidence and proposed amendments.

7.5 The review will include an integrated impact assessment which will consider the impact of any policy changes on specific groups and communities. It is important to consider whether amending the priority for one category, may have an unintended negative impact on another group in housing need and reduce the likelihood of rehousing; for example, any change to the priority within the Allocations Policy could impact, for example, on children in temporary accommodation. It is important that any potential impacts are identified, and Members are supported in their decision making around changes to the policy to prevent any unintended consequences.

7.6 Members are asked to note that the Allocations Policy is a partnership policy governing the HHR and therefore HHR partners will be critical to the review and proposals for establishing a new policy.

## **8 Conclusion**

8.1 The annual report indicates that demand for social housing in Highland remains high and, in many areas, the available housing available for let cannot meet demand; this continues to place additional pressure on the many households living in accommodation that does not meet their current needs; this is primarily due to a shortage of available housing.

8.2 Overall, evidence would suggest that the HHR is still performing well in meeting housing need and continues to play an important role in supporting good health, strong communities, and local economies. The review of the Allocations Policy will consider whether there are areas for improvement to strengthen the approach of ensuring the housing in Highland goes to those in the greatest need.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 18 July 2025

Author: Claire Fisher, Housing Policy Officer

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1- HHR Annual Allocations Report 2024/25

## HHR Annual Allocations Report 2024/25

### 1 Introduction

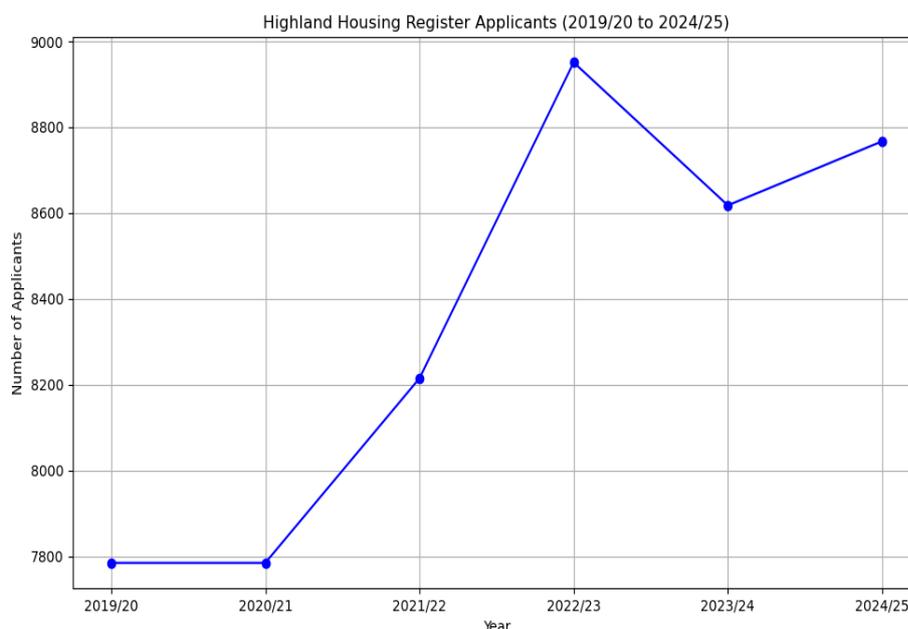
- 1.1 This report contains monitoring and information and commentary on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR Allocations Policy in 2024/2025. The analysis helps to identify improvements in meeting housing needs and aspirations in Highland.
- 1.2 The Housing Register is required to comply with the various Housing (Scotland) Acts (1987, 2001 and 2014), homelessness duties and statutory guidance.
- 1.3 The aims of the Highland Housing Register Allocations [Policy](#) include:
  - To provide housing to those in the greatest need, dependant on individual circumstances;
  - To help to prevent and deal with homelessness;
  - To help create and maintain strong and economically viable communities;
  - To work with our partners to provide suitable housing for those with special needs; and
  - To make the best use of the housing available.
- 1.4 The outcomes relate to the HHR partners - Albyn Housing Society, Caledonia Housing Association, Cairn Housing Association, Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association, Lochaber Housing Association and the Highland Council.
- 1.5 In terms of the local context, the HHR Policy operates across a variety of housing markets and communities. In June 2021, National Records Scotland estimated that the Highlands had a population of nearly 238,000 who live in 110,700 households.
- 1.6 Based on the 2023 Housing Need and Demand Assessment, social rented housing made up around 18% of all housing in Highland. As of 31 March 2025, there were 22,021 HHR social rented properties in Highland. The proportion of occupied housing that is social rented in Highland is lower than national average which sits at around 23%.
- 1.7 Differences in supply means that it is important for applicants to understand that their specific choices affect their likelihood of being made an offer. They are encouraged to use a web-based tool (Housing Prospects) to understand availability in different communities and encourage them to maximise their choices.
- 1.8 The Demand and Supply Tool is available within this [link](#)

