



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S
**LOCAL HOUSING
STRATEGY 2017-2022**
ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



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1. Introduction

The Housing [Scotland] Act 2001 places a Statutory Duty on all Local Authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy, framed by Statutory Guidance published by Scottish Government. The current Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy covers the five year period from April 2017 to March 2022. Due to a range of factors, principally the timescales for the development of the next Housing Need and Demand Assessment, Scottish Borders Council Executive Committee agreed to extend the current LHS for an additional year up to March 2023.

The strategy was developed with our partners, stakeholders and the voluntary sector over an 18 month period and was formally approved in September of 2017. The strategy addresses a wide range of challenges and issues as well as setting out outcomes, priorities and actions to deliver our shared vision for housing in the Scottish Borders.

The Local Housing Strategy sets out the vision and priorities for the future of housing and all housing related services across the Scottish Borders

It considers all tenure and types of accommodation and reflects both national priorities and local needs



The vision for the LHS is:

Every person in the Scottish Borders lives in a home that meets their needs

In order to deliver this vision successfully; the following four LHS priorities were defined:

- LHS Priority 1: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities
- LHS Priority 2. More People Live In Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes
- LHS Priority 3: Fewer People Are Affected By Homelessness
- LHS Priority 4. More People Are Supported To Live Independently In Their Own Homes

Some of the key objectives within the Local Housing Strategy include:

- To help ensure adequate housing supply across all tenures to address the varying and diverse housing need in the Borders.
- To promote and increase energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty through the development and implementation of a new Home Energy Efficiency & Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- To increase the supply of new affordable housing that meets the needs of our community through the ongoing development and delivery of the next and future Strategic Housing Investment Plans.
- To tackle disrepair in the private sector and address landlord compliance in the private rented sector.
- To address the Housing, Support and Care needs of the growing Older People population through the implementation of an Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Support and Care Needs.
- To improve the health and wellbeing for people experiencing Homelessness; and ensure fewer people are affected by homelessness.
- To gain a better understanding of the housing aspirations and needs of young people in the Borders

This annual report provides an update on progress from April 2020 to March 2021, featuring key highlights and achievements, as well as ongoing challenges for the future.

The beginning of the reporting period began in the week following the first national lockdown in March 2020, as we all know the past year has been a challenging one, Covid-19 has changed the world in a myriad of ways. Each Local Authority and Housing Association across the country has had to adapt the way they work, while ensuring tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness continue to get the services and support that is needed now more than ever.

Local Authorities and Housing Associations have been on the front line throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, supporting communities to adjust to the new normal we all faced. Continuing our commitment to ensuring everyone has a home which meets their needs is more vital than ever and the importance of good quality housing has been highlighted by the pandemic. Scottish Borders Council and our partners have continued working hard to deliver on the ambitions of the Local Housing Strategy throughout the year; working to ensure that people have access to affordable, good quality housing and feel safe and supported in their homes.

Scottish Borders Council greatly appreciate the hard work that our local partners and communities have contributed towards the delivery of our ambitious targets set out in the LHS and will continue to build on those excellent foundations, maintaining the momentum of delivering on the Local Housing Strategy.

2. Housing Supply

Addressing Priority 1: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities

Highlights

- Scottish Government funding allocation in 2020/21 of £16.975m
- The 2021/26 SHIP proposed delivery of 1,125 new affordable homes, under-pinned by an estimated investment of £166m
- Work continues on proposals for the regeneration of Upper Langlee in Galashiels. The proposals envisage the demolition of 159 homes, refurbishment of 68 homes and revised provision of 109 new build energy efficient homes
- 107 Affordable homes were delivered throughout the Scottish Borders
- Work underway on the latest Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)
- Essential repairs carried out to Abbey Rampart wall in Jedburgh, facilitated by CARs scheme
- Hawick CARs scheme extended to 2025

Covid-19 Impact

Covid-19 has adversely impacted on affordable housing delivery in a number of ways, in particular closure of construction sites and delays to planned site starts resulting in the need to delay construction activity with affected projects completing some months later than originally intended. This has been a contributory factor to the 2020/21 underspend of the grant allocation from the Scottish Government to the Scottish Borders area. However the programme is now recovering and 449 homes were under construction at 31st March 2021.

Covid-19 has impacted the delivery of a range of plans and activity, including for example, some of the CARs work. A number of repair projects and the delivery of education/training activities were impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, however it is hoped that as the restrictions ease, more activity will take place within the community during the 2021/22 financial year.

Affordable Housing Supply

Over the course of the current parliament the Scottish Government have set a national target for the delivery of 50,000 affordable homes within Scotland. The Scottish Government allocated £16.975m in Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding to assist with the delivery of affordable housing within the Scottish Borders in 2020/21. Unfortunately, both nationally and locally, the impact of Covid-19 has adversely impacted upon the delivery of planned projects in a range of ways, most notably through construction sites being closed for extended periods and delays to site starts, resulting in a £2.855m underspend against the Scottish Government's funding allocation.

In spite of Covid-19, as of 31st March 2021 there were 449 affordable homes (18 sites) under construction, 33 homes (3 sites) at the pre-site start stage and 176 homes (4 sites) at planning and pre-application stages.

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan [SHIP] is the sole strategic document for prioritising affordable housing investment within the Scottish Borders and sets out a rolling five year planning horizon. The SHIP 2021/26 was approved by Scottish Borders Council in November 2020 and proposes the delivery of 1,125

new affordable homes, under-pinned by an estimated investment of £166m over the period of the plan. Work has started to inform the development of the next SHIP submission in October 2021.

107 affordable homes delivered across the Scottish Borders in 2020/21

These were provided as follows –

94 new affordable homes provided by Registered Social Landlords

- 29 at Springfield Avenue/Drive, Duns by Berwickshire Housing Association
- 3 at St John's Court, Galashiels by Eildon Housing Association
- 9 at Thirlestane Road, Lauder by Eildon Housing Association
- 49 at Todlaw, Duns by Trust Housing Association
- 4 at Heriot Field, Oxton by Scottish Borders Housing Association

4 Individual house purchases

- 4 by Waverley Housing

9 Individual house purchases assisted by the Scottish Government's Open Market Shared Equity Scheme.

Addressing Housing Need

During 2020/21 Scottish Borders Council used Second Homes Council Tax and Affordable Housing Developer contributions to support:

- Eildon Housing Association to provide Extra Care housing at Langhaugh Galashiels;
- Waverley Housing to progress the regeneration of Beech Avenue Galashiels.
- Scottish Borders Housing Association to progress their proposals for Tarth Crescent Blyth Bridge.
- Eildon Housing Association to deliver their project at Tweed Bridge Court Peebles.



Completed Developments in 2020/21



Todlaw, Duns. Extra Care Housing



St John's Court, Galashiels



Stonyford, Lauder



Springfield Avenue, Duns



Todlaw, Duns. Amenity Housing



Heriotfield, Oxton

Tackling Rural Affordability

Scottish Borders Housing Association have completed a new development comprising four three bed family homes at Heriotfield in Oxton. Following background research into local housing as well as close consultation with the local community, it was confirmed that there was a specific need for affordable family homes in Oxton, which in recent years had seen families priced out of local housing and a resultant

fall in the school roll. All four homes at Heriotfield are now allocated with two of them providing homes to families returning to the area.

These homes feature air source heating: an energy-efficient, low-carbon home energy solution for off-grid homes, allowing tenants to both heat their homes economically and reduce their impact on the environment.

Through partnership working between SBHA, Scottish Borders Council, Oxton and Channelkirk Community Councils, wider benefits have been generated for this small community as part of the build, including improvements to the adjacent Council-owned play park and groundworks for a new community hub.

Masterplan for Upper Langlee, Galashiels Regeneration

Scottish Borders Council and Waverley Housing have worked closely to consider suitable options for the future of part of the Upper Langlee housing estate in Galashiels. There are 229 homes in the study area and proposals envisage the demolition of 159 homes and the provision of 109 new build



energy efficient homes for social rent. These homes will better meet the needs of tenants and residents in the local community along with addressing future housing demand in the Galashiels area. The project also includes the refurbishment of 68 homes, which is now substantially complete, this element of the project comprises the installation of external wall insulation ('EWI'), work being undertaken to properties along with roof repairs, replacement main doors and entry systems.

Contract work started on site in January 2020 based upon a 30 week notional timescale. Due to Covid-19 restrictions the programme of work was interrupted, and the revised completion date for these refurbishment works is April 2021. The new development comprises a 3 storey block of amenity flats with undercroft, located at the entrance to the site. The remainder of the site is being redeveloped with 14 blocks of terraced houses, which include a range of townhouses, terraced houses and cottage flats. This is a high cost regeneration project with estimated costs of £23m which will be delivered on a phased basis over a number of years.

