

Agenda Item	10
Report No	HP/23/26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Housing and Property**

Date: **12 August 2026**

Report Title: **Highland Housing Register Allocations Monitoring Report 2025/26**

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 the Delivery Plan is to increase the number of affordable houses across the area. In addition, the Highland Housing Challenge continues to recognise the need to increase the number of properties of all tenure types in Highland.
- 1.2 This report sets out the annual performance review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy for 2025/26; 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 detail found at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 On 15 May 2025, Council agreed that a review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocations Policy should be undertaken. The scope of the review was subsequently approved by Housing & Property Committee on 13 August 2025. The findings of this review are reported as a separate report to this Committee.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **note** the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on Housing Allocations; this 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.

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. Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025, 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. Ensuring continuing compliance with housing and homelessness legislation forms part of the Allocations Policy review which is reported elsewhere to this Committee.

- 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 an 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.

5 Background

- 5.1 The Highland Housing Register (HHR) is a shared housing list for the majority of social landlords in Highland. This means that applicants need to apply only once for social housing and could be allocated a house from any of the social housing providers.
- 5.2 The HHR is governed by an [allocations policy](#). This policy sets out how people can apply for social housing, how the application will be assessed and how the partner landlords allocate properties. Overall, a needs base approach to the allocation of housing is taken; ensuring that those who need housing the most are prioritised.
- 5.3 The Policy is compliant with relevant legislation including the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Homelessness Etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 5.4 This paper sets out the annual performance review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy for 2025/26. A summary of the annual performance review is contained within the report, with the detail found at **Appendix 1**.

6 Housing Demand

- 6.1 There was a total of 8,767 Housing and Transfer Register applications on the Highland Housing Register (HHR) on 31 March 2026. 61% 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. 10 percent of households are defined as homeless under national homelessness legislation.

- 6.2 The continuing need for smaller size properties is clear. Half of all applicants are single people and 9% are couples, although these figures can vary across Highland.
- 6.3 The highest demand for housing in terms of number of applications remains Inverness, where 42% of applicants have selected as their first choice; this is followed by Lochaber 10% and Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross 9%.
- 6.4 Whilst over two-fifths of applicants are seeking housing in Inverness, the lack of housing availability means only 29% of lets are made there.
- 6.5 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 (41.8%), followed by Lochaber (10%) and then East Ross (9.2%).
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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 [June 2025](#) and updated in [May 2026](#);
 - The [Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028](#);
 - The [Strategic Housing Investment Programme 2026/27 – 2030/31](#) which was approved on 5 November 2025. A full review of the Programme will be submitted to this Committee in November 2026; and
 - The Housing Need and Demand Assessment (latest update expected imminently).
- 6.8 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, as detailed in section 7.

It should be noted that this report largely focuses on the housing outcomes of the allocations policy and process. It does not detail the significant housing options, housing support and homelessness prevention work, some of which was reported as part of the homelessness update to May Committee.

- 6.9 Section 7 provides a summary of how the HHR Allocation's Policy is performing and meeting demand in Highland in 2025/26. **Appendix 1** provides more detail of the outcomes achieved.

7 Meeting Demand

7.1 Across Highland 1,592 households were housed in 2025/26; this compares with 1,620 the previous year. While HHR stock overall increased by 148 houses, fewer became available for re-let. This was a result of improved tenancy sustainment, with tenants remaining in their properties for longer. Providing social tenants with the appropriate advice and assistance to sustain their tenancies was highlighted as a key call to action in the Poverty & Equality Commission report to Council in June 2026.

7.2 The majority of lets continue to be Council Housing (71%), followed by Albyn (13%), Cairn (8%), Lochaber (3%), Lochalsh and Skye HA (4%) and Caledonia (1%). This is broadly reflective of the proportion of properties owned by the social housing partners.

7.3 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.

7.4 The [Homelessness Update](#) to May committee detailed how Highland Council continue to focus on mitigating homelessness pressures while ensuring compliance with all statutory homelessness duties. Demand for homelessness assistance remains high, reflecting national trends across Scotland, however the Council has maintained a strong emphasis on homelessness prevention, tenancy sustainment and rapid rehousing approaches.