1.9 Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, social landlords are required to prioritise households with ‘unmet’ housing needs (i.e. households who are unable to meet their own needs). Other households can benefit from the increasing supply of alternative options: mid-market renting; and low-cost homeownership (e.g. via open market purchase or new build shared equity models).

## 2 Applications

2.1 The number of households applying for housing was 8,767 on 31 March 2025; this is a 1.73% increase from 8,618 on 31 March 2024. In 2019/20, before Covid-19, the total number stood at 7,785. Chart 1 below highlights the total number of applicants held over the last six years.

**Chart 1 – Total number of HHR applicants 2019/20-2024/25**



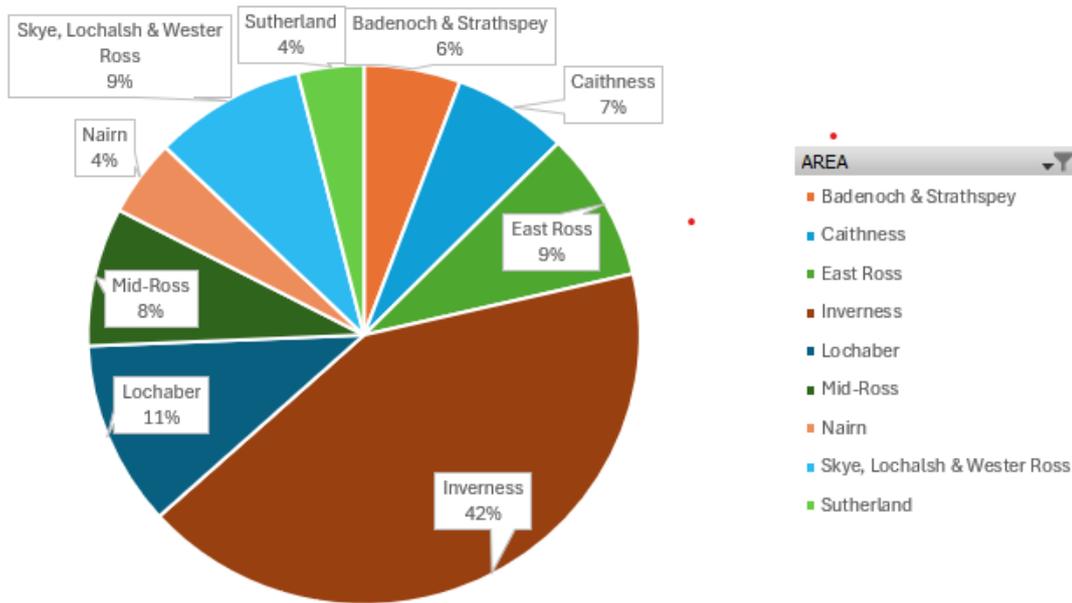
2.2 The increase in applications between 2019/20 and 2020/21 was largely a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Scottish Government restrictions on moving to a new home and re-let works meant fewer than average allocations took place. In addition, to ensure that applicants were not disadvantaged during the pandemic, the HHR partners agreed to pause re-registration and cancellation processes until February 2021.

2.3 Nearly 1 in 3 applicants on the HHR (30% 2,607) are existing tenants of Highland Housing Register landlords, applying for a transfer to another home; this is an increase of 2.3% from last year. Most households are applying to the ‘Housing List’ and are looking to move in as ‘new’ tenants (70%, 6,160). Just over half of all housing register applicants are privately renting or living with parents/relatives, over 1 in 10 are in temporary homeless accommodation and under 1 in 10 (6.9%) are currently homeowners. These figures follow last year’s trends.

