### **LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2022-23**

### Executive Summary

The new Local Housing Strategy (2023 -28) is the leading strategic document that will provide a five-year plan for housing and housing related services in Falkirk. The main goal of the strategy is to provide quality housing and service for all communities and individuals who live in the area. Consultation allows representative groups and local people a direct involvement in influencing the LHS, especially the development of outcomes and actions. Demonstrating how consultation is used to influence the development of the LHS is strongly emphasised in the Guidance. This report highlights the consultation and engagement activities that were undertaken.

###  Introduction

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to produce an LHS setting out strategic priorities and plans for the delivery of housing related services. The Scottish Government has produced guidance in relation to developing the next LHS for all local authorities to consider. The Equality Act 2010 also requires the involvement, consultation, and engagement with as wide a range of residents as possible’.

The Strategy is Falkirk Council’s main document for housing, planning and investment within the area. Its strategic objective is the delivery of housing and housing related services. The Strategy will achieve this through annual monitoring of an action plan that will cover housing related priorities including housing supply, ending homelessness, property condition, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, climate change, specialist provision, communities, place-making, and a sustainable private sector.

Early engagement with key partners and stakeholders is key in assisting and identifying priorities and actions to inform the Strategy.

### Early Engagement Survey and Data Collection

**Online Survey**

A Citizen Space online questionnaire was created with the assistance of the Editorial Panel, a group consisting of volunteers to gain the views and feedback from local people on Housing and Housing Services in Falkirk. The format consisted of questions covering five topics including Improving Neighbourhoods, Homelessness, Housing and Support for vulnerable people, Improving Housing Conditions and Reducing energy costs and climate change. Each section also provided space for comments to be added. The survey also asked further questions seeking opinions on Housing Issues in Falkirk and Digital inclusion.

The questionnaire was made available on Falkirk Council’s website and publicised via social media and other distribution networks including Local News Outlet, Registered Tenants Organisations, Community Learning & Development, Social Work, Education, Forth Valley College, People’s Panel consultation list and further existing consultation registers.

Promotional material was sent to local community centres and food pantries. The survey was also made available in hardcopy format to these groups with pre-paid envelopes attached for ease of return. The survey was available for translation if required.

This was available from 1st of June until 31st of October.

### Total Responses

937 survey responses were received in total. 195 from private sector surveys (85 private tenants survey), 81 (landlord and letting agents survey) and 29 (Scheme of Assistance). The general survey had 742 responses.

### Analysis

Results from the LHS survey were analysed for each of the questions asked with graphical representation createdindicating the number of people who provided an answer. A summary report of results collected from the Online Survey is attached with this report.

Free text comments provided for each question were collated, key themes were identified and are listed below, these will be used to inform the Local Housing Strategy. Key themes noted were.

**Improving Neighbourhoods – Key Themes**

* More affordable social housing needed.
* Empty homes need to be used.
* Affordability concerns / house prices too high
* Housing supply should better meet demand.
* Quality of housing should improve.
* People need to take pride in the area they live in
* Larger properties should not be forgotten about

**Homelessness**

* Nobody should be homeless.
* Prevention is vital and should be a priority / early intervention.
* Accessing Assistance should be easy.
* Importance on tenancy support and promotion of it
* Maximise Benefits & Income and promotion of it.
* End Hostel type accommodation
* Vulnerable people should be fully supported.
* Need more support from Scottish/ UK Governments
* Joined up working with Social Work, DWP is essential.

**Providing Housing and Support for Vulnerable People**

* Important to support independent living.
* Homes should be accessible and adapted.
* Support for older people and those with disabilities should be a priority.
* Aging population, homes need to meet be suitable.
* Specialist Housing should be available.
* Housing Advice should be easily accessible and is vital.
* Adaptations required to keep people in their homes.
* Improve existing stock to support independent living.
* Take advantage of technology
* Raise awareness of community/support groups available

**Energy Costs & Climate Change**

* Cost of living crisis is a real fear.
* Energy should be affordable.
* Carbon emissions should be addressed as soon as possible.
* Energy saving advice should be easily found and available.
* Housing staff should be trained to offer relevant energy saving advice.
* Improve existing housing quality to be energy efficient.
* Build modern, energy efficient homes.
* Clean living environments are important.

**Private Rented Sector: Tenants**

* Aspiration for council housing - access an issue.
* Aspiration for homeownership - affordability an issue
* High satisfaction with property conditions
* Low awareness of regulations and enforcement
* Low awareness of available assistance
* Increase Private Sector Team visibility.
* Increase online information.