The Housing Options service continued to prioritise early intervention and person-centred support to reduce the risk of homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation wherever possible. Performance during 2025/26 remained positive in several key areas, including the continued use of community-based temporary accommodation, reductions in the time households spend in temporary accommodation, and the ongoing prioritisation of homeless households through allocations to permanent housing.

The Council also continued to develop tenancy sustainment services and partnership working to support vulnerable households and improve long-term housing outcomes across Highland.

7.5 The Council and HHR partners are continuing to meet statutory duties to house households who are homeless. Across Highland, 891 lets – 56% of all lets – went to households with points that reflect their homelessness status; this is a 4% increase from 2024/25 and reflects the commitment to reduce the time a household is homeless and to move households into secure affordable tenancies as quickly as possible.

As well as the legislative duties on the Council, it is acknowledged that providing secure tenancies to homeless households in their communities provides the support needed for vulnerable local families at a time of their greatest housing need. This is also reflected in the Poverty Commission report from June 2026.

7.6 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 56% of stock to homeless households in Badenoch & Strathspey (69%), Dingwall (68%), Inverness (71%), Lochaber (59%) and Nairn (69%).

7.7 **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 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 assessed as unsuitable by NHS Highland due to changes to their health needs. Nearly a fifth had been living in overcrowding housing.

7.8 **Specific Strategic Commitments**

As well as approaches directly from applicants, HHR partners are committed to assisting with other policy priorities. A total of 13 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, 14 care-experienced young people were housed through the Highland Protocol which supports our Corporate Parenting commitments and duties.

7.9 Highland supports the Armed Forces, including through the Armed Forces Covenant, which recognises the needs of this group. As at 31 March 2026, a total of 12 applications were received from serving members of the Armed Forces, resulting in two allocations. In addition, 146 applications were received from former members, resulting in 21 allocations.

7.10 Nearly nine out of 10 applicants housed had additional points which recognised they have a particular 'Need to Reside' in that community either because they work or are already established there. The Need to Reside category is specific to Highland and is not widely used by most local 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.

7.11 The Highland Housing Register (HHR) application has been updated to include a new question enabling applicants to identify whether they are employed as a key worker. Introduced on 4 March 2026, this addition is intended to improve the quality of data available to partner landlords and the Council, supporting a better understanding of housing need among keyworker groups across the Highlands.

It is recognised that it will take time to build a comprehensive dataset, and early figures should therefore be treated as indicative only. As at 31 March 2026, 16 applicants had been identified as key workers, of whom one had been successfully housed.

The information gathered will not in itself determine priority; however, it will inform policy development, future service planning, and potential allocation approaches, ensuring the HHR continues to respond effectively to local and national housing challenges.

7.12 **Inclusion**

The HHR monitors equalities information to make sure it is providing equality of access and ensuring there is no discrimination for protected groups. Over 60% of applicants described themselves as White Scottish. This group account for 71% of those housed applicants, 10% of lets went to non-British/White, and 3.5% went to other ethnic minorities.

7.13 More information on the outcomes achieved in 2025/26 is provided with **Appendix 1**.

8 Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy

8.1 The Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocations Policy continues to be subject to periodic review to ensure it remains compliant with legislation and responsive to local housing need.

8.2 As agreed by Council in May 2025, a review of the Allocations Policy has been undertaken. The scope of this review reflects the need to ensure that the policy continues to prioritise those in greatest housing need while supporting sustainable communities across Highland.

8.3 Further detail on the review, including its scope, methodology and proposed changes, is provided in a separate report to this Committee.

8.4 Any recommendations arising from the review, subject to Members' approval, will be implemented in partnership with HHR landlords in due course.

9 Conclusion

9.1 The annual allocations report indicates that demand for social housing in Highland remains high and, in many areas, the 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. It is therefore important that work continues to increase the availability of housing, across all tenures.

9.2 Overall, evidence indicates 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 housing in Highland goes to those in the greatest need.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 30 June 2026

Author: Claire Fisher, Policy Officer

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – HHR Annual Allocations Report 2025/26

Highland Housing Register Annual Allocations Report 2025/2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report contains monitoring and information and commentary on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR Allocations Policy in 2025/2026). 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.