2.4 Housing demand for specific letting areas can be measured in two ways. Either by reviewing an applicant's First Choice preference (i.e. where they most want to live) or All Demand (i.e. all the letting areas that an applicant is willing to reside in). Where appropriate, this report will provide demand as both First and All. This allows the report to reflect on where an applicant would ideally like to reside and what the overall demand across Highland's letting areas are.

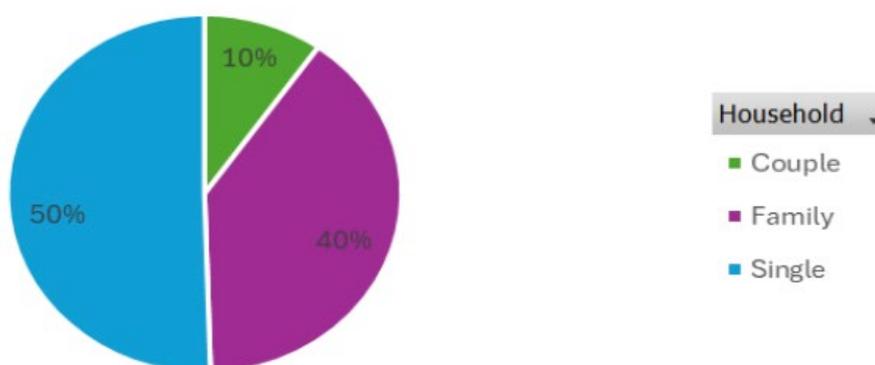
2.5 In terms of First Choice Demand, most applicants wish to be housed in Inverness City (which 25.37% of all applicants have selected as their first choice), followed by Ardersier (11.04%) and Lochaber (7.62%). Chart 2 below details this across Highland.

**Chart 2 – Households applying by 1<sup>st</sup> choice area**



2.6 Demand for small properties is clear. Half of all HHR applicants are single people; 10% are couples and 40% are families. Pressure on smaller properties is greater in some areas – for example, in Skye 70% of applicants require a one-bedroom property. Chart 3 below shows the household composition of HHR applicants.

**Chart 3 – Household Composition of HHR Applicants**



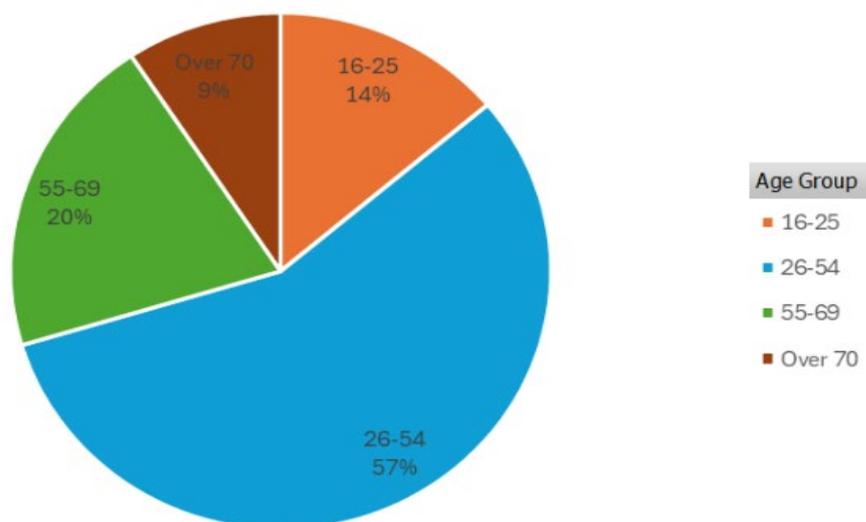
2.7 Table 1 outlines the number of bedrooms applicants require by their First Choice. This data highlights the significant contrast between demand and supply for one-bedroom properties and 5+ bedroom properties.