There has been a desire to regenerate this area of Galashiels for some time, and this development is considered a strategic housing priority for both Waverley Housing and Scottish Borders Council. The development offers a clear fit with a number of the Strategic Outcomes set out in the Local Housing Strategy.

Lowood, Tweedbank

Lowood in Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site identified in both the Borders Railway Corridor and the South East Scotland City Region Deal that is situated within the Scottish Borders. Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was developed and was agreed as a Consultative draft by Scottish Borders Council in January 2020 with the public consultation period ended in May 2020. Consultation responses have been considered by Scottish Borders Council and the finalised SPG will be considered by Scottish Borders Council on the 17th June 2021. This guidance, once finalised and agreed, will steer future work to agree a master plan for development, help assemble infrastructure investment and implement phasing packages. Work has

also continued on the development of ideas for a care village as one element of the future development of Lowood. The SHIP 2021/26 includes proposals for 2 phases of affordable housing by Eildon Housing Association and Scottish Borders Housing Association aim to build 4 homes as part of a collaboration with Aberlour that will provide a specialist young person's service facility.

South East Scotland City Region Deal

Building on previous Council joint working through the South East Scotland Plan arrangements, City Region Deal joint working has developed on a number of fronts, with new governance arrangements being developed and agreed upon. A new Regional Housing Board was established in 2019 as a means of better engaging the housing sector and harnessing its potential contribution towards the wider City Region Deal objectives. A number of work streams have been, or are being developed. There is a particular focus on the development of a "Regional Growth Framework", which will be published for consultation in June 2021 and the development of Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3. The South East Scotland City Region partnership has developed a greater understanding of infrastructure requirements and challenges as well as opportunities for modern methods of construction and related funding bids.

Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)

The third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the period 2022-27 is being prepared on behalf of the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders Councils.

The HNDA3 will examine the interaction of Housing Market Areas in South-East Scotland; key housing market drivers; the housing stock profile and pressures; the current and future housing need and demand; and the need for specialist housing. The key output will be an estimate of the long-term requirement for additional housing. The HNDA3 Core Project Team was set up in June 2020 and is made up of planning and housing officers from each local authority. As the HNDA is evidence based a wide range of data is currently being collated. The project team have been identifying and collecting the evidence base, working with partners throughout. The timescale for completing the HNDA3 is October 2021.

Young People's Housing Study

The Housing Needs and Aspirations of Young People Scottish Borders 5 Year Action Plan April 2019: The Housing Needs and Aspirations of Young People aims to improve the housing options and outcomes available to all young people aged from 16 to 34 across the Scottish Borders.

The plan has developed a range of policy and practical responses, with commitment from a range of partners. This will enable young people to make more successful and sustainable transitions into their own housing. Work is currently underway towards ensuring these actions are delivered and Scottish Borders Council continue to work closely with our partners.

Town Centre Work

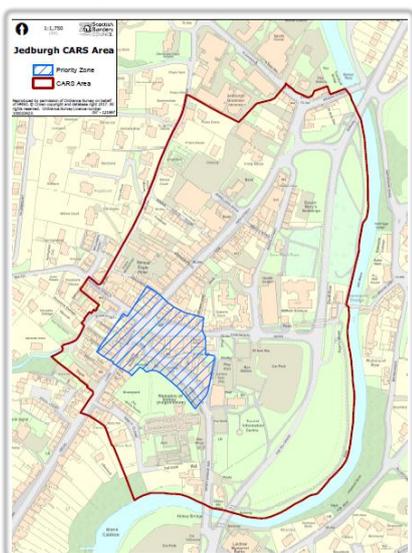
Housing has a significant role to play in contributing to and helping to maintain the vibrancy of town centres. Through implementing actions outlined in the LHS during 2020/21 Scottish Borders Council have continued to work with partners on initiatives to improve town centres, including support to reduce the number of vacant properties, the preparation of Town Centre Housing Contribution Statements for Hawick and Eyemouth, targeting energy efficiency measures within areas such as Jedburgh; as well as piloting a missing shares scheme in Hawick. The pilot missing shares scheme supports the scheme of assistance approach in regard to housing condition, including common repair.

Work has been completed on the Town Centre Housing Contribution Statement for Eyemouth and there are ongoing discussions on developing a statement for other settlements in the Scottish Borders, for example Galashiels. Other work has been impacted by covid-19 and the related restrictions.

Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) is part of a national programme to conserve Scotland's traditional buildings and support the regeneration of town centres. CARS activity supports the Scheme of Assistance which helps address issues of housing quality and condition. Information and advice is provided to owner occupiers, landlords and tenants of privately let properties; helping address disrepair and supporting owners of empty property to bring them back into use.

Jedburgh CARS



The scheme has entered its final year and will draw to a close on 31st March 2022. At the end of year four a total of 34 individual grant offers for building repairs, towards 22 town centre buildings, totalling over £285k had been made with a number projects progressing on site. Further applications have been received which have resulted in the Repair Grant fund being oversubscribed.

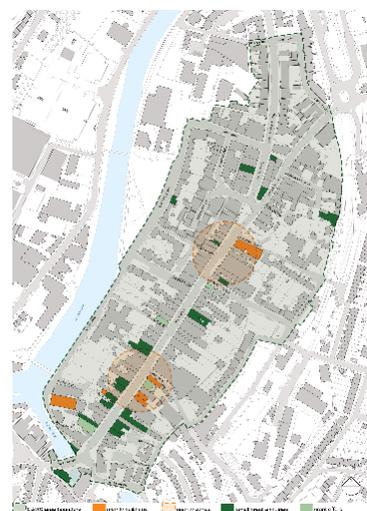
Three of the priority projects for Jedburgh CARS have been offered funding totalling over £250,000 and these have progressed on site with completion due later in 2021. Applications have been received for another two Priority Buildings, and these are currently being assessed with a view to grant offers being made imminently. The Public Realm component of Jedburgh CARS is the development of essential repairs to the Abbey Ramparts retaining wall. The works are now complete and the area re-opened to the public with very positive feedback being received.

Jedburgh CARS is currently on track to deliver all of, (and potentially exceed) the project outputs identified at the outset of the scheme, and has also been successful in attracting some additional funding to support additional repair works in the town centre. The final year of the initiative will be challenging, more so with the backlog of construction works to be cleared, but the repair projects to be delivered will result in a significant impact within the town centre Conservation Area, and hopefully assist with the development of robust and sustainable regeneration opportunities for the future.

Hawick CARS

Hawick CARS formally launched in October 2019 and has been extended for an additional year due to Covid-19 until March 2025. Three grant repair projects are now complete and awarded funding, and one is currently on site. The completed projects were able to progress on site last summer 2020 and into the autumn of 2020 once restrictions allowed, all of which provide a significant impact to the town centre due to their location and prominence on the high street.

Hawick CARS is also working with property owners to develop the priority building repair projects at six locations in the town centre. Hawick CARS were delighted to issue grant offers for one of the more prominent priority buildings on the high street, which is in a bad state of repair, at the end of March 2021. The project is due on site May 2021.



As per previous years, a complimentary missing shares initiative is being developed and delivered by Scottish Borders Council. This is a pilot scheme to run alongside Hawick CARS, originally for two years but now extended to the duration of the scheme. The scheme supports willing owners by paying the missing share of the contribution for essential works and recovers the cost.

Empty Homes

Work has begun on the creation of an updated empty homes profile for the Scottish Borders which will provide a more complete picture of empty homes within the region. Scottish Borders Council have engaged with empty home owners providing them with advice in relation to bringing empty homes back into use, including realistic timescales for the necessary work involved in doing so; advice in relation to potential VAT exemptions available for qualifying repairs as well as any potential funding opportunities such as the rural housing fund where these are applicable.

Scottish Borders Council are developing a Matchmaker Scheme to help connect people wishing to sell an empty home with people who want to buy them. Promoted via our website and Scottish Empty Homes Partnership a portfolio of owners and property is beginning to grow. The intention is to drive awareness of the scheme now that the base function has been created.

Scottish Borders Council have acted as a conduit between empty home owners and parties interested in these properties, while advising the home owner of help available to them to bring their home back into use.

As an example Scottish Borders Council supported work at a property at Chapel Street, Eyemouth lying within the town's conservation area and listed on the buildings at risk register. Guidance and specialist advice has helped the owner to progress works, and secure VAT exemptions.