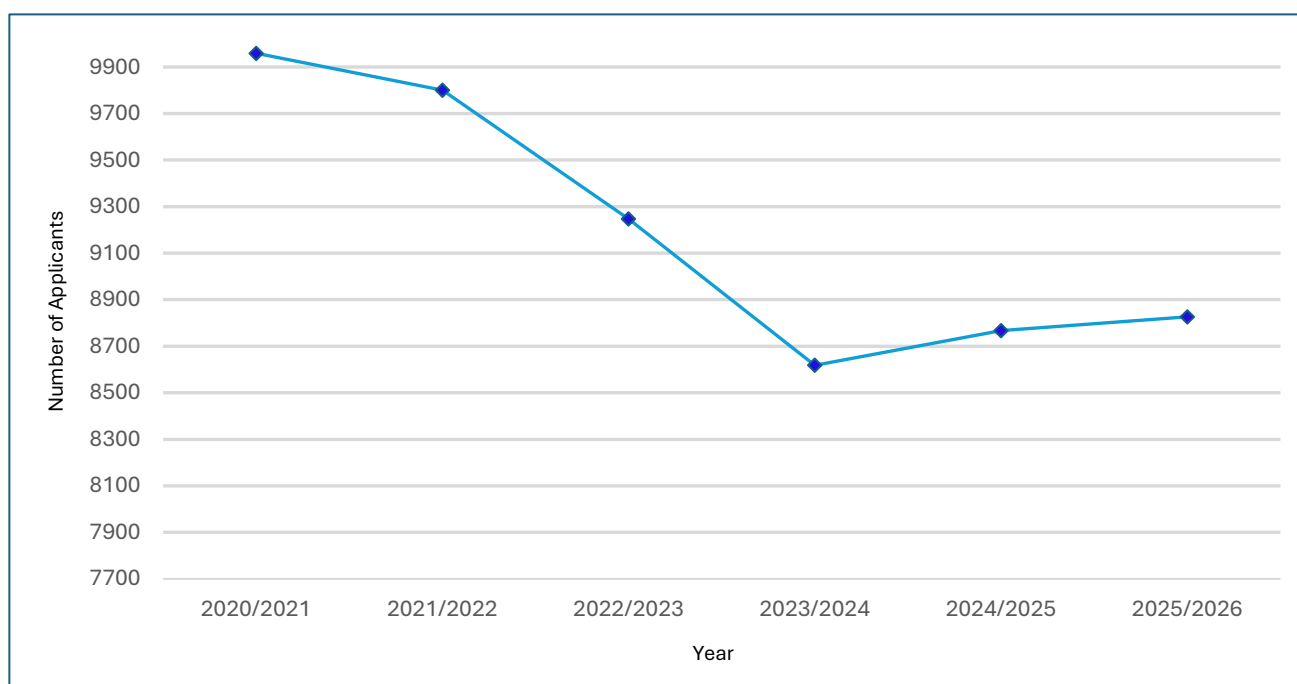
The aims of the Highland Housing Register Allocations [Policy](#) include:-

- 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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 237,290 who live in 110,743 households.
- 1.5 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%.
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 The Demand and Supply Tool is available within this [link](#).
- 1.8 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 8,826 on 31 March 2026; this is a 0.67% increase from 8,767 on 31 March 2025. Chart 1 below highlights the total number of applicants held over the last six years.