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

Area	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5+	%	Apps/stock
Badenoch & Strathspey	268	57%	99	21%	80	17%	21	4%	3	1%	471
Available Stock	255	26%	500	51%	188	19%	22	2%	6	1%	971
Caithness	360	64%	110	20%	56	10%	27	5%	7	1%	560
Available Stock	732	26%	1146	41%	769	28%	116	4%	4	0%	2,767
East Ross	435	58%	167	22%	103	14%	38	5%	10	1%	753
Available Stock	580	19%	1,032	34%	1,270	42%	148	5%	30	1%	3,060
Inverness	2,025	58%	866	25%	410	12%	156	4%	48	1%	3,505
Available Stock	2,014	29%	3,099	45%	1,658	24%	179	3%	14	0%	6,964
Lochaber	535	59%	218	24%	95	11%	42	5%	11	1%	901
Available Stock	259	12%	1,208	54%	702	31%	77	3%	1	0%	2,247
Mid-Ross	394	58%	146	21%	101	15%	28	4%	14	2%	683
Available Stock	423	22%	927	47%	541	28%	66	3%	9	0%	1,966
Nairn	237	61%	74	19%	50	13%	20	5%	8	2%	389
Available Stock	324	33%	398	40%	233	24%	31	3%	5	1%	991
Skye & Lochalsh	516	69%	149	20%	56	7%	23	3%	5	1%	749
Available Stock	453	24%	835	44%	539	29%	59	3%	1	0%	1,887
Sutherland	209	66%	66	21%	34	11%	6	2%	4	1%	319
Available Stock	357	31%	443	38%	357	31%	9	1%	2	0%	1,168
<b>Highland</b>	<b>4,979</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>1895</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>8,330</b>
<b>Available Stock</b>	<b>5,397</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>9588</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>6257</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>22,021</b>

2.8 Chart 4 illustrates the different age groups of HHR applicants. The bulk of applicants are between 26 and 54 (57%).

**Chart 4 – Age of HHR Applicants**



2.9 Table 2 focuses on the current circumstances of young applicants. Young applicants aged 16- 25 are far more likely than other age groups to be in homeless accommodation/Homeless at Home (21% of young applicants). This is an increase of nearly 3% from the previous year.

**Table 2 - Applicants Aged 16-25 Showing Current Circumstances**

	Couple	Family	Single	Total
A TENANT OF A HHR LANDLORD	10	103	51	164
HOMELESS IN NON-COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION	4	7	33	44
LIVING IN CARAVAN	1	2	6	9
LIVING IN HOSTEL/HOTEL/B&B	0	0	3	3
LIVING OR LODGING WITH FRIENDS	8	6	31	45
LIVING WITH PARENTS/RELATIVES	62	76	326	464
LONG TERM STAY IN HOSPITAL	0	0	4	4
OTHER COUNCIL TENANT	3	12	8	23
OTHER HOUSING ASSOCIATION TENANT	1	14	3	18
OTHER SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION	1	1	13	15
OWNER OCCUPIER/SHARED OWNER	1	4	3	8
RESIDENTIAL CARE/THROUGH CARE	1	1	25	27
TEMPORARY HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION	10	32	144	186
TENANT OF A PROPERTY LEASED BY COUNCIL	0	3	5	8
TENANT OF PRIVATE/RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD	23	29	44	96
TIED TENANT	6	6	11	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>1,137</b>

## **Mutual Exchange**

- 2.10 Mutual Exchanges can help tenants to meet their needs and aspirations to move (especially if their points are low). 131 tenants used this method to move into a HHR tenancy (either from within Highland or outwith); this is an increase of 13 from last year.
- 2.11 Further efforts are being made to assist Council tenants to securing Mutual Exchanges. This will help tenants who would otherwise find it difficult to secure a move through the normal allocations process.

## **Sheltered Housing**

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

## **HHR Suspension**

- 2.13 HHR applicants may have their application suspended from receiving an offer of housing. The HHR Allocations Policy sets out several reasons when this may happen. If the applicant has:-
- Ongoing rent arrears on their current or former social housing tenancy
  - Poor housing condition at their current tenancy
  - A history of anti-social behaviour
  - Provided false or misleading information
  - Refused a second offer
  - Has complex medical needs
  - Requested their application to be suspended.
- 2.14 As of 31 March 2025, 66 applicants were suspended. This compares to 74 as of 31 March 2024.

## Pressures Across Highland

2.15 Table 3 indicates relative pressure on housing by illustrating how many 'first choice' applicants there are for each house let. Pressure across the Highlands has slightly decreased to 4.84 applicants for every Allocations (down from 4.9). The biggest increase was in Inverness from 5.6 to 8.7.