Empty Homes: Before and after shots of the exterior of a renovated empty home at Chapel Street, Eyemouth



Before and after shots of the interior at Chapel Street, Eyemouth

3. Good Quality and Energy Efficient Homes

Addressing Priority 2: More People Live In Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes

Highlights

- HEEPS:ABS has been renamed as Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS)
- Scottish Borders Council allocated £1.7m grant funding from Scottish Government for 2020/21 EES: ABS Programme
- EES:ABS Air Source Heat Pump installation scheme developed to support properties in off gas areas
- 5,501 advice interactions with Home Energy Scotland
- Successful joint bid by all 4 Scottish Borders RSL's to secure £450k from the Scottish Governments £2m Fuel Poverty fund
- Scottish Borders Council currently has over 5,000 approved registered Landlords and over 7,800 rental properties approved
- Online training courses held in conjunction with Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS)
- Over 300 households have been supported and benefits and energy savings of £300,000

Covid-19 Impact

During the last year there have been a number of challenges involved with delivering energy efficiency programmes across both the private and social sectors. This is due to works being put on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions and some delays with supply of Air Source Heat Pump units due to production slowing down as a result of social distancing guidelines within the manufacturing plant.

In the private sector property inspections were impacted as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and upon resumption were carried out virtually, in person inspections being carried out in emergencies only. The pandemic also had an impact upon training events with a scheduled June event cancelled, although this was mitigated by offering online training to landlords at a later date. In addition the pandemic impacted upon delivery of both the CARs, Scheme of Assistance and Missing Shares initiatives where delivery was impacted by periods of lockdown and difficulty securing contractors.

Climate Emergency

On the 25th September 2020 Scottish Borders Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to a target of net carbon zero in line with government targets. The commitment adds further impetus to the need for an active delivery of the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEES).

The climate declaration supports the national commitment to achieving a net zero carbon in Scotland by 2045. The Scottish Borders can play its part in this by providing more energy efficient housing and affordable warmth as well as promoting decarbonisation, energy efficiency, sustainability and renewable technology within the region.

Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy



To support Priority 2 of the LHS the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) was launched in 2019. The Strategy runs to 2023 and is reviewed regularly by the Borders Home Energy Forum. It takes lead and inspiration from commitments on fuel poverty and home energy efficiency, as well as the ongoing wider Scottish Government support, to provide an effective Strategy that delivers for all in the Scottish Borders.

The Strategy provides actions to deliver affordable warmth for those that need it most, and a commitment to increase the energy efficiency of all homes regardless of circumstance – providing multiple benefits that reach out to the householder, providers and the wider supply chain.

Covering the period 2019-23, the Vision is that ‘more people live in energy efficient and affordably warm homes’. The Priorities that work towards fulfilling this Vision are:

- Priority 1: To collectively work with our partners to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes.
- Priority 2: To explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home.
- Priority 3: To ensure that the AWHEEs provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders.

The first two years of this Strategy have now been implemented and a separate update report is currently being prepared.

Eildon Housing Association’s Green Homes Pilot

Eildon Housing Association had previously secured £100,000 from Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and Scottish Borders Council in order to carry out an action based research and independent evaluation exercise, known as the “Green House Pilot”.

Four of the Association’s affordable housing projects have been selected for inclusion in the Pilot, which will involve the design, development and delivery of around 30 homes, using three different energy efficient solutions such as Passivhaus, Energiesprong and Off-site construction/ Volumetric Design, alongside a 12 house traditional build “control” project. Construction work on these homes started in March 2021. This follows on from the Association’s first Passivhaus development comprising 3 houses at Springfield Terrace Street Boswells which was completed in March 2020.



Passivhaus Development, St Boswells

Independent monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by the Mackintosh Environmental Architecture Research Unit within the Mackintosh School of Architecture. The outcomes of the research will inform the Association’s new build design guide and its approach to component replacement and energy efficiency in existing properties. It will also influence the Association’s Rent Setting Policy.

Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS; formerly referred to as HEEPS:ABS)

The key delivery channel for addressing fuel poverty and improving domestic energy efficiency is the Energy Efficiency Scotland: Area Based Scheme (EES:ABS) This has been the cornerstone of both the Scottish Government's and Local Authority's energy efficiency improvements for private domestic properties since 2013.

Programmes typically involve the installation of external and internal wall insulation as well as cavity wall insulation, however, the scope of eligible measures is now widening. In the last year Scottish Borders Council has introduced decarbonisation and renewable technology in the form of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP), and Solar Photovoltaic and battery storage (PV Battery) to the programme.

Over the period April 2013 to December 2020 Scottish Borders Council has secured **£13.6m** in funding to deliver the programmes. £10.6 million has been Scottish Government EES:ABS grant funding allocation and £3m in Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding. Table 1 shows a summary of outputs from April 2013 to December 2020.

Table 1: Summary of outputs April 2013-December 2020

Summary	
Measures installed	4,353
Households supported	over 3,500
Annual Financial Savings	£521,540
Lifetime Financial Savings	£20,811,240
Annual CO2 Savings (Tonnes)	2,060
Lifetime CO2 Savings (Tonnes)	16,585

In the financial year 2019-20 Scottish Borders Council were awarded £1.34m in EES:ABS funding. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the programme's delivery, despite this it was still possible to install 100 of the planned 278 energy efficiency measures supporting over 75 households. £550,000 of the £1.34m grant allocation was drawn down over that period. For the 2020/21 programme (expected to complete in December 2021) Scottish Borders Council have been allocated over £1.7m, a record allocation for the Scottish Borders. The anticipated measures, fuel bill and Co2 savings are detailed in table 2.

Table 2: Anticipated EES:ABS programme for 2020/21 (due to complete December 2021)

Description	2020/21
EES:ABS Funding	£1,770,000
Total Funding	£1,770,000
External Wall Insulation (Solid Wall)	30
Hard to treat CWI (CWI Solution)	88
Internal Wall Insulation (Solid Wall)	50
Air Source Heat Pump	39
PV & Battery	39
Total Measures	246
Annual Financial Savings (£)	£23,360
Lifetime Financial Savings (£)	£904,320
Annual CO2 Savings (Tonnes)	94
Lifetime CO2 Savings (Tonnes)	715

No estimate has been possible in regard to the level of ECO funding available during 2020/21. There have been challenges created by ECO providers removing funding from certain measures or reducing rates available mid project. In previous years there was a greater degree of certainty. ECO funding will continue

to be a high priority and we will look to maximise amounts. Projects must be developed with this in mind and find means to ensure affordability is achieved.

As EES:ABS mobilises there will be local community events held to raise awareness of the external wall insulation scheme with residents (where safe to do so and in line with Scottish Government Covid-19 guidelines). Furthermore, the project has partnered with Home Energy Scotland to run after-care events providing further support where external wall insulation measures have been installed.

Scottish Borders Council and the appointed EES:ABS contractors will continue to follow Scottish Government guidelines and advice, adhering to construction sector best practice to ensure that employees and householders are always protected.

Monitoring and evaluation activities this year include customer satisfaction surveys; energy usage monitoring and; enhanced monitoring on a sample to households to include effect on temperature and energy and carbon reduction.



Before and after photographs showing EWI Installation in Langlee

Home Energy Scotland Referrals

Home Energy Scotland (HES) is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Energy Saving Trust to provide free and impartial advice on ways to save energy, reduce fuel bills and make homes cheaper and easier to heat.

They have a network of five advice centres across Scotland to help them reach householders, community organisations, businesses and local authorities in order to reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions.

They can provide advice on energy efficiency, switching suppliers, renewables, saving water, sustainable transport and refer people for benefits and tax checks.

Table 3 shows the last five years of interactions data from Home Energy Scotland for the Scottish Borders.



Table 3: Number of Home Energy Scotland interactions

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Inbound calls	1,175	934	1,245	1,130	1,039
Outbound calls	592	705	977	558	2,330
Events	299	1,379	945	516	43
Other (e.g. emails, letters, home visits)	2,521	2,106	2,244	2,973	2,089
Total advice interactions	4,587	5,124	5,411	5,117	5,501

Energy Efficient Scotland (EES) Pilot Project

The Energy Efficient Scotland pilot project in Peebles (Change Works in Peebles hub – CWIP) ran until June 2020 and focused specifically on behavioural change, and in engaging and supporting local householders and businesses to reduce energy consumption and fuel bills as well as increasing the uptake of energy efficient measures.

This is seen as the first stage in covering all five localities during the funding period of Energy Efficient Scotland. The primary target for this self-funded project is owner occupiers with an EPC banding lower than C in line with EES route map aspirations. Additional funding received enabled the project to cover the whole of Tweeddale, specifically to explore the self-funded market. The primary target for this self-funded project are owner occupiers with an EPC banding lower than C. The lessons learned from this will inform both local and government strategy.