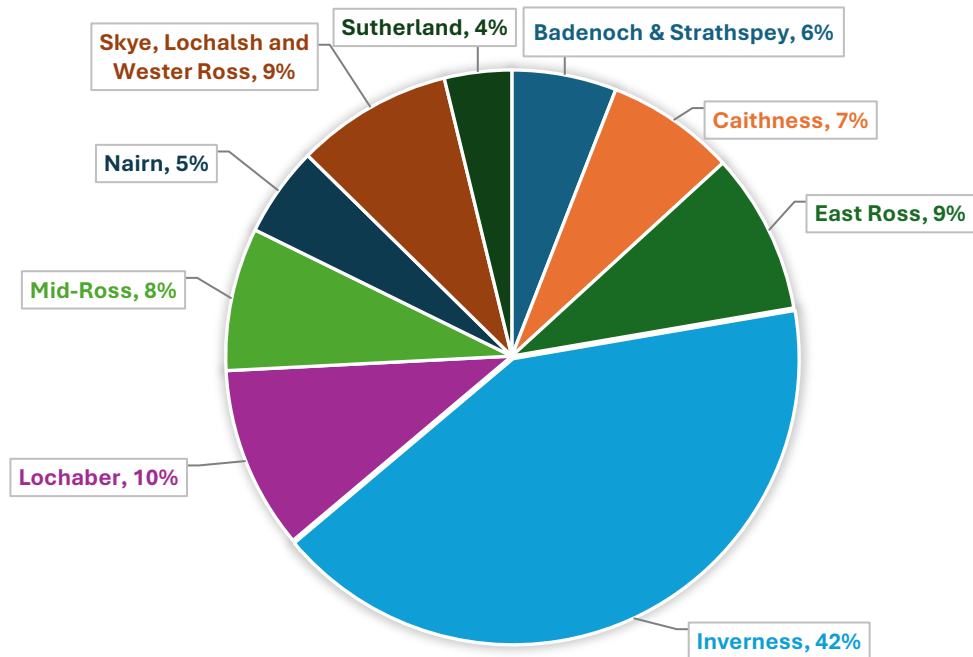
Chart 1 – Total number of HHR applicants 2020/21-2025/26



- 2.2 The decrease in applications between 2020/21 and 2023/24 was largely due to the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. As restrictions were lifted, allocations resumed to more typical levels, supported by increased re-let activity and the completion of new developments. This resulted in a greater supply of available properties and reduced overall pressure on the housing register.
- 2.3 Nearly 1 in 3 applicants on the HHR (31% 2,743) are existing tenants of Highland Housing Register landlords, applying for a transfer to another home; this is an increase of 4.9% from last year. Most households are applying to the 'General Register' and are looking to move in as 'new' tenants (29%, 6,083). A third 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 (6.1%) are currently homeowners. These figures are similar to the 2024/25 statistical 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.

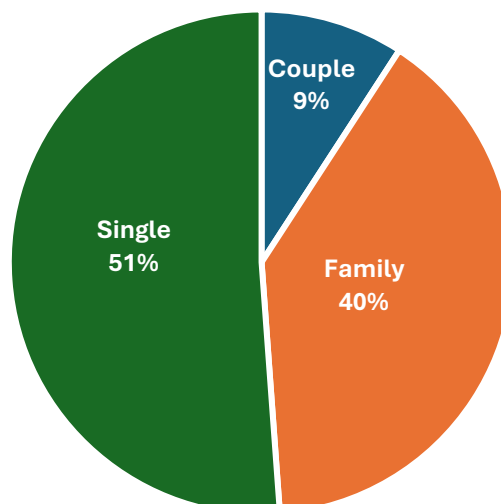
- 2.5 In terms of First Choice Demand, most applicants wish to be housed in Inverness (which 42% of all applicants have selected as their first choice), followed by Lochaber (10%), East Ross and Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross (9%). Chart 2 below details this across Highland.

Chart 2 – Households applying by 1st choice area



- 2.6 Demand for small properties is clear. 51% of all HHR applicants are single People, 9% are couples and 40% are families. Pressure on smaller properties is greater in some areas – for example, in Skye and Lochalsh 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



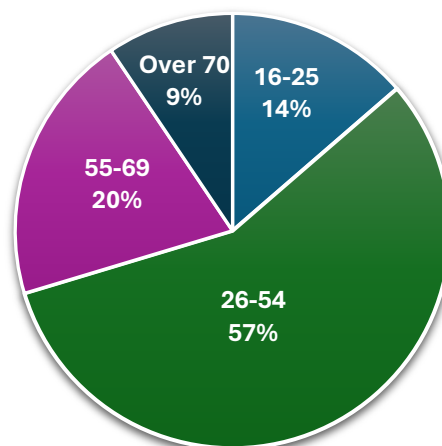
- 2.7 Table 1 below outlines the number of bedrooms applicants require by their First Choice. This data highlights the significant contrast between demand and supply for one-bedroom properties and 5+ bedroom properties.