**Table 3 - Housing Applicants and Lets Per Year in the Highlands**

Area	First Choice Applicants	Lets Per Year	Pressure per Let
Badenoch and Strathspey	482	67	7.19
Caithness	576	233	2.47
East Ross-shire	762	246	3.27
Inverness	3,574	411	8.7
Lochaber	943	194	4.44
Mid Ross-shire	707	149	4.75
Nairn	391	57	7.67
Skye, Lochalsh & Wester Ross	759	136	5.58
Sutherland	329	127	2.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,767</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>5.27</b>

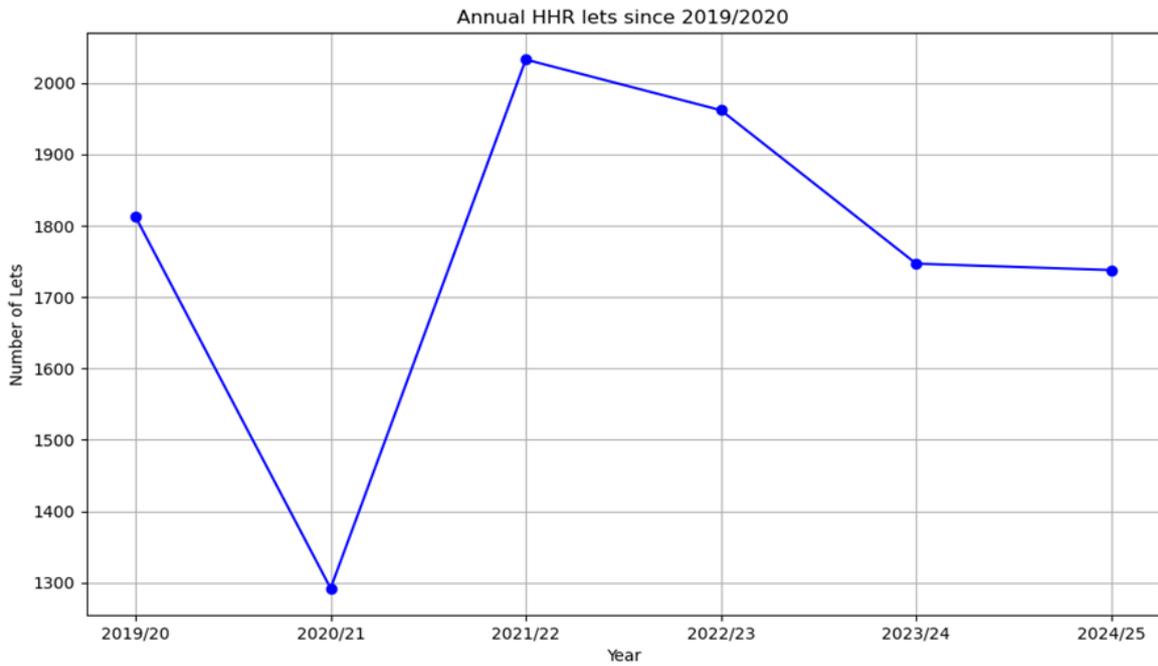
### 3 Allocations

3.1 In terms of letting, a total of 1,620 lets took place in 2024/25. This is a decrease from last year's total of 1,747.

3.2 Chart 5 highlights the availability of lets and reflects several interconnected issues, which include:-

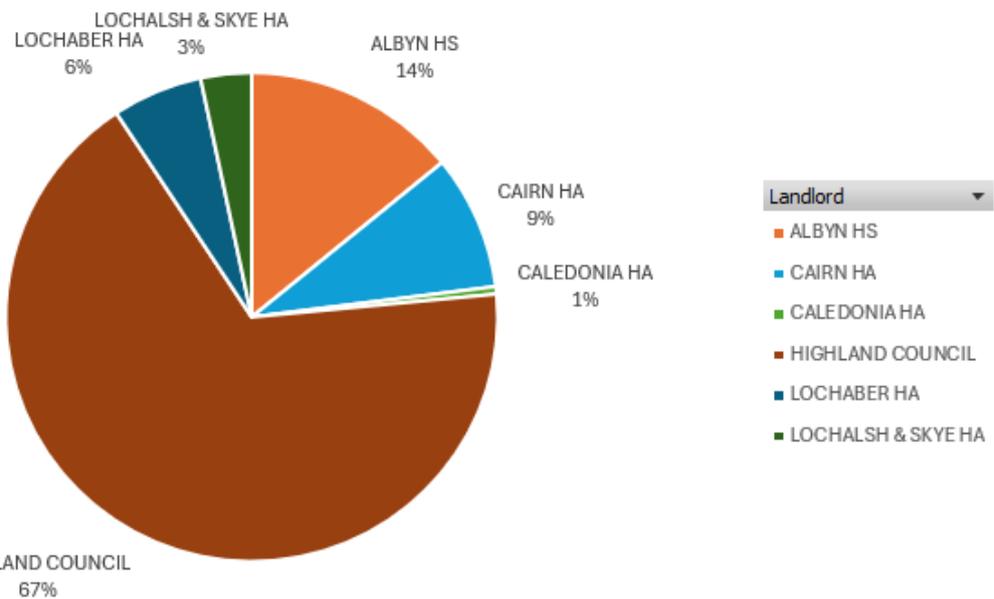
- High tenancy sustainment rates (tenants successfully managing tenancies, including fewer abandonments and tenancy terminations); and
- Longer void repair times among HHR partners as a result of trades capacity across the construction sector and external issues with utilities and metering.