Given the Covid-19 restrictions the scheme was unable to build upon the community engagement work delivered previously, although lessons were still learned in how to engage using alternative methods, typically using social media and digital technologies.

Borders Home Energy Forum

The Borders Home Energy Forum continues to ensure that a strategic, multi-agency approach is taken to help reduce fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency and improve health and well-being in the Scottish Borders, particularly for the most vulnerable households within the region.

The Partnership comprises organisations representing housing associations, statutory bodies, advisory groups, bodies associated with energy, affordable warmth, health and income maximisation, and representatives from Scottish Borders Council. The forum continues to attract new members as more groups are established in the region to address climate change challenges and promote energy efficiency and affordable warmth within local communities. The Forum has acted as a catalyst for building collective support for ongoing strategies including;

- Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy
- EES:ABS and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)
- Funding opportunities such as the Warm and Well project
- Joint proposals have been planned and submitted by RSLs
- Upcoming funding opportunities are being discussed proactively and in advance of calls being released
- Facilitated the recent establishment of a new Construction Sector and Supply Chain Forum

It has additionally served as a platform to promote and facilitate measures and schemes that target alleviating fuel poverty and increasing energy efficiency in households; as well as improving health and wellbeing. The move to online meeting has allowed guest speakers to appear at the forum and a collaboration with the Highlands & Islands Forum has benefitted the group through knowledge sharing and highlighting common issues that rural areas face while collectively seeking solutions.

Scottish Federation of Housing Associations £2M Fuel Poverty Fund for RSLs

Eildon Housing Association led a successful joint bid by all 4 Scottish Borders Registered Social Landlords to secure £450k from the Scottish Government's £2m Fuel Poverty fund. This significant 'one off' funding will have a real impact in tackling fuel poverty, funding has been allocated between RSLs on a pro-rata basis of housing stock and in two lots:

- Immediate payment of large-scale arrears of £50-£1000 per household. Payment will be made direct to the energy supplier and all RSLs will have a pro rata split for this purpose. It is estimated that around 200 people across all RSL's could benefit from this.
- Ring-fenced funding which will be held by the Fuel Bank Foundation who can issue vouchers to tenants throughout the rest of the year. These vary from £30 in the summer to £49 in the winter months, RSLs will have a pro rata total to draw upon.

Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing EESSH & EESSH 2

The Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (EESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. The first milestone (EESSH 1) was for all applicable social housing to reach the minimum rating of no lower than an EPC C or D by 31st December 2020.

RSLs across the region achieved the below EESSH percentages at the end date of 31st Dec 2021:

- Waverley Housing – 99.3% EESSH compliance
- SBHA – 97.14% EESSH compliance
- BHA – 76% EESSH compliance
- Eildon – 95% EESSH compliance

EESSH 2 Standard and timescales

A second milestone was confirmed in June 2019, for social rented houses to meet EESSH by December 2032

..."All social housing meets, or can be treated as meeting, EPC Band B (Energy Efficiency rating), or is as energy efficient as practically possible, by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent"...

RSLs will continue to develop and deliver scheduled maintenance and improvement programmes to address the EESSH2 standards across their housing stock. EESSH 2 represents a much higher EPC standard and will be more challenging and costly for RSLs to attain. The higher EPC reflects the government's wider push for more energy efficient housing across Scotland.

Warm & Well Borders

Scottish Borders Council secured two years of funding worth £551,000, from National Grid's Warm Homes Fund to deliver the "Warm and Well Borders" project. The project is now in its second year. The Warm & Well scheme has developed a multi-agency approach to reducing fuel poverty, improving the energy efficiency of homes and improving the health and well-being of the most vulnerable households in the Scottish Borders.



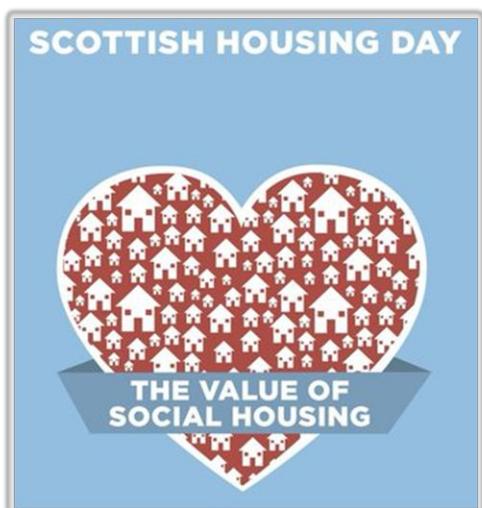
The project is being delivered through a partnership between Scottish Borders Council, Changeworks, three local Citizens Advice Bureau, Home Energy Scotland, health and social care teams and community health

organisations. Warm and Well Borders will have supported fuel poor households to live affordably warm at home by tackling high fuel bills, fuel debt, and supporting skills to be in better control of energy costs as well as building resilience to tackle the causes of fuel poverty.

Covid-19 had a huge impact on the delivery of the scheme due to the constraints put in place through social distancing. Working with the funder, the scheme delivery team were able to adapt support methods incredibly well, adopting alternative approaches including digital and online support as well as interviews with householders has been effective.

As we enter the second year of the scheme it has delivered significant savings and benefits for those most at risk and in fuel poverty. Over 300 households have been supported and benefits and energy savings of £300,000 realised. The support arrangements and relationships developed between the agencies have put in place a lasting legacy that will continue to support the region beyond the duration of the scheme.

Scottish Housing Day



Scottish Housing day was held on the 16th of September 2020. To mark Scottish Housing Day, Scottish Borders Council joined up with RSLs, other Local Authorities and other organisations across Scotland to promote the value of social housing.

Councilor Mark Rowley, Scottish Borders Council's Executive Member for Business and Economic Development said: "I'm passionate that Scottish Borders Council work with our partners to deliver exceptional housing across the Scottish Borders, so I'm delighted we are recognizing the value of social housing by taking part in this year's Scottish Housing Day".

Information on housing was publicised widely across Scottish Borders Council's social media platforms working closely with local RSLs to share information, advice and awareness of all the services Scottish Borders Council and our partners offer in relation to homelessness, housing and other housing related services.

Private Landlord Registration

Landlord registration allows local authorities to control and regulate who can operate legitimately as a private landlord. This provides Scottish Borders Council with an effective tool for dealing with the worst performing landlords who, by their behaviour and attitude, mismanage their properties or fail to act in respect of their anti-social tenants and cause misery for their own tenants, other tenants, neighbours and communities. At the end of the 2020/21 period there were over 5,000 registered landlords and nearly 8,000 properties within the private rented sector in the Scottish Borders.

In recent years emphasis has shifted from registration enforcement to a liaison and support service for landlords and tenants. The service is focused on engagement and enforcement is only applied as a last resort. Key engagement activities include:

- Scrutinising prescribed information provided on applications and liaising with landlords where there are anomalies. This is an important point of engagement, landlords are offered guidance on legislation relating to letting properties. Rental properties are being improved as a result and landlords also gain a better understanding of the requirements when letting in the private sector.
- Due to the restrictions caused by Covid-19 property condition inspections have been problematic for example repairing standard issues are now being addressed through remote inspections. This

involves obtaining video footage or photographs provided by the tenant and a report is prepared by Officers and forwarded to the landlord in the usual way. Contact with landlords and Tenants has had to be adapted focusing on email and phone calls rather than the postal service, due to changing working practices introduced to limit the effects on the service by Covid-19.

Throughout the pandemic Officers have continued to support landlords by providing the latest Scottish Government Guidance; information on financial help available and how to go about daily landlord activities including what checks should be being completed and how to undertake viewings. This information is also available on our website which has been regularly updated throughout the pandemic. Some enforcement actions have been put aside during this time, contact with landlords providing support and encouraging them to complete any outstanding actions being the preferred method of engagement.

Throughout the year courtesy reminder letters are now sent to landlords prior to expiration of their registration, this has resulted in fewer complaints in regard to late fees being applied. In addition records in regard to prescribed information are being kept so that targeted advice can be provided to landlords to assist them with these forms.

Despite the pandemic Scottish Borders Council continued to work in conjunction with LAS to provide training for landlords. Training moved to a virtual classroom, making it more accessible for many of the region's landlords and two events were held, one on Property condition & property management and another on Tenancy Management during Covid-19.