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

Area	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5+	%	Apps/ Stock
Badenoch & Strathspey	281	56%	112	22%	83	17%	19	4%	6	1%	501
Available Stock	259	26%	505	51%	192	20%	22	2%	6	1%	984
Caithness	396	63%	125	20%	71	11%	30	5%	7	1%	629
Available Stock	732	26%	1146	41%	770	28%	116	4%	4	0%	2768
East Ross	450	57%	174	22%	99	13%	52	7%	13	2%	788
Available Stock	577	19%	1030	34%	1269	42%	149	5%	30	1%	3055
Inverness	2112	59%	805	22%	448	13%	174	5%	42	1%	3581
Available Stock	2017	29%	3117	45%	1661	24%	179	3%	14	0%	6988
Lochaber	516	60%	182	21%	99	12%	45	5%	13	2%	855
Available Stock	261	12%	1211	54%	707	31%	77	3%	1	0%	2257
Mid-Ross	417	60%	151	22%	85	12%	29	4%	16	2%	698
Available Stock	428	21%	937	47%	551	28%	65	3%	10	1%	1991
Nairn	258	59%	93	21%	49	11%	25	6%	10	2%	435
Available Stock	326	33%	398	40%	233	23%	31	3%	5	1%	993
Skye & Lochalsh	524	69%	147	19%	55	7%	23	3%	8	1%	757
Available Stock	451	24%	840	44%	544	29%	59	3%	1	0%	1895
Sutherland	214	65%	72	22%	27	8%	9	3%	6	2%	328
Available Stock	358	31%	443	38%	359	31%	9	1%	2	0%	1171
Highland	5168	60%	1861	22%	1016	12%	406	5%	121	1%	8572
Total Stock	5409	24%	9627	44%	6286	28%	707	3%	73	0%	22102

- 2.8 Chart 4 below 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 AN HHR LANDLORD	8	111	48	167
HOMELESS IN NON-COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION	2	9	28	39
LIVING IN CARAVAN	2	0	5	7
LIVING IN HOSTEL/HOTEL/B&B	0	0	7	7
LIVING OR LODGING WITH FRIENDS	4	5	45	54
LIVING WITH PARENTS/RELATIVES	60	71	337	468
LONG TERM STAY IN HOSPITAL	0	0	2	2
OTHER COUNCIL TENANT	1	11	9	21
OTHER HOUSING ASSOCIATION TENANT	4	14	7	25
OTHER SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION	0	0	11	11
OWNER OCCUPIER/SHARED OWNER	1	2	3	6
RESIDENTIAL CARE/THROUGH CARE	1	0	27	28
TEMPORARY HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION	11	24	180	215
TENANT OF A PROPERTY LEASED BY COUNCIL	2	9	9	20
TENANT OF PRIVATE/RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD	17	21	36	74
TIED TENANT	0	0	8	8
Total	113	277	762	1,152

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 an HHR tenancy (either from within Highland or outwith); this is an increase of 13 from last year.
- 2.11 Further efforts are ongoing 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 significant 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 2026, 58 applicants were suspended. This compares to 66 as of 31 March 2025.

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 Highland has slightly decreased to 5.44 applicants for every allocation (up from 4.84). The biggest increase in 2025/26 was in Inverness from 5.6 to 7.76.

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

Area	First Choice Applicants	Lets Per Year	Pressure per Let
Badenoch & Strathspey	513	45	11.4
Caithness	631	237	2.66
East Ross	788	246	3.20
Inverness	3,600	464	7.76
Lochaber	895	204	4.39
Mid-Ross	700	159	4.40
Nairn	441	50	8.82
Skye, Lochalsh & Wester Ross	766	114	6.72
Sutherland	329	73	4.51
Grand Total	8,663	1,592	5.44