**Private Rented Sector: Landlords & Letting Agents**

* Most landlords do not let as a business, renting only 1 or 2 properties.
* Landlords leaving the sector.
* Promote elements of regulation and enforcement
* Promote available support/ assistance for landlords.
* Promote available support/ assistance for tenants.

**Scheme of Assistance** (low response)

* Support to explore the introduction of discretionary adaptation grant assistance.
* Support to continue with current property condition priorities.
* Mixed support to keep/ alter discretionary property condition assistance.
* Support to include common repair within discretionary grant assistance.
* Property condition enforcement action important and supported.

**Most pressing housing issue in the Falkirk Council Area**

* Length of time to be housed / rehoused.
* Affordability
* Lack of social housing
* Quality of housing and condition
* Making use of empty homes
* Tenancy sustainment
* Repairs & Adaptations
* Make best use of land available.
* Ending homelessness and providing support

### Focus Groups

Several focus groups were held across the Falkirk Council area with a priority on contacting the more difficult to reach communities. Face to Face consultation regarding housing and services was held at the following locations.

**Kersiebank Community Centre – Syrian Re-Settlement Programme.**

**Key points**

* All those taking part indicated they wished to live in Falkirk for the near future. 5/10 years.
* The area where the families had been placed through the resettlement scheme was the area of choice for families to remain.
* Property sizes, larger properties needed to meet family needs. 4 Bedrooms.
* Highlighted the importance of the resettlement officer, the housing support provided by them was vital.

The survey was translated into both Arabic and Urdu for Asylum Seekers consultation meeting. The group was arranged at Kersiebank Community Centre on Thursday 21/07/22 to gain the views on Housing and views on living in the Falkirk Area. Transportation was arranged for those that needed it to attend. Six adults turned up to the session and included a mix of both Council and Housing Association tenants.

**Castings Homeless Assessment Centre**

**Key Points**

* All participants highlighted their preference is for social rented housing minority indicating the private rented sector a valid option.
* Most required smaller properties with one requiring larger to support access to children.
* Support required would be a check up to see how they are managing in the new tenancy.
* Current Falkirk Council Homespot Site is not mobile friendly enough. Difficult to navigate, most residents access the site through mobile phones.

Residents of Castings Homeless Assessment Centre were invited to take part in the LHS consultation on Friday 22nd July to discuss their views on housing in Falkirk and provide feedback for the survey. Six residents chose to take part in the consultation. All key points were recorded.

**Talbot House – Older People Community Centre**

**Key Points**

* more information about adaptations should be available and easy to access, knowing who to contact is important.

An older person’s focus group was held during a breakfast/coffee morning on 26th July at Talbot House in Grangemouth. Those in attendance were given transport by Grangemouth Community Care. This event is bi-weekly and run by local charities that encourage older people to eat together and socialise. Falkirk Council were invited to the morning so that older people would have a comfortable, informal setting to provide their views on housing in Falkirk. Around thirty people were in attendance.

Those in attendance had various level of interest in the survey with most having no interest and did not want to take part. Eight participants completed the full LHS survey. A total of thirteen completed the further feedback focus group questions (two questions based on current support provision and interest in an older person’s community)

**Kersiebank Community Café & Food Pantry**

**Key Points**

* More Social Housing was required.
* Housing support needed.
* Access to furniture packages and white goods for new tenants, improved service from Housing Officers, staff more knowledgeable about what is going on in the area.

The Kersiebank Community Café is held weekly and run by volunteers that encourage people to eat together and to socialise. A Food Pantry service is also available to those in attendance who require access to food out with Café hours. Falkirk Council were invited to the Cafe on Wednesday 31st August to speak to those in present to provide their views on housing in Falkirk. Approximately twenty people were in attendance, nine chose to participate with the survey.

**Denny Community Care Centre & Food Pantry**

***Key Points***

* All participants highlighted a desire to see more social housing.
* People felt strong local connections.
* All had a preference to live in the Denny.

Falkirk Council were invited to attend the Denny Community Support Group on Friday 23rd September to speak to those present to provide their views on housing in Falkirk. After a brief introduction and background on the local housing strategy all five in attendance chose to participate with the survey.

**Link Academy – Young People Education**

**Key Points**

* Most would like social rented housing.