**Chart 5 Annual HHR lets since 2019/2020**



3.3 Chart 6 shows the proportion of Allocations by HHR Partners. The figures remain broadly similar to 2023/24.

**Chart 6 Proportion of HHR Lets by Landlord**



3.4 In addition to HHR partners, participating landlords (Trust Housing, Blackwood Homes, Abbeyfield, Hanover Housing and Key Housing) have around 700 social rented properties in Highland. Whilst these landlords may seek nominations from the Highland Housing Register (HHR), several hold their own lists which they allocate independently from the HHR. HHR officers are encouraged to assist applicants to apply direct to these. In 2024/25, 35 HHR applicants were housed by these landlords via HHR nominations.

- 3.5 As household circumstances change over time, many tenants of HHR landlords will request a transfer to a new tenancy that will better meet their housing needs. Allocating housing to a transferring tenant is a useful tool for releasing properties to meet housing need. In 2024/25, 21% (336) of lets were to transfer applicants. This is detailed at Table 4 below; this is a similar proportion to 2023/24 in the number of lets going to transfer applicants.

**Table 4 - Lettings by Area and Source**

Area	Transfer Lets	Housing List Lets	Total Lets
Albyn Housing Society Ltd	45	185	230
Cairn Housing Association	34	111	145
Caledonia Housing Association	1	7	8
Lochaber Housing Association	28	68	96
Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association	7	47	54
Alness	48	128	176
Badenoch and Strathspey	9	42	51
Dingwall	23	89	112
Inverness	44	228	272
Lochaber	27	67	94
Nairn	6	30	36
Portree	9	54	63
Sutherland	19	90	109
Wick	36	138	174
<b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>1,284</b>	<b>1,620</b>

- 3.6 In line with national guidance, housing applicants can refuse offers of housing. In 2024/25, 299 offers of housing were refused by applicants. This represents 19% of all housing offers being refused. This is a similar figure to last year. It is lower than the national benchmarking figures. It represents the element of choice that applicants may have, and it also reflects changing circumstances of households during the course of their applications.
- 3.7 Of the 299 refusals, 122 (41%) were deemed as an unreasonable refusal and 177 (59%) were deemed a reasonable refusal. A reasonable refusal could be, for example, if the property is unsuitable for the applicant's medical needs following a medical reassessment. Examples of an unreasonable refusal are refusing a property because it has too small a garden or an unspecified unwillingness to move to a particular area.

- 3.8 If an applicant refuses two reasonable offers, their housing application will be suspended for six months. Those who refuse one reasonable offer under Caithness Choice Based Letting will have their application suspended for six months.
- 3.9 The percentage of overall refusals and the proportion of reasonable to unreasonable refusals has remained consistent over the last three years. HHR staff continue to receive training on how to minimise refusals, including frequent reviews of applicant choices and circumstances.

## Homelessness

- 3.10 Social housing landlords are legally required to give reasonable preference to households who have particular needs, including those in greatest housing need. Table 5 shows the extent to which allocations met urgent needs arising from homelessness.
- 3.11 As of the 31 March 2025, the HHR contained 819 households assessed as homeless. This is an increase from 736 in 2023/24; this increase will in part be due to an effort to increase allocations to homeless applicants across partner landlords. Homeless applicants represent 10% of all HHR applicants.
- 3.12 The table below shows the percentage split between homeless and other applicants housed through the HHR in Council stock.