3 Allocations

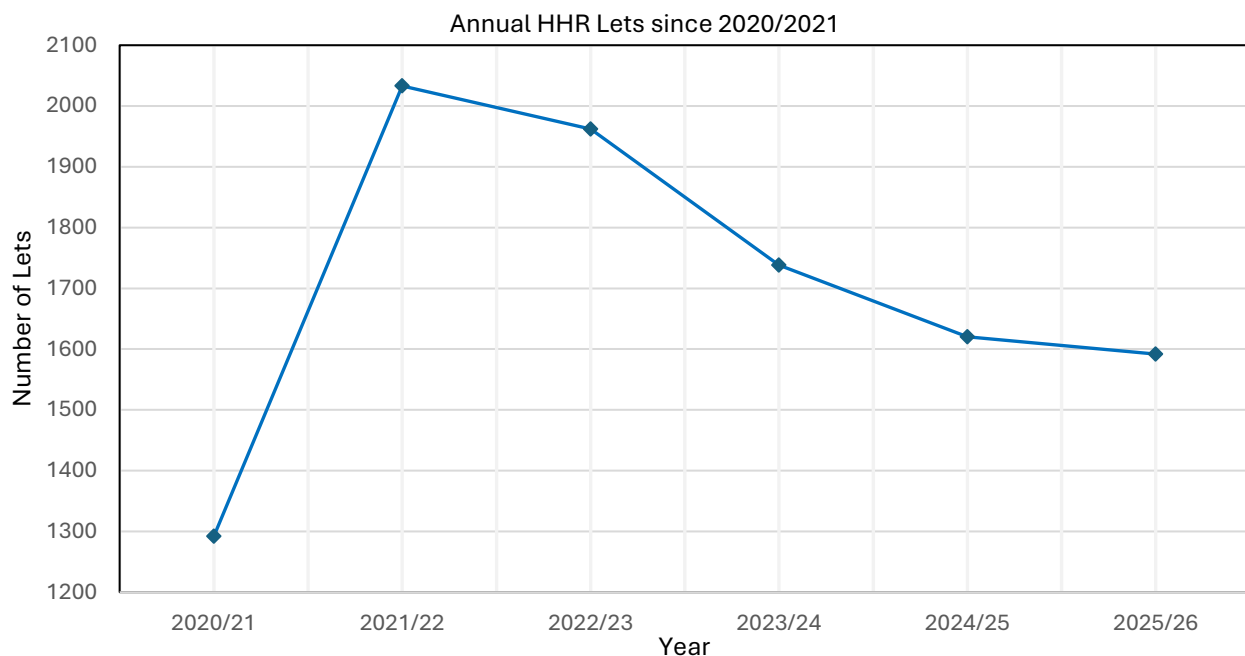
3.1 In terms of letting, a total of 1,592 lets took place in 2025/26. This is a small decrease from last year's total of 1,620.

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

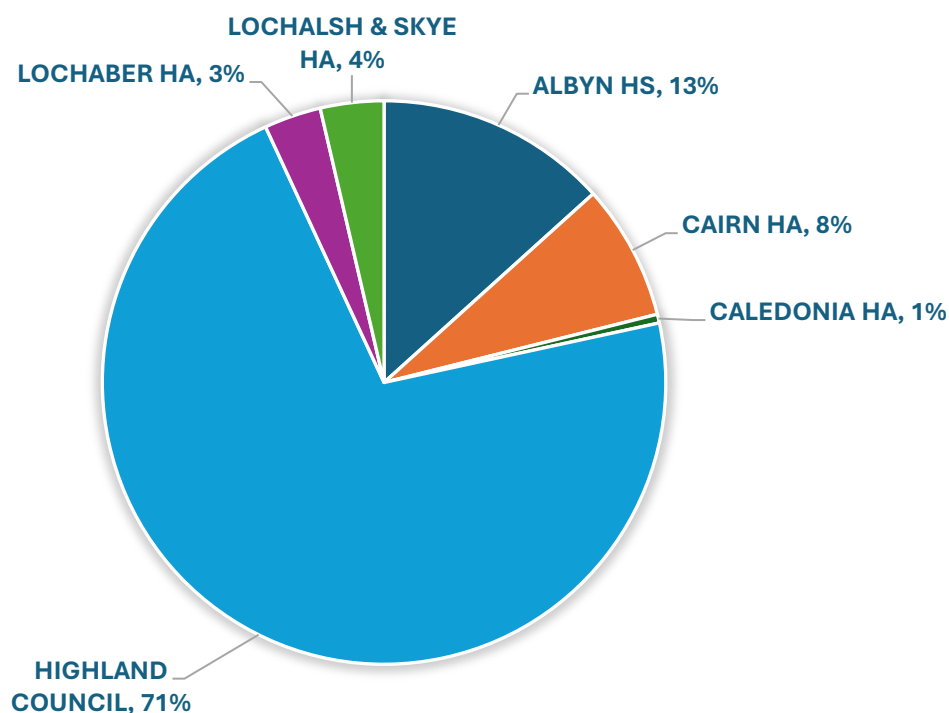
- Longer void repair times among HHR partners as a result of trades capacity across the construction sector and external issues with utilities and metering.