Scheme of Assistance

The Scheme of Assistance helps to achieve the Local Housing Strategy's vision, with particular contribution to Priorities 1, 2 and 4. These priorities are supported through a range of services which:

- Help older people and people with disabilities who are living in the private sector to make adaptations to their homes ensuring that they are able to live in a safe environment within their own property (Priority 4)
- Working with Environmental Health and Building Standards to address disrepair in private sector homes (Priority 2)
- Ensuring that properties in the Private Rented Sector meet the repairing standard and providing advice to both tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities
- Support owners of empty property to bring them back into use (Priority 1 & 2)

The Scheme of Assistance offers:

- Information and advice for private sector housing residents on home repairs, maintenance, improvements and adaptations.
- Common repairs work, engaging with and bringing together multiple owners to resolve complex repairs.
- Working with Building Standards to deliver enforcement work
- Financial help to cover some (or all) of the costs of eligible major adaptations.
- Information and advice to support empty homes owners to bring them back into use.



During the reporting period 46 instance of practical assistance were given to landlords including advice on repair and maintenance including common repair; empty homes advice; support to landlords and tenants and, as a last resort, enforcement.

In addition, general information and advice was also provided in regard to private property house condition concerns.

Missing Shares Scheme

In 2019 Scottish Borders Council agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme in the Scottish Borders. Initially this pilot will target the Hawick Conservation Area over a two year period. The intention is to manage the Missing Shares scheme in tandem with the Scheme of Assistance and to support activity through the approved Hawick Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. The pilot will be reviewed regularly and progress monitored. Progress in the delivery of the missing shares scheme has been hampered by Covid-19, in light of this the intention is to request an extension to the pilot.

4. Homelessness

Addressing Priority 3: Fewer People Are Affected By Homelessness

Highlights

- During 2020/2021, 767 households approached Scottish Borders Council 's Homelessness Team for advice and/ or assistance
- 558 households were assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness
- 90% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless, with a known outcome, secured settled accommodation
- No B&B accommodation used as temporary accommodation within the Scottish Borders during 2020/21
- During 2020/2021 the Housing support team received 256 new referrals. The number of cases closed during 2020/2021 was 114 of which 86% were closed due to a successfully completed intervention.
- 15 additional temporary homeless accommodation properties were acquired from RSL

Covid-19- Impact

Work and life changed dramatically in 2020/2021 due to the Covid-19 emergency. Borders Homelessness and Health Partnership (BHHSP) members have been on the front line of the crisis and have worked closely throughout the pandemic to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness have continued to receive the services and support they require. Homelessness services were delivered by telephone wherever possible, however, given the vulnerable nature of many homeless households, face to face access and support was retained where required.

Early actions in response to the pandemic were focused around ensuring homeless or potentially homeless households within the Scottish Borders had suitable accommodation available to them that allowed them to comply with the imposed lockdown measures. To achieve this homelessness services and RSLs worked in partnership to increase the availability of temporary homeless accommodation by 15 properties, and ensured homeless applicants had continued access to permanent accommodation and support.

As part of the national public health response, local authority homelessness services across the country continue to have temporary additional duties to provide temporary accommodation regardless of an applicant's entitlement to public funds. Within the Scottish Borders temporary homeless accommodation was provided to one household with no recourse to public funds.

Changes to legislation relating to the Local Connection that was set to be introduced during 2020/2021 was delayed until there is more certainty over the control of the coronavirus pandemic and a reduction in the need to restrict movement between local authority areas.

Test and Protect

As part of the local Test and Protect response, officers from Public Health, local RSLs, and Scottish Borders Council's Safer Communities, Assets and Infrastructure, and homelessness teams worked together to identify and provision a small number of suitable properties for use as alternative accommodation for individuals or families to self-isolate safely and effectively.

East Housing Options HUB

Scottish Borders Council continued to be actively involved with the Scottish Government's East Housing Options HUB which met on a fortnightly basis throughout 2020/2021 and proved to be a vital support during the pandemic response. Funding secured from the East Housing HUB resulted in the launch of a homelessness peer support pilot that is being delivered in conjunction with Penumbra.

Evictions

Eviction bans introduced in response to the pandemic remained in place at the end of 2020/2021, subject to three weekly reviews. In 2019/20, 140 statutory homelessness cases were as a result of an action taken by landlords to terminate a tenancy. This reduced significantly in 2020/2021 to 55 applications. At this time it is not known when the eviction ban will end nor what the impact of this will be but in order to mitigate this homelessness services and RSLs have continued to provide advice and support to tenants to prevent rent arrears throughout the pandemic.

Homeless Presentations

There was an 11% reduction in homeless presentations in 2020/2021 compared to 2019/2020, however, the response to each case was more complex and services had to adapt quickly to ensure every household had a place to stay. Of those that were assessed as homeless or threatened within homelessness during 2020/21 the main reasons for homelessness recorded was being asked to leave, relationship breakdown and domestic abuse, accounting for 67% of the reasons for homelessness during the period.

Key Homelessness Statistics

- 767 households approached Scottish Borders Council's Homelessness team for advice and/or assistance.
- 686 households presented as statutory homeless, an 11% reduction compared to 2019/2020. This is in keeping with indications coming from Bi-Annual national data which reported a 10% decrease in homeless presentations in the period 1st April 2020 to 30th September 2020.
- 558 households were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, this is a decrease of 11% from 2019/2020. Of which, 557 were assessed as 'unintentionally' homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- The level of repeat homelessness applications in the Scottish Borders remains low, with 4% of applicants assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness having applied within the previous year.
- 89% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless, where there was a known outcome, secured settled accommodation. This compares favourably with the 2019/2020 national average of 82%.
- Contact with unintentionally homeless households was maintained until closure in 94% of cases, broadly in keeping with the 2019/2020 national average of 95%.
- For homelessness cases that closed in 2020/21 it took an average of 141 days from assessment to closure, this has increased from 137 days in 2019/2020 but compares favourably to the national average for 2019/2020 of 224 days.
- There was no use of bed and breakfast as a temporary accommodation option in Scottish Borders
- 244 statutory homeless cases were open at the start of the period and 277 cases at close of the period. The 14% increase is a direct consequence of a number of challenges arising from the Covid-19 public health crisis.



Care Leavers

The Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers in the Scottish Borders, which was developed and implemented in partnership between Scottish Borders Council and the four locally based Registered Social Landlords in 2017/2018, seeks to ensure that the priority accommodation and support needs of care leavers are recognised in order that their needs for suitable housing are met in a planned and sustainable way. Key partners continued to support the 'Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: Improving Care Leavers Housing Pathways' to ensure that the housing needs of our care leavers are met in a planned co-ordinated way.

Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' (SHORE) standards

The 'Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' (SHORE) was launched nationally in 2017. The standards are designed to ensure that people leaving prison can access services and accommodation in the same way as people living in the community. During 2020/2021, Scottish Borders Council worked with the Scottish Prison Service to identify and people who may face homelessness upon their release to ensure that every person had access to suitable accommodation upon their release that met their housing and support needs and would allow them to adhere to the lockdown restrictions.

The information sharing protocol which was adopted in 2019/2020 and has improved information sharing arrangements contributing to the aspirations of SHORE, allowing for earlier intervention both in terms of the prevention and resolution of homelessness.

Homelessness services adopted the use of 'Email a Prisoner' which has proved to be a vital communication tool to ensure suitable housing arrangements are identified prior to reintegration within the community.

Although no visits within a prison setting were possible, the homelessness service worked with the Scottish Prison Service to ensure that homeless applicants being released from prison received access to housing and support.

The national Early Release Programme introduced regulations to allow a limited number of short-term prisoners nearing the end of their time in custody to be released early. In the Scottish Borders key partners worked together to undertake an exercise to identify all people who may face homelessness upon their release to ensure they had access to advice, support and accommodation where required.



RSL Partnerships

In October 2020 Eildon Housing Association implemented a new allocations policy changing the way in which homeless applicants were allocated permanent housing. Early indications in regard to this new allocations policy are encouraging both in regards to preventing and resolving homelessness.

Scottish Borders Council and Link Housing Association implemented a Section 5 protocol, which seeks to maximise the choice of homes available to homeless applicants and provide better opportunities to meet homeless households' needs. Scottish Borders Council look forward to working closely with Link Housing Association and the opportunities this will bring in terms of meeting the aims of the Borders RRTP.

From April 1, 2021, Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) will be changing the system it uses to let its homes. BHA have been working together with six other social housing landlords across Scotland to create a new lettings service called These Homes. These Homes will replace the HomeHunt service currently used to advertise, allocate and let BHA homes. The new digital lettings service will look very different to HomeHunt

but will still work in a similar way in that a prospective tenant will need to register and apply for the properties they want to be considered for.