**Table 5 – Homeless lets in Highland**

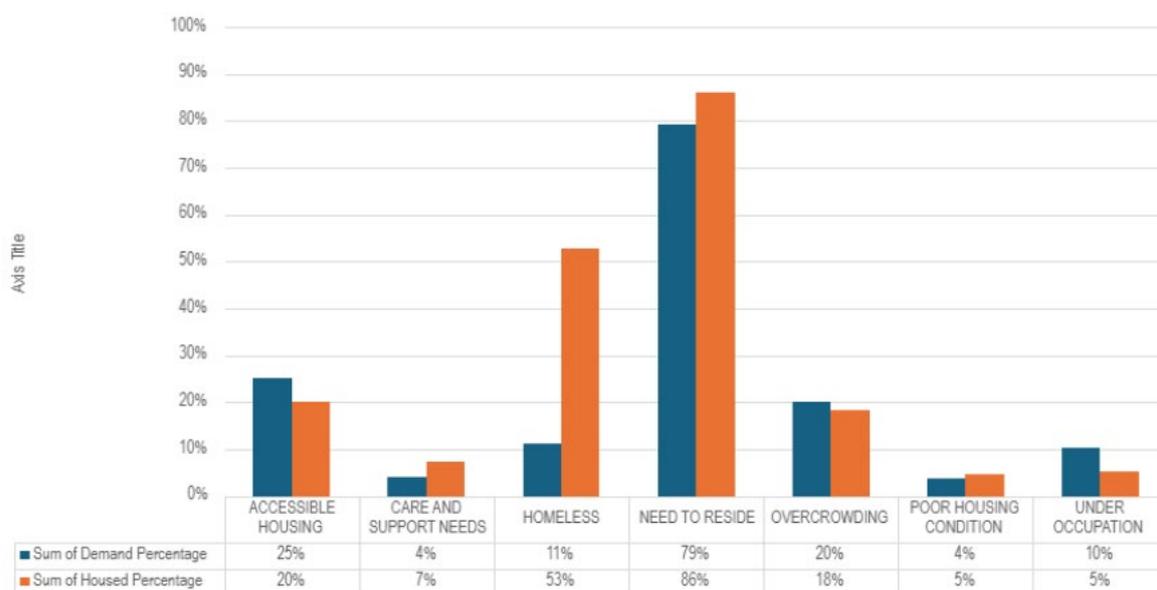
Area	Number of Applications with Homeless Points	% of Housing List Apps*	Lets to Homeless Households	
			No. of Lets to Apps with Homeless Points *	% of total lets
Badenoch and Strathspey	39	9%	33	65%
Caithness	12	2%	46	26%
East Ross	52	7%	93	53%
Inverness	447	13%	197	72%
Lochaber	86	9%	43	46%
Mid Ross	74	10%	82	73%
Nairn	39	10%	26	72%
Skye Lochalsh & Wester Ross	60	8%	45	71%
Sutherland	10	3%	19	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>819</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>53%</b>

\* Applications and Lets (Council Stock Only)

- 3.13 In 2024/25 the five Housing Association HHR Partners housed a total of 271 homeless applicants. This represented 51% of their total lets. Albyn housed 52%, Cairn 54%, Caledonia 88%, Lochaber 34% and Lochalsh & Skye 61% respectively.

- 3.14 In most areas, homeless applicants make up the majority of allocations on the Housing List. In Caithness and Sutherland, where demand and supply are comparatively less pressurised, many housing applicants can be re-housed before they become homeless.
- 3.15 Chart 7 below shows the percentage of applicants awarded points for the various housing need categories set out in the HHR Allocations Policy compared to the percentage housed with these points. It shows, in line with HHR Policy objectives, that generally applicants who, due to their circumstances, have the greatest need for rehousing are more likely to be housed.

**Chart 7 – Proportion of Allocations & Lets by Points Categories**



- 3.16 Across Highland, over 8 out of 10 of those housed had additional points which recognised their 'need to reside' in a particular community within the Highlands. This is because they already live or work there or because they are giving or receiving care and support there (e.g. from family).
- 3.17 In areas with more pressure on its housing (i.e. far more applicants than supply), a greater proportion of lets went to those with these points. For example, in Badenoch & Strathspey and Nairn, 97% and 98% of all housed applicants had 'need to reside' points.
- 3.18 Under-occupation of housing remains an issue in Highland with 10% of applicants awarded points for having unused room/s in their existing home. The HHR Partnership is currently reviewing its Rightsizing Policy, whereby relevant applicants are incentivised to transfer to a smaller home through assistance with removal costs and the like. This can free up houses for larger households who have applied, often as a result of overcrowding in their existing home.