Chart 5 Annual HHR lets since 2020/2021



3.3 Chart 6 below shows the proportion of Allocations by HHR Partners. The figures remain broadly similar to 2024/2025 and reflect the number of properties across each landlord.

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 2025/26, 27 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 2025/26, 21% (342) of lets were to transfer applicants. This is detailed at Table 4 below; this is a similar proportion to 2024/25 in terms of 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	42	170	212
Cairn Housing Association	22	102	124
Caledonia Housing Association	1	7	8
Lochaber Housing Association	15	37	52
Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association	11	47	58
<u>Highland Council areas</u>			
Alness	50	137	187
Badenoch & Strathspey	9	27	36
Dingwall	16	76	92
Inverness	74	281	355
Lochaber	42	110	152
Nairn	7	32	39
Portree	6	32	38
Sutherland	6	55	61
Wick	41	137	178
Total	342	1,250	1,592

- 3.6 In line with national guidance, housing applicants can refuse offers of housing. In 2025/26, 299 offers of housing were refused by applicants. This represents nearly 15% of all housing offers being refused. This is the same percentage figure as last year. It is lower than the national benchmarking figures. Refusals represent the element of choice that applicants have, and it also reflects changing circumstances of households during the course of their applications.
- 3.7 Of the 299 refusals, 190 (64%) were deemed as an unreasonable refusal and 109 (46%) 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 include 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, although unreasonable refusals increased by 13 and reasonable refusals decreased by 13. 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 2026, the HHR contained 891 households assessed as homeless. This is an increase from 819 in 2024/25. Homeless applicants represent 12% 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