SBHA introduced changes to their engagement strategy, increasing the use of emails, social media and texts to reach out to their tenants regarding rent arrears. This had a positive impact and the number of households receiving support from SBHA Financial Inclusion team increased to 814 households compared with 675 the previous year. SBHA also saw an increase in engagement from cases at high risk of enforcement action, engagement would traditionally sit at around 5% however this increased to over 90% during lockdown and successfully reduced the number of tenants with over £1000 in rent arrears. It is imperative that all opportunities to work in partnership to minimise evictions during 2021/2022 are explored as part of our recovery planning and response. Accordingly, a commitment to undertake a review of Section 11 procedures will be conducted in 2021/22. This will be enhanced by the Crisis Intervention Fund which was launched in 2020/21.

Berwickshire Housing Association's Financial Inclusion Team assisted their tenants to obtain £150,421 of backdated benefits in 2020/2021 with a further £898,131 of ongoing benefit gains for tenants over the following year. In addition Berwickshire Housing Association have developed a tenancy support services to support tenants who may have additional mental health and wellbeing support needs. The 18 month pilot project, called 'BeWell', is funded by BHA with additionally funding from the Lintel Trust. The project will launch in 2021/2022 and will be delivered in partnership with Penumbra.

BeWell aims to:

- Promote independent living by addressing key factors that risk tenancy sustainment;
- Work in a partnership with Penumbra to provide the range of emotional and practical supports that customers of Berwickshire Housing Association need;
- Reduce tenancy breakdown and rent arrears for customers of Berwickshire Housing Association;
- Reduce the number of voids created by tenancy breakdown;
- Maximise access to BHA's tenancy support teams including Financial Inclusion, Customer Accounts and Befriending services;
- Connect people rapidly to community-based personal and social support networks so that they feel safe and secure at home.

These Homes

Berwickshire Housing Association have been working together with six other social housing landlords across Scotland to create a new lettings service called These Homes. These Homes will replace the HomeHunt service currently used to advertise, allocate and let BHA homes. The new digital lettings service will look very different to HomeHunt but will still work in a similar way in that a prospective tenant will need to register and apply for the properties they want to be considered for.

Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP)

The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) established in 2018/19 continues to operate with a key focus on the implementation of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. The BHHSP includes senior officers from Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders with responsibility in homelessness, health and social care, public health, social work, property management and housing strategy. The four locally based Registered Social Landlords have representation from senior officers.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG)

The national Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was reconvened in June 2020 in response to the coronavirus crisis and further recommendations were proposed to the Scottish

Government, these recommendations were considered and an updated Ending Homelessness Together action plan was published in early October 2020.

Following this, 'RRTPs and HARSAG 2020 –What Now? A Short guide for local Authorities', was published on 29th October 2020 and supports the HARSAG recommendations that the 'responsibilities for addressing and preventing homelessness do not sit solely with local authority homelessness teams' and highlight 'the core relationship between health and home, demonstrating that in order to keep people safe we must work collaboratively across all sectors, but also showing that it's possible to do so – and quickly', the guide reflects the four key themes of the HARSAG recommendations;

1. Prioritise Prevention – 'Where Homelessness is predictable it is preventable'
2. Settled Housing Options – 'We all have the potential to live a good life – and home is the best place from which to build it'
3. Equalities competence – 'The risk and impact of homelessness is not distributed equally, or in the same ways, across society'
4. Responsive systems – 'To end homelessness in Scotland we need an enabling system with no wrong door'

Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)

Rapid Rehousing is a key component of the whole-system approach whereby the responsibility for tackling homelessness lies not just with Local Authorities but with housing providers, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support. The Covid-19 emergency has delayed the full application of resources and has consequently impacted on the development of the Borders RRTP. In order to support the work of the RRTP additional development resources have been appointed to compensate for time lost as a result of the delays.

As a result of the delays and impact of Covid-19 and updated emerging guidance, it was agreed that the RRTP action plan should undergo a review to reconsider the priorities of the BHHSP in light of the pandemic. Following the initial response to the pandemic, focus moved to the RRTP and work began on the 'Ending Homelessness Together' commitments, by progressing the Scottish Borders RRTP with our Housing Association and Health and Social Care partners.

We are mindful of the changing landscape brought about by the Covid-19 emergency and the impact this has had on the development of our RRTP, however, we are equally aware of the contribution that the RRTP framework can have on our recovery.

Housing First Service

A range of RRTP priorities were taken forward in the latter half of 2020/2021. Significant progress was made to pilot a Housing First Service within the Scottish Borders and organisations were invited to tender for the service in March 2021, we look forward to seeing a Housing First service operational in the Scottish Borders in 2021/2022. Housing First provides general settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs, recognising that a safe and secure home is the best base for recovery, it offers personalised, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address wider needs.

Crisis and Housing Intervention Funds

One of two proposed Crisis Intervention Funds was launched in 2020/21. A total of £30,000 RRTP funding per annum has been committed to the Crisis Intervention Funds for the duration of the RRTP. The funds will be administered by Scottish Borders Councils with applications accepted from Homelessness and RSL officers.

The Housing Intervention Fund which launched in February 2020, aims to improve the housing options available to applicants who are in need of intervention due to rent arrears and who often face the prospect of being homeless. More often than not, by this stage, there has been a breakdown in communication with their landlords and/or a lack of engagement from the applicant to address the debt.

Homelessness Officers work in collaboration with both the applicant and other interested parties to bridge that gap and help the customer remain in their tenancy. The applicant's landlord and the homelessness team are required to work together to ensure reasonable milestones are met by the applicant that aim to address the underlying cause of the arrears. Seven applications to the Housing Intervention Fund were approved in 2020/2021.

The second fund which is planned to launch in 2021/2020 is a Homelessness Intervention Fund accessible by front line workers within homelessness services to use in the prevention or resolution of homelessness.

The Scottish Welfare fund continued to operate to provide essential furnishings and was an integral part of ensuring people had access to essential household items that they required to take up residence of their new homes.

Crash Pad

A Crash Pad was established within the temporary homeless accommodation portfolio and will become operational in April 2021. The Crash Pad is a self-contained property that can accommodate households on a short term basis (one or two nights), this will allow for improved assessment of need prior to allocation of temporary accommodation and aims to result in suitable temporary accommodation being provided in the first instance.

This will improve the customer's experience of homelessness, make more efficient use of the wider temporary accommodation stock and reduce Scottish Borders Council's risk of breaching the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

Digital Inclusion

Housing access and housing stability can be greatly improved for those who have consistent access to the range of services that are offered digitally. The RRTP will continue to explore ways of getting homeless households digitally included throughout its lifespan.

As part of the RRTP action to improve digital access a successful application to the Connecting Scotland Programme was submitted, with 10 packages being awarded to homeless households and 237 packages to RSL tenants.

Housing Support

Receiving 256 new referrals into service the Housing Support team have continued to provide vital service provision to supported people throughout 2020/2021, continuing direct delivery where deemed essential. 86% of cases have been closed due to interventions being successfully completed.

The team have been trained by the local Naloxone Lead within the NHS and subsequently registered with the Scottish Government Population Health Directorate in order to supply and administer Naloxone in the case of an emergency to save a life.

In April 2020 the housing support team consulted with partners on the service currently being provided, considering; accessibility, communication, partnership working, quality of service and responsiveness. 80.6% rated the quality of the support provided high quality/very high quality.

“I feel the service is a vital component of homelessness services and we rely on their hard work and expertise to support vulnerable clients in their resettlement. Without them I have no doubt there would be a massive increase in the failure of tenancies and people would struggle to maintain them.”

“Great communication, partnership working, active problem solving and ability to look for solutions out of the norm”

“The people with whom I have worked from the Housing Support team are dedicated to providing a good service and committed to the people they are trying to support.”

5. Support to Live Independently

Addressing Priority 4: More People Are Supported To Live Independently In Their Own Homes

Highlights

- Longfield Crescent development completed in February 2021
- Construction underway at Langhaugh, Galashiels
- £173,221 spent on adaptations in the private sector
- Financial assistance provided by Scottish Borders Council for 41 major adaptations in the private sector
- 45 major adaptations carried out by RSLs
- Care and Repair Handyperson Service fitted a total of 1,630 grabrails
- 2 new homes built to wheelchair accessible standards
- HNDA sub group established to work specifically on the Special Housing Provision

Covid-19 Impact

Despite the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown resulting in delays to projects much progress has been made over the 2020/21 period, with new extra care housing delivered. Covid-19 impacted upon delivery of major adaptations where numbers were down as a result of the period spent in lockdown and the difficulty in visiting properties particularly where vulnerable residents were shielding for long periods of time.

Extra Care Housing

Considerable progress has been made over the 2020/21 period in developing service specifications and contracts between Scottish Borders Council and Eildon and Trust Housing Associations.

The first development in the programme to complete in February 2021 was Trust Housing Association's Longfield Crescent development at Todlaw in Duns.