- 3.19 Highland supports the Armed Forces including through the Armed Forces Covenant which recognises the particular needs of this group. The Highland Housing Register (HHR) collects data on those who are serving and former members of the Armed Forces. The HHR also provides additional priority to those who are leaving or just left the Armed Forces, and they are awarded Need to Reside points for anywhere in Highland. In all other circumstances, these points are reserved for those who have a connection to the local area e.g. work or already live there.
- 3.20 In 2024/25, there were 16 applications from serving members and 94 applications from former members of the British Armed Forces. Of these, 14 were housed through the Highland Housing Register.
- 3.21 Training has been given to staff on Housing Options available to members of the Armed Forces and Housing issues common to members of the Armed Forces.
- 3.22 We gather information on ethnic origin of housing applicants for monitoring purposes. Provision of this information is optional for applicants and therefore the totals are less than the total number of applications and allocations. Table 6 provides a breakdown of the returns received.

**Table 6 - Ethnic Origin and Housing Data**

Ethnic Origin	Total Applicants	Housed Applicants
A. WHITE:SCOTTISH	385	76
A. WHITE:ENGLISH	73	16
A. WHITE:WELSH	2	0
A. WHITE:OTHER BRITISH	37	5
A. WHITE:IRISH	4	0
A. WHITE:GYPSY TRAVELLER	2	0
A. WHITE:ROMA	1	0
A. WHITE:POLISH	22	3
A. WHITE:UKRAINIAN	15	11
A. WHITE:EUROPEAN	25	2
A. OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND	13	0
B. ANY MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	7	3
C. PAKISTANI, PAKISTANI SCOT/BRIT	2	0
C. INDIAN, INDIAN SCOT/BRIT	12	0
C. BANGLADESHI, BANGLADESHI SCOT/BRIT	5	0
C. OTHER ASIAN BACKGROUND	8	2
D. CARIBBEAN, CARIBBEAN SCOT/BRIT	9	0
D. AFRICAN, AFRICAN SCOT/BRIT	3	0
D. BLACK, BLACK SCOTTISH/BLACK BRITISH	2	0
D. OTHER BLACK BACKGROUND	1	0
E. ARAB: ARAB SCOT/BRIT	3	0
E. OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	4	1
F. PREFER NOT TO SAY	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>112</b>

3.23 Information on applicants identifying as disabled is also monitored. Not all applicants provide this information as it is voluntary. Households with disabilities are more likely to be rehoused than most other categories of applicants because of the award of high points in the Accessible Housing and Care & Support points categories.

#### **4 Particular Housing Needs**

4.1 Special Allocations Status (SAS) points are part of the HHR policy. An applicant can receive these points if they have evidenced needs which are not specifically recognised by the other categories of housing need in the policy.

4.2 In 2024/25, 81 applicants were housed with SAS points; this included applicants who were housed as a result of being victims of anti-social behaviour or because of major house refurbishments.

4.3 HHR partners continue to work closely with partners to meet the housing needs of clients with specialist needs. In 2024/25, 16 households were helped to move into their first independent living tenancy, mostly through the protocol with NHS Highland for people with complex care and support needs or leaving homeless supported accommodation.

4.4 In addition, 16 young people were housed in their first tenancy through the Care Leavers Protocol.

#### **5 Conclusion**

5.1 The annual report indicates that demand for social housing in Highland remains high. This demand continues to put additional pressure on housing and associated support services.

5.2 Overall, the HHR continues to meet housing need and continues to play an important role in supporting good health, strong communities, and local economies. However, there are significant housing needs that are not resolved quickly because of the limited supply of housing. This has been acknowledged in the update of the Highland Housing Challenge in June 2025.

5.3 The HHR Allocations Policy was approved by the Housing and Property Committee on 27 April 2023 and has been implemented on a phased basis since then. The policy changes focused on addressing the challenges in Highland and determining how best to increase the supply of housing for those with unmet housing need across Highland.

5.4 In May 2025, the Council approved a review of the Allocations Policy to ensure that housing needs are being met as far as possible in Highland communities, within the challenges of housing supply being insufficient to meet demand.