Falkirk Council were invited to a young person’s support group at Link Living’s Link Academy on Thursday 28th July. Link Academy is an accredited training centre which provides a range of qualifications, including Tenancy and Citizenship SCQF Level 4. They also provide employability support.

The purpose of the survey was explained to the six people who were in attendance for the session. One of which chose not to take part in the focus group questions. Each member of the group was aged between 16-21.

**Community Learning & Development’s Young Parents Support Group**

**Key Points**

* All participants preferred Social Housing
* Preference for four in a block or houses
* All participants wanted new homes to be built in Denny, Bonnybridge or a Central Falkirk Location

Falkirk Council’s Community Learning Development team holds a support group for Young Parents, the group meet regularly and have online support sessions to discuss issues and to provide a chance to socialise. An online group session was held on Wednesday 28th September to discuss the new Local Housing Strategy and the groups requirements. Eight members of the group chose to participate and provided details.

**Lighthouse Community Café**

**Key Points**

* All participants highlighted a desire to see more social housing.
* Most noted a desire to live in the Polmont, Brighton, Maddiston and the Braes areas of Falkirk.
* All participants noted a need for the provision of adaptations and information surrounding these to be easily accessible. Also, concern was raised at the current length of time it is taking from initial assessment to adaptations being installed.
* Services and Support that those contributing to the survey would like to be provided included regular housing officer checks.
* Support for the elderly people who might be lonely, teaching practical living skills for young people who might be in their first tenancy/home of their own.

The Lighthouse Café is held weekly and run by volunteers in Maddiston’s Community Centre, the Café is open to everyone and encourages people of all ages to attend and socialise. Falkirk Council were invited to the Cafe on Thursday 22nd September to speak to those present to provide their views on housing in Falkirk. After a brief introduction and background on the local housing strategy seven people chose to participate with the survey.

**Military Matters – Housing Options Scotland**

**Key Points**

* Ex Service Personnel will often not identify as such, especially if they served for short periods of time. This still entitles them to full support.
* A huge importance should be placed on Tenancy Support and help to develop living skills including Budgeting, arranging appointments, welfare benefits, paying bills.
* An investment should be made into ex service personnel in new tenancies similar to Housing First models, regular visits from housing staff.
* Importance on providing up to date service provision to Military Matters, they include all information within Good Area guides that are given during planned discharges.
* Relevant housing staff completing the Armed Forces Mental Health First Aid training course.

**Falkirk Council met via Teams with Military Matters on Thursday 24th November to discuss Ex Military personnel and veteran accessing housing in the area. Military Matters** is a specialist project within Housing Options**Scotland** focusing on housing issues affecting people serving in the**military**in**Scotland** service personnel transitioning into civilian life**. Military Matters provided expert insight into the common housing issues affecting serving personnel and provided details on what is being done to help ex-military and veterans around Scotland.**

**Contact was also made with Falkirk Council’s Veterans Champion to discuss issues surrounding ex-military personnel accessing housing. Having a joined-up approach between veteran’s services and council support upon discharge was highlighted as a priority. Also, promotion to raise awareness of services such as benefits advice and adaptations was of high importance.**

**Sensory Centre & Travelling Person’s Site**

**Key points**

Falkirk Council staff attended the Forth Valley Sensory centre to discuss the details of the LHS and the possibility/interest of holding a focus group with services users who attend the facility. The F**orth Valley Sensory Centre is a charity that supports D/deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially sighted people of all ages across Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, and Stirling.**

**The decision to hold a group and take part in consultation was left with representatives of FV Sensory Centre. No group was held but an increase of those with disabilities was noted in responses to the online survey shortly after the meeting was held.**

**The residents of the Travelling Person’s site indicated that they felt they were overly consulted by Falkirk Council and would prefer not to take part in the LHS survey. Previous recent consultation, a** Face-to-face survey using a place setting format was completed at the Travelling Person Site to establish the priorities for reconfiguration and upgrading of the site. Falkirk Council staff engaged residents on site to discuss requirements and to adapt the site as required. The community were also asked for their ‘Place standard’ views, questions were asked about life on site. What is done well on site and where there is room for improvement.

Contact was also made directly with **Travelling Show People’s Guild** for information on any future requirements they had in the Falkirk area. Emails were sent to Chairman of the group who indicated that they have no permanent requirements in Falkirk.