Scottish Borders Council and Trust have developed a joint approach to promote the development, services provided and allocate tenancies. Construction of Eildon Housing Association's 39 flat Wilkie Gardens development at Langhaugh Galashiels is advancing well, with the opening anticipated in the autumn of 2021.



ECH Housing at Todlaw, Duns

In addition, stripping out work started in March 2021 as a precursor to the start of building works to convert the Listed Building at the former Kelso High School, this will provide 36 flats for Eildon Housing Association upon completion which is expected around December 2022.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target

Following the delivery of the finalised report “A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders” in January 2020, work has continued to engage stakeholders. It is intended that the action plan will now be delivered and integrated with the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 actions through the LHS monitoring and reporting processes.

The final report identified a wide range of issues and challenges which will need to be addressed at national as well as at a local level by Scottish Borders Council and partner agencies. The core findings indicated that up to 20 new wheelchair accessible homes will be required, per year, across all tenures in order to address both current unmet need and future requirements.

Informed by the above report the Executive Committee agreed to set an annual Wheelchair Accessible Housing target of 20 homes with proposed delivery being divided into 15 by Registered Social Landlords with the balance provided by the private sector. This target is reflected in Scottish Borders Council’s current Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021/26.

During 2020/21, 2 new build homes were completed to wheelchair accessible housing standards. These were delivered by Trust Housing Association at the new Extra Care Housing development at Longfield Crescent in Duns.

HNDA Specialist Provision

As part of the development of the third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) a sub group has been established to work specifically on the Special Housing Provision section. Based on the previous HNDA, this was an area that required more focus and as a result four members of the project team have been meeting regularly to work on this section.

Specialist Provision refers to three broad categories of need covering six types of housing or housing-related provision. These support independent living for as long as possible and help to enable people to live well and with dignity.

Table 4: Housing Need Categories

Category of Housing Need	Type of Housing Provision
Property Needs	1. Accessible and adapted housing 2. Wheelchair housing 3. Non-permanent housing e.g. for students, migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees
Care and Support Needs	4. Supported provision e.g. care homes, sheltered housing, hostels and refuges 5. Care/ support services for independent living
Locational or Land Needs ¹	6. Site provision e.g. sites/ pitches for Gypsy/ Travellers and sites for Travelling Showpeople, city centre locations for student accommodation

¹ At SDP and local authority level Gypsy/Traveller issues are a requirement of SPP given cross border issues here. Locational need may also be for non-permanent accommodation e.g. student accommodation in town centres or near the college/university. Other more innovative or aspirational 'locational need' may be for certain types of Specialist Provision e.g. properties within close proximity to shops and services or in groups (villages) to allow support services to be managed and delivered more effectively. With the health and social care agenda, this may come more to the fore so that in future there will be more planning collaboration over the provision of nursing/care homes, residential homes etc.

The group have been identifying the data requirements for the section and have been working closely with partners in Health & Social Care, Care and Repair Services, other local authority departments and RSLs.

For robust and credible status HNDAs must satisfy all core outputs and processes; for specialist provision these are:

- Identifies the contribution that Specialist Provision plays in enabling people to live well, with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Identifies any gap(s)/ shortfall(s) in that provision and the future level and type of provision required.
- Considers evidence regarding property needs, care and support needs and locational/ land needs.
- Undertakes consultation with all appropriate stakeholders who represent the views of those people who this chapter may impact upon and reports on the findings of such consultation.
- Gives due consideration to the provisions of the Equality Act (2010)

Care and Repair



Scottish Borders Council has a contract with Eildon Housing Association to deliver the Borders Care and Repair Service.

The aim of the service is to enable older people and people with disabilities living in the private sector to have warm, well maintained and safe homes. Care & Repair helps to achieves this by:

- Providing help and advice on housing repairs, improvements and adaptations, and to ensure the work is carried out in accordance with The Care & Repair Standards.
- Providing a Home Handyperson service to help to support community care groups (prioritising older people and people with disabilities), to continue to live at home through the provision of practical household help and support.

The service is available to:

- home owners over 60 years of age
- private tenants over 60 years of age
- disabled owners or private tenants of any age

The service has been expanded due to a legacy donation from Borders Caring Service to provide an additional Handyperson and the introduction of a fall prevention pilot.



Disabled Adaptation Outcomes

A major adaptation involves permanent changes to the structure of a person's home. These works are subject to mandatory grant provision and are prioritised for financial assistance by Scottish Borders Council. These include:

- Provision of standard amenities which can include an extension to provide any or all of the standard amenities;

- Provision of structural adaptations with the exception of extensions, to provide living accommodation.

During the 2020/21 period a total of £173,221 was spent on adaptations throughout the region in the private sector. Despite Covid-19 restrictions a total of 41 adaptations were delivered. Table 5 details the types of adaptations that were installed within the Scottish Borders.

Table 5: Major Adaptations (Private) Completed in 2020/21

Adaptation Type	No. Completed
Curved Stair Lift	3
Closomat	1
Create Shower Room in Spare Bedroom	1
External Ramp	2
Level Access Shower	21
Modular Ramp	1
New Door and Flat Threshold at House for Access	1
Ramp with Hardstand, Path and Turning Point	1
Regrading External Steps at Back Door	1
Stair Lift	5
Wet Floor Shower	3
Wet room	1
Total	41

Within the Scottish Borders there are currently 778 signed up members subscribed to the Handyperson Service. During 2020/21, the Care and Repair Handyperson Service fitted a total of 1,630 grab rails, at a total cost of £6,025. Table 6 details information on small repairs and adaptations and the Handyperson's Service.

Table 6: Small Repair & Adaptations & Handyperson 2020/21

	Number Completed	Spend
Small Repairs & Adaptations	264	£50,201
Handyperson Jobs	2,643	Subscription Service

In 2011 there was a significant move to the development of a 'One Stop Shop' model for all adaptations in the Borders, which was achieved through an agreement with each of the four larger Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This provides a consistent adaptation service to all people in the Borders regardless of tenure.

Through the One Stop Shop approach, Care and Repair effectively spend the funding awarded from the Scottish Government national budget, referred to as Stage 3 funding, for each of the RSLs. Table 7 details the number of major adaptations and spend by each RSL.

Table 7: Major Adaptations carried out by RSLs in 2020/21

RSL	Number Completed	Spend
Berwickshire Housing Association	13	£47,245
Eildon Housing Association	15	£25,782
Scottish Borders Housing Association	10	£44,069
Waverley Housing	7	£22,538
Total	45	£139,634

Personalising Services

Scottish Borders Housing Association's Strategic Plan has a commitment to personalising services to ensure those at risk can access support. Throughout lockdown welfare calls were made to 4,500 tenants and regular welfare checks were maintained with those who had requested them. Using Customer insight data SBHA were able to prioritise their response initially to those shielding, elderly or those with a disability. Referrals were made into the community assistance hubs and resilience groups where required. SBHA have reduced the number of Tenants who owe over £1,000 in arrears. This has been the result of a change in engagement strategy, email, social media and text been utilized to reach out to tenants. Normally there is a 5% engagement from high risk cases as SBHA proceed with enforcement however this has increased to over 90% during lockdown.

Connecting Scotland

RSLs throughout the region have taken part in the Connecting Scotland Initiative allowing them to distribute iPads and Chromebooks to tenants through the scheme enabling them to be digitally connected. Team members were trained as digital champions to offer support to Tenants to get online and use devices.

Housing Proactive, OK Each Day

Berwickshire Housing Association launched a new service across Independent Living homes in partnership with Alertacall, called Housing Proactive, Ok Each Day. This service is the first step towards Berwickshire Housing Association reviewing their overall approach to supporting customers to live independently at home within their local communities for longer. It marks the first step in preparations for the Analogue to Digital switchover.

6. Developments for the year ahead

The period 2020/21 has seen changes to all of our lives, the ways in which we work have changed. Housing services across the Scottish Borders have had to innovate in the way we interact with service users to continue to provide an excellent service that is inclusive to all. Housing will play a key part in the economic recovery of the country as well as addressing some of the inequalities that exist within our society.

Local Authorities and Housing Associations have been on the front line of the crisis, supporting communities to adjust to the huge challenges they now face. Continuing our commitment to ensuring everyone has a home which meets their needs is more vital than ever and looking to the year ahead. Scottish Borders Council and partners will be working hard to deliver on the ambitions of the Local Housing Strategy and working towards ensuring that people have access to affordable, good quality housing and feel safe and supported in their homes.