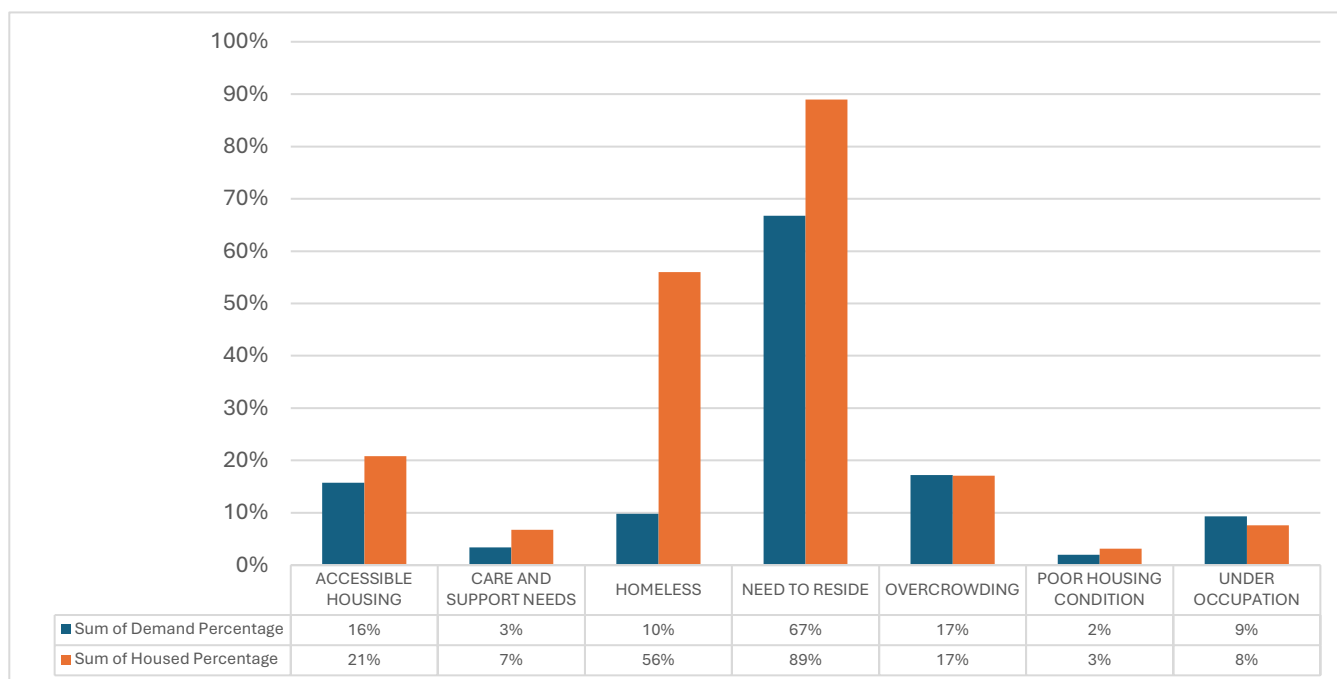
Area	Number of Applicants with Homeless Points	% of Housing List Apps*	Lets to Homeless Households	
			No. of Lets to Apps with Homeless Points*	% of total lets
Badenoch & Strathspey	51	10%	25	69%
Caithness	8	1%	67	38%
East Ross	58	7%	104	56%
Inverness	451	13%	252	71%
Lochaber	73	8%	89	59%
Mid-Ross	82	12%	63	68%
Nairn	51	12%	27	69%
Skye & Lochalsh	84	11%	21	55%
Sutherland	9	3%	16	26%
Total	867	10%	664	58%

*** Applications and Lets (Council Stock Only)**

- 3.13 In 2025/26 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 applicants who 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, 89% 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.
- 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 Lochaber, 100% and 98% of all housed applicants respectively 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 Policy Review Group has reviewed and relaunched the Rightsizing Policy, whereby relevant applicants are incentivised to transfer to a smaller home through assistance with removal costs and for more vulnerable applicants practical assistance. 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 2025/26, there were 12 applications from serving members and 146 applications from former members of the British Armed Forces. Of these, 21 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	473	100
A. WHITE: ENGLISH	115	16
A. WHITE: WELSH	1	2
A. WHITE: OTHER BRITISH	33	3
A. WHITE: IRISH	2	1
A. WHITE: GYPSY TRAVELLER	2	2
A. WHITE: ROMA	2	0
A. WHITE: POLISH	23	6
A. WHITE: UKRAINIAN	11	2
A. WHITE: EUROPEAN	37	3
A. OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND	13	0
B. ANY MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	6	2
C. PAKISTANI, PAKISTANI SCOT/BRIT	6	0
C. INDIAN, INDIAN SCOT/BRIT	11	1
C. BANGLADESHI, BANGLADESHI SCOT/BRIT	7	0
C. CHINESE, CHINESE SCOT/BRIT	0	0
C. OTHER ASIAN BACKGROUND	9	0
D. CARIBBEAN, CARIBBEAN SCOT/BRIT	13	0
D. AFRICAN, AFRICAN SCOT/BRIT	9	0
D. BLACK, BLACK SCOTTISH/BLACK BRITISH	2	0
D. OTHER BLACK BACKGROUND	3	0
E. ARAB: ARAB SCOT/BRIT	1	0
E. OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	5	1

F. PREFER NOT TO SAY	2	1
TOTAL	786	140

- 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 2025/26, 81 applicants were housed with SAS points; these 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 2025/26, 13 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, 14 young people were housed in their first tenancy through the Care Leavers Protocol. This is supported by the Public Protection Team by a planned approach and close joint working with colleagues in Social Work and the NHS.

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 May 2026.
- 5.3 The review of the Allocations Policy is addressed in a separate report to this Committee.