Falkirk Council also approached local **Autism Support Group Linlithgow & Falkirk Autism Families**, a group where families affected by autism and related conditions can get together to share information. Discussions were held to encourage participations and the decision to take part in the consultation was left with a group representative. No group was held, as a result the report Autism: A Guide for Practitioners within Housing & Homelessness Services produced by the Welsh Government.

The guide was produced as a response to the issues raised by autistic people and professionals through a consultation facilitated by the National Autism Team on behalf of the Welsh Government. The report highlights the challenges faced by autistic people in relation to housing and homelessness.

The Guide, and the associated training, provides housing practitioners with practical solutions for dealing with issues which are sometimes seen as anti-social behaviour.

The Guide builds on a ‘person-centred’ approach, putting individuals at the heart of the

decision-making process: helping to identify issues as early on to address possible.

The good practice guide highlighted that some in the housing sector are following trauma informed approaches to create psychologically informed environments. Doing so makes it possible to address the sometimes-complex needs of tenants who may be at risk of homelessness, allowing them to access and maintain stable accommodation and live independent lives.

The good practice guide highlights evicting people from social housing makes no sense. Once they have been made homeless, they are likely to be moved into less secure accommodation. They risk losing contact with informal and formal support networks which makes a “bad situation” worse.

We contacted a local **Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender** organisation on several occasions, although interested, they did not agree to a more formal consultation, as they advised they had several projects ongoing.

National research[[1]](#footnote-1) [*No Place Like Home?*](https://www.clarionhg.com/media/1745/no-place-like-home-final.pdf)was considered in relation to the requirements of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. This aimed to uncover LGBT\*Q[[2]](#footnote-2) residents’ experiences in relation to their social housing and their views about what needs to be changed. No Place Like Home acknowledged that little is really known about the needs and views of LGBT\*Q residents who live in housing provided by local authority or a housing association.

Despite equality laws, the above research found that LGBT\*Q social housing residents do not believe they are being listened to, taken seriously, or treated equally.

According to the research, LGBT\*Q social housing residents are hypervigilant around their neighbourhood and home. A fifth of gay men reported that they regularly modify their home to make their sexuality less visible if their landlord or a repairs’ person visits.

A third of survey respondents felt that their housing provider was not able to deal effectively with issues like harassment.

Almost half of LGBT\*Q residents surveyed felt lonely, whilst a quarter felt unhappy. Less than a half felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

Recommendations and practical suggestions

1. Housing providers need to build trust with LGBT\*Q residents.
* LGBT\*Q social housing residents want their housing provider to be more proactive on inclusion and be an openly LGBT\*Q supportive organisation.
* Ensure all housing provider workers treat LGBT\*Q residents with respect and on an equal basis with all other residents.
* Ensure housing providers take complaints about their staff (including subcontractor staff) seriously and providers act on them quickly.
* If monitoring residents’ sexuality/gender identity, housing providers must be clear what the information will be used for, why, who will have access to it and how the data will be protected.
1. Be an organisation who is openly supportive of LGBT\*Q residents. How?
* Going beyond legislation and token gesture
* Constantly advertise support for LGBT\*Q residents across a wide range of media.
* With LGBT\*Q community and commercial spaces disappearing, there is an opportunity for housing providers to help create new spaces.

The research asked the following questions.

* What do LGBT\*Q social housing residents feel about where they live and who visits their home?
* Overall, there is a strong degree of hypervigilance on the part of LGBT\*Q residents.
* Do LGBT\*Q social housing residents feel part of a community?
* Overall, many LGBT\*Q residents feel excluded in multiple ways, which combined can lead to feelings of isolation.
* What do LGBT\*Q social housing residents think of their housing provider?
* Overall, LGBT\*Q residents were concerned about being able to trust their housing providers to treat them equally, with dignity and respect.
* What do LGBT\*Q social housing residents think housing providers are doing well and what housing providers could improve?

**Doing well**

* Some housing providers are actively listening and putting residents in contact with
* appropriate support services or organisations.
* Some housing providers have a social inclusion officer or LGBT\*Q-specific support officer.
* Some have resident facing staff who are known to be supportive of LGBT\*Q residents.
* Some do let residents know about LGBT\*Q related events.
* Some have LGBT\*Q tenants’ forums that have feedback on policy.

**Needs to be improved.**

* Communication with residents; this includes staff-resident interactions (treating people courteously and with respect), improving accessibility to relevant information and services, and constantly advertising the organisation as LGBT\*Q affirmative across a range of media.
* Staff training to improve awareness of LGBT\*Q lives and interactions with residents.
* Procedures for dealing with complaints about harassment and abuse.
* Utilising LGBT\*Q resident groups to help design and review policies.

Key points from this research are that “home” must be seen as a safe place. If health and wellbeing is to be improved by participation in local communities some voices need to be sought out, welcomed, and supported so they can be heard and included.

**Stakeholders**

During the summer of 2021 Falkirk Council met with twelve Local Estate Agents individually to discuss their views on the housing market, who is buying in Falkirk and what demand exists for specific property types.

The majority of Estate Agents highlighted that the Housing market in Falkirk is healthy, properties were often selling very quickly and for over the advertised price, good for sellers but not for buyers. The agents noted that most people purchasing properties were either people looking to downsize or first-time buyers, they did however indicate that increased prices were making things difficult for first time-buyers and that family members had sometimes provided financial assistance to meet deposit requirements.

When questioned specifically about demand for bungalows or low-level flats all the estate agents spoke of a huge demand but a lack of supply in the areas means that there are never enough available on the market.

We have met with estate agents twice over the course of the LHS 2017-2022 and will continue this process with the new LHS.

We work regularly with estate agents and the District Valuer on work areas such as the buyback project which shape actions in the new LHS.

### Working Groups

The LHS is overseen by the **Strategic Housing Group** which acts as the Housing Market Partnership. This group discussed the progress of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment and explored scenarios to be explored. This group has representation from housing, planning, RSLs and Homes for Scotland.

**Tripartite group** this groupconsist of the strategy and development team, council new build team, developing RSLs, Scottish Government. The groups’ purpose is to oversee the SHIP and updates on the HNDA and LHS are given to every meeting.

**Housing Contribution Statement Steering Group** oversees the Housing Contribution Statement. This group consists of members from the Health and Social Care Partnership, RSLs and Falkirk Council Strategy and Development. Members of this group provided input to priority four.

### Specialist meetings

Falkirk Council strategy and development team meet with members of Homes for Scotland in January2023 along with planning colleagues to discuss the HNDA, the new LHS and the new Local Development Plan. We started discussions around the housing supply target at this meeting.

### Private Sector Surveys and Data Collection

Online Surveys

Three separate online surveys were created in relation to private sector tenants, landlords and letting agent and the Scheme of Assistance, to gain views, experience, and feedback on these distinctive housing areas.

Private Sector Tenant Survey format consisted of questions covering property information, sector experience, housing aspirations and assistance information. The survey also provided space for comments to be added and asked further questions seeking opinion on Digital Inclusion. A letter highlighting the release of the survey was issued to one quarter of rented properties by random selection. It was also made available on Falkirk Council’s website and publicised on social media and other distribution networks including Registered Tenants Organisations, Community Learning and Development, CVS Falkirk, Yammer, and our People’s Panel consultation list.

The survey was also available in hardcopy format with pre-paid envelopes attached for ease of return. The survey was available for translation if required. It was available from late October until 31/1/23: Eight five responses were received.

An overview of the survey results will be available on our [Private Sector](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/privatesector) webpages.

Landlord and Letting Agents Survey format consisted of questions covering portfolio and management information, rent and property improvement arrangements, there future plans, regulatory awareness, and future assistance. The survey also provided space for comments to be added.

Awareness of the forthcoming release of the survey was raised at the Landlord and Letting Agent Forum on 29/9/22. An email was sent to all registered landlords as well as letting agents on our communication list once launched. The survey was also made available on Falkirk Council’s website and publicised on social media and other distribution networks including Registered Tenants Organisations, Community Learning and Development, CVS Falkirk, Yammer, our People’s Panel consultation list, Scottish Association of Landlords and as well as our Renting Matters Newsletter (December 2022).

The survey was available for translation if required and was available from late October until 31/1/23. Eighty-one responses were received (79 Landlords/ 2 Letting Agents).

Landlord and Letting Agent survey findings were shared through our Renting Matters in Falkirk e-newsletter (May 2023) as well as at our June 2023 Forum. Landlords and letting agents were given a further opportunity to feedback to ensure the findings were reflective of the wider stakeholder group.

An overview of the survey results will be available on our [Private Sector](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/privatesector) webpages.

Scheme of Assistance Survey format consisted of questions concentrating on Disabled Adaptation which asked about discretionary grant assistance and the importance of different support elements as well as Property Conditions which asked about priorities, discretionary grant assistance, common repairs, and enforcement. The survey also provided space for comments to be added and asked further questions seeking opinion on Digital Inclusion.

The survey was made available on Falkirk Council’s website and publicised on social media and other distribution networks including Social Work, Housing and Social Care Partnership, Environmental Health, Registered Tenants Organisations, Community Learning and Development, CVS Falkirk, Yammer, and our People’s Panel consultation list.

The survey was also available in hardcopy format with pre-paid envelopes attached for ease of return. The survey was available for translation if required. It was available from late October until 28/2/23: 29 responses were received. Due to the low response rate, further engagement is scheduled for 2024/25: concentrating more on face to face, focus group discussions.

An overview of the survey results will be available on our [Private Sector](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/privatesector) webpages.

In addition, drop-in sessions were arranged as part of the private sector engagement process. Due to low turnout, these events were reduced to three sessions which took place at Kersiebank Community Education Centre on 10/2/23, Tamfourhill Community HUB on 11/1/23 and Falkirk College on 18/1/23. No one dropped into the sessions at Kersiebank and Tamfourhill sessions and only one survey was completed in person at Falkirk College.

### Developing the Local Housing Strategy

The consultation process involved receiving feedback and opinions from partners, stakeholders, and local communities to help develop a strategy for addressing housing and support issues in Falkirk. This approach made sure that everyone had a chance to share their ideas and that the strategy was based on compelling evidence and a variety of perspectives. The feedback received was organised into different themes and used to create an action plan.

### Second Stage Formal Consultation

The second stage consultation for the local housing strategy plays a pivotal role in refining its development. This phase serves as a valuable platform for gathering additional insights, addressing potential gaps, and ensuring that the strategy aligns closely with the needs and aspirations of the community. By engaging stakeholders in this process, we can enhance the strategy's effectiveness, increase its relevance to local concerns, and create a more robust and impactful housing plan that truly serves the community's present and future needs.

A formal consultation period asking seven questions relating to the priorities of the LHS were asked. It ran during the summer of 2023. A draft version of the LHS, a summary document and the findings of the first consultation were provided as supporting documents to the online survey. The consultation was shared with all groups that were contacted as part of the first stage consultation and was shared online via various social media platforms and community pages.

Fifty-three respondents provided feedback that supported the priorities set within the Local Housing Strategy with emphasis being placed on providing high quality, energy efficient and affordable housing that meets the needs of local people both today and in the future. Health & Wellbeing, Support Provision and Falkirk Council plans on being proactive in ending homelessness were also noted to be significant.

### LHS Second Stage Consultation Summary

This summary outlines key points from responses to Falkirk Council's second-stage consultation on the Local Housing Strategy. The survey covered seven questions based on the draft strategy, government guidance and insights from the first-stage consultation. The summary highlights the responses by each question asked.

**Q1) How can Falkirk Council work with Developers and Housing Association to increase the supply of affordable housing in the area? What measures could be put in place to ensure that affordable homes remain affordable?**

The responses from stakeholders regarding Falkirk Council's efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing highlight several key themes.

* **Balancing Tenures:** Many responses highlight the importance of a balanced approach to housing supply, addressing both affordable and private homes. This indicates a concern that focusing solely on social housing might neglect the needs of other segments of the population, such as individuals or families who are looking to purchase homes.
* **Affordability:** The concept of "affordable" housing is highlighted as relative to income and often challenged due to rising housing costs. The need for a definition that considers various income levels is evident, along with a call for measures that help a wider range of individuals, including those on low incomes and single people.
* **Partnerships with Developers and Housing Associations:** Collaboration with both private developers and housing associations is suggested to increase the supply of affordable homes. Developers could potentially be incentivized to sell homes at discounted rates, and partnerships with housing associations could lead to new build properties that cater to low-income families.
* **Use of Land and Planning:** Land allocation and planning policies are discussed as essential tools for delivering affordable housing. There is a call for more allocated land for housing development, especially on brownfield sites. The impact of planning regulations, including the percentage of affordable homes required in new developments, is also mentioned.
* **Maintaining Housing Stock:** Ensuring that existing housing stock is well-maintained is highlighted as an important aspect of addressing housing needs. It is suggested that housing inspections should be increased to ensure that both council housing and privately rented homes are maintained to a good standard.
* **Local Facilities and Infrastructure:** The need for adequate infrastructure and local facilities to support housing developments is raised. Concerns are voiced about the strain on amenities like GPs, train stations, schools, and parking due to increased housing developments.
* **Engagement with Communities:** Some responses stress the importance of involving communities in discussions about new housing developments, especially on derelict and abandoned sites. Early engagement can provide certainty to developers and housing associations and address potential community concerns.
* **Allocation and Distribution:** Suggestions for fair allocation policies include considering the needs of different groups such as movers, seekers, and starters. There is also a call for equal allocation of new housing to create a more equitable system.
* **Repurposing Housing Stock:** Repurposing larger properties to accommodate distinct types of tenants, such as moving single occupants into smaller units, is suggested to optimise available housing stock and meet specific needs.

The responses to the question underline the multi-layered nature of addressing affordable housing supply. A comprehensive strategy should balance affordability and include sustainability, collaboration, strategic planning, maintenance, community engagement, equitable allocation, and a broader focus on socio-economic benefits.

**Q2) What is your overall opinion on the Housing supply target? Do you think the proposed target supply aligns with the current housing needs and demands in Falkirk?**

From the responses, several trends and key issues can be noted regarding the public's opinions on the Housing Supply Target (HST) and its alignment with current housing needs and demands in Falkirk.

* **Need for More Housing:** Many respondents believe that the proposed housing supply target falls short of addressing the actual housing crisis. They highlight the need for a higher number of homes to be built to adequately meet the demand.
* **Affordability Concerns:** Several individuals express concern about the balance between affordable and private housing. They argue that there should be a greater emphasis on affordable housing, as private developments can lead to excessive costs and market saturation.
* **Demand Outweighs Supply:** A common sentiment is that the current demand for housing outweighs the proposed supply targets. Respondents believe that the target numbers are not sufficient to address the growing housing needs in the area.
* **Impact on Existing Services:** Concerns are raised about the potential strain on existing infrastructure like schools and healthcare facilities due to increased housing development. Respondents argue that the provision of housing should be accompanied by improved local amenities.
* **Private vs. Affordable Housing:** The balance between private and affordable housing is a point of contention. Some respondents question the dominance of private housing in the target and advocate for a greater focus on affordable housing.
* **Rural Development:** A few comments mention the importance of promoting rural development and balancing housing allocation between brownfield and greenfield sites to meet diverse housing needs.
* **Wheelchair Accessibility:** Specific calls for accessible housing are highlighted, with suggestions for a certain percentage of new homes to be built to wheelchair accessible standards to address the needs of people with disabilities.
* **Engagement with Developers:** Some respondents suggest that building relationships with private developers and landlords is crucial to achieving the housing supply targets and ensuring the successful delivery of new homes.
* **Need for Transparency:** There is a desire for transparent and open dialogue between the council and the public to address concerns, clarify goals, and ensure that housing plans align with community needs.

In summary, stakeholder’s opinions on the housing supply target in Falkirk reflect a range of concerns regarding affordability, allocation, infrastructure, and the overall adequacy of the proposed target to address the housing crisis in the region. There is a common sentiment that the target needs to be more ambitious to effectively meet the diverse housing needs of the community.

We value the feedback from stakeholders regarding the housing supply target in Falkirk. The concerns raised about affordability, allocation, and infrastructure are important and we recognise the need for a more ambitious target to address the housing crisis. While the feedback is essential, it is worth noting that the target numbers were based on a thorough Housing Needs Demand Assessment. We are dedicated to considering this feedback as we aim to find a housing solution that balances community needs and informed analysis.

**Q3) What actions could be taken to reduce homelessness in the area? How can the council work with local support services to provide help and support to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?**

From the provided responses, several key trends and issues related to reducing homelessness and providing support can be identified:

* **Empty Properties:** Many respondents suggested using empty properties to accommodate homeless individuals or families. This approach involves addressing issues with the properties after people are moved in, which could help increase available housing stock quickly.
* **Rent Deposit Schemes:** Some respondents proposed re-introducing rent deposit schemes to help individuals move into the private rented sector. This would alleviate the financial burden of initial deposits and make private renting more accessible.
* **Partnership and Information Sharing:** Collaborative efforts between the council and local support services, such as Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), were noted. The goal is to ensure that individuals receive comprehensive information about housing options and support services available to them.
* **Affordable Housing and Empty Buildings:** Building more affordable housing and repurposing empty buildings for housing were suggested to increase the overall housing supply and offer accessible options for those at risk of homelessness.
* **Individual Support:** Respondents highlighted the importance of understanding individual circumstances, such as trauma, and providing support that meets those needs. Some mentioned the need to offer a platform for progress, considering factors like mental health and addiction, which contribute to homelessness.
* **Allocations**: Suggestions to modify allocation processes, including using a points-based system and prioritising homelessness cases over other categories like "movers," were put forward to address the immediate needs of homeless individuals.
* **Support Services and Mental Health:** The importance of strengthening mental health services and substance abuse programs was emphasised to address underlying issues contributing to homelessness.
* **Education and Financial Literacy:** Many respondents highlighted the importance of education on running a household, including financial management. This could empower individuals to manage their homes effectively and prevent homelessness.
* **Homelessness Prevention Programs:** There were calls for the development and funding of programs that identify individuals and families at risk of homelessness early on and offer financial assistance, mediation services, and counselling to stabilise their housing situations.
* **Supply of Accommodation:** Many responses stressed the need for the council to focus on increasing the supply of available housing across all tenures to effectively tackle homelessness.
* **Communication and Engagement:** Several respondents mentioned the importance of proactive engagement with homeless or vulnerable individuals, ensuring that they receive timely assistance and support.
* **Holistic Approaches:** The need for a comprehensive approach involving multiple stakeholders, including charities, housing associations, private landlords, and support services, was emphasised by several respondents.
* **Council Action and Leadership:** Respondents called for the council to take a more proactive role in addressing homelessness and increasing available housing, suggesting that partnerships with support services are not enough on their own.
* **Empty Homes Team and Enforcement:** The importance of having dedicated teams to address vacant and void properties, as well as enforcing compliance and using compulsory purchase orders, was highlighted.

Overall, the responses reflect a range of ideas and perspectives on how to reduce homelessness and provide support in the area. Many suggestions revolve around increasing available housing stock, enhancing support services, and taking a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address the complex issue of homelessness.

**Q4) How can the council work with housing associations to increase the supply of social housing in the area? What measures could be put in place to ensure that homes are of a high standard and meet the needs of tenants?**

From the responses provided, several key trends and issues related to increasing the supply of social housing and ensuring housing quality for tenants can be identified.

* **Collaboration and Communication:** Many respondents highlight the importance of regular meetings, collaboration, and communication between the council and housing associations. Establishing strong partnerships, joint planning, and sharing resources are seen as essential to efficiently address the housing shortage and quality concerns.
* **Standards and Regulations:** A common theme is the need for strict adherence to building standards and regulations for new housing developments. There is a call for regular inspections and enforcement to ensure that new builds meet high-quality standards and are accessible to individuals with diverse needs.
* **Community Consultation:** Engaging with local communities and tenants is seen as crucial in understanding their needs and preferences. Suggestions include holding focus groups and consultations with people who have experienced new build properties to ensure that their input is valued and acted upon.
* **Maintenance and Repairs:** Respondents highlight the importance of proper maintenance and timely repairs for existing housing stock. Effective property management services and tenant support are seen as essential to address maintenance issues promptly.
* **Transparency and Accountability:** Many suggest transparency in allocation processes and housing lists, ensuring that priority bands are consistent across different housing associations. Holding housing associations accountable to the same standards as private landlords is also mentioned as a key concern.
* **Affordability and Funding:** Some respondents suggest providing more funding to housing associations and offering incentives for building social housing. Additionally, the affordability of social housing and rent levels is highlighted as a factor that needs to be considered.
* **Matching Housing to Needs:** Aligning housing allocations with the specific needs of tenants is mentioned. This includes avoiding single occupants in family homes, ensuring that properties are suitable for the intended tenants, and providing accessible and flexible housing.
* **Feedback and Tenant Satisfaction:** Establishing mechanisms for tenants to provide feedback and express concerns about housing and services is seen as valuable for improving housing quality and tenant satisfaction.
* **Involvement of Health and Support Workers**: Some respondents suggest sharing information with health and support workers and involving them in housing-related decisions to ensure that the needs of vulnerable individuals are adequately addressed.
* **Repurposing and Brownfield Sites:** Utilising brownfield sites and vacant properties is mentioned as a potential solution to increase housing supply. Repurposing existing spaces for housing could contribute to meeting demand.
* **Design and Innovation:** Designing better and more innovative housing solutions is proposed to address the shortage of quality housing. Some respondents suggest exploring contemporary designs that meet modern needs and preferences.

Feedbacks highlights the importance of collaboration, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