The year ahead will see continued efforts to help ensure that every person in the Scottish Borders lives in a home that meets their needs. As far as possible given the uncertain context of the impacts of Covid-19 this will be through the delivery of more affordable homes; ensuring people live in good quality, energy efficient homes and ensuring people have the support that they need to live independently. Scottish Borders Council greatly appreciate the hard work that our local partners and communities have contributed towards the delivery of our ambitious targets set out in the LHS and will continue to build on those excellent foundations, maintaining the momentum of delivering on the Local Housing Strategy.

Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021-2026

The SHIP 2022/27 is due to be submitted to Scottish Ministers by the 31st of October 2020. Uncertainties in the housing sector have been eased to a degree regarding the future level of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme budget allocations beyond the Scottish Parliamentary election which is due to be held in May of 2021. Scottish Borders Council and its partners have been advised to plan on the basis of a £16.972m allocation for 2021/22.

Preparatory work has started to draft the next SHIP 2022/27. Current indications are that, all being well, it is anticipated that up to 343 affordable homes could potentially be delivered during the 2021/22 period.

Housing to 2040

Published in March 2021 Housing to 2040 is Scotland's first long-term national housing strategy with a vision for what we want housing to look like and how it will be provided to the people of Scotland, no matter where they live and what point in their life they are at. Housing to 2040 sets out a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. It aims to deliver upon the ambition that everyone should have a safe, good quality and affordable home that meets their needs in the place they want to be.

The vision and underpinning principles inform the Housing to 2040 route map and describe the ambition for everyone to have access to a warm, safe, affordable and energy efficient home that meets their needs, in a community they feel part of and proud of. Housing to 2040 sets a new ambition to deliver 100,000 affordable homes by 2031/32 which will make an important contribution to tackling child poverty and continuing work towards ending homelessness.



It puts place at the heart of the strategy, with an intention to invest in our town centres and make it easier for homes to be the heart of strong communities with housing that is well designed, without compromising on the aesthetics. Housing to 2040 also aims to take action to stem rural depopulation and help communities in all corners of Scotland to thrive.

Undertaking an assessment of Supply and Demand in the Social Housing Sector

Undertaking an assessment into the demand and supply of housing in the Scottish Borders will provide key information around the mismatch that may be present within the Scottish Borders social housing sector, as the gap between demand and supply of housing of the right type and quality in the right places is considered to be an issue in some areas. With social housing under increasing pressure it is important to understand what can be done to better utilise current stock and ensure that future stock is addressing the need and demand of the Borders population, including those at risk of, or currently facing, homelessness.

This study will be of particular support to Priority 1 and 3 of the LHS and the development of the next LHS expected to cover the period 2023-2028. This research will also play a vital role in the delivery of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, which aims to prevent, and ultimately eradicate, homelessness through the timely provision of a stable and suitable home.

Private Sector House Condition

The private sector is the biggest tenure in the Scottish Borders with a large percentage of the population either owning their own homes or renting privately. One of the key challenges in this sector is to ensure everyone is living in good quality homes. Good quality housing makes an important contribution to many aspects of a successful Scottish Borders including supporting local economies, improving individual's health and well-being and by making communities safer.

Over the next year, Scottish Borders Council will be undertaking a significant amount of work to improve our understanding of the condition of private sector housing through the development of the Private Sector Housing Condition Improvement Action Plan throughout the year. The plan will set out how Scottish Borders Council, with partners, will support the improvement of private sector house conditions by tackling disrepair and below tolerable standards across tenures.

The team has worked closely with landlords over the past year developing new processes to improve our service and have engaged with them throughout the pandemic, providing relevant and up to date advice on Scottish Borders Council website along with support from our Private Sector Liaison and Enforcement Officer, who has been on hand to advise local landlords. The team will continue to support landlords moving forward for example keeping landlords up to date with proposed changes within the sector.

Recognising issues around empty homes can be complex and working with owners can, in many cases, be time consuming, Scottish Borders Council is working with the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to secure additional staffing resource to develop a dedicated empty homes service. Funding has been approved for an Empty Homes Officer post for a two year period which will provide Scottish Borders Council with additional resource to target empty homes within the region. It is anticipated recruitment to this post could be completed by summer 2021.

Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Living in a warm, comfortable and energy efficient home is something that everyone should have access to and this is why it is a priority in the LHS. The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy was developed in 2018/19 and the second year of the strategy has been now been implemented, building on achievements of previous years.

The Borders Home Energy Forum maintains good support and its key position to deliver, and monitor progress against, the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy. It will continue to work closely to deliver against Scottish Government Energy Efficiency Scotland route map, as well as targeting efforts to work collectively on issues of fuel poverty.

Scottish Borders Council continue to support strategic development and actively participates and responds to government consultations, such as the Improving Energy Efficiency in Owner Occupied Homes, New Build Heat Standard and the Heat in Buildings Strategy.

Officers will continue to support the creation and development of the renewables and construction supply chain forum as well as the ongoing influence of the Borders Home Energy forum.

Beyond Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH2)

The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) was introduced in March 2014 and set a milestone for social landlords to meet for social rented homes by 31 December 2020. RSLs within the Scottish Borders were able to deliver a 92% compliance with this target despite the challenging restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Works to improve properties' energy performance remains ongoing.

The next milestone is EESH 2. Under EESH2, all social housing must meet, or can be treated as meeting EPC Band B (Energy Efficiency rating), or is as energy efficient as practically possible by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent.

This will have implications in the Scottish Borders due to the rural nature of the region higher percentage of pre-1945 solid walled properties that are more expensive to bring up to the required energy efficiency standard. Similarly, having a large percentage of properties off the gas grid also brings additional costs and challenges in improving the energy efficiency rating of a property. In addition, more straightforward improvements were addressed under the EESH 1 standards. The more stringent and far reaching standards set for EESH 2 represent additional challenges in the year ahead.

Homelessness

During 2021/2020 homelessness services will retain the key focus of progressing the reviewed Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and working towards the 'Ending Homelessness Together' commitments, with our RSL and Health and Social Care partners. Scottish Borders Council are mindful of the continuing impact and changing landscape brought about by the coronavirus crisis, however, we are equally aware of the significant contribution that our RRTP can make during our recovery period and the opportunities that have been generated from strengthened relationships during the pandemic.

The expected introduction of a Housing First support model in 2021/2022 is particularly welcomed. Housing First will provide support to those who have endured long term homelessness or who have multiple experiences of homelessness and also have multiple and complex needs.

Although many people see homelessness as being a housing issue, for many of the Housing First cohort homelessness is symptomatic of a greater range of challenges.

Housing First will not replace specialist services, it will help individuals establish and maintain links with these services while recognising the fundamental impact that having a secure home can have in areas such as health, substance use, employability and offending behaviour.

Housing and Communities

Housing is a vital component within in our communities, not just by providing safe, secure and affordable homes but by contributing on a wider scale to the places and spaces in which we live and where communities can thrive. This has been highlighted during the pandemic.

The development of new housing stimulates the local economy. In addition Housing Associations provide support to a wide range of initiatives within the local community and provide a wide scope of additional services such as befriending services, support services, financial inclusion activity, community gardens, supporting the third sector and many other examples from our local RSLs.

An example of this is Berwickshire Housing Association working alongside Abundant Borders to encourage the use of their community gardens in both Duns and Ayton.

The community garden at Todlaw in Duns will include an orchard, raised beds and other facilities to encourage use of the garden by tenants and their families. There is also an outdoor classroom planned for the Duns community garden which should be completed by the spring or early summer 2021.



Community Garden at Todlaw



Sensory Garden at Station Court

Berwickshire Housing Association have also been working on transforming a vacant piece of land into a vibrant sensory garden for Community Integrated Care residents at Station Court in Duns to be known as the Bumblebee Garden. Construction of the garden has completed and planting is due to begin this year.

New more environmentally friendly construction methods such as the Green House Pilot are being trialled throughout the region. In addition to which two other projects providing 24 homes are now being delivered out with the Pilot to similar low carbon and high energy efficiency standards with

20 homes at St Aidens, Galapark in Galashiels and 4 homes at The Valley in Selkirk. The continued regeneration of Upper Langlee in partnership between Scottish Borders Council and Waverley will bring improved more energy efficient housing along with addressing housing need in the area.

There are remain a number of challenges facing us over the lifetime of this Local Housing Strategy, however, Scottish Borders Council and LHS Partners recognise the opportunities not only to provide good quality homes for all within sustainable communities, but to also stimulate community regeneration, the local economy, protect the environment and improve social wellbeing and inclusion.

Working collaboratively to deliver on the ambitions of this LHS is paramount and through continued effective partnership working the vision of the LHS is being driven forward. Collectively we aim to build upon the achievements in this year's report to continue to ensure that the Scottish Borders remains a place where everyone is able to enjoy affordable, good quality housing in a pleasant and safe environment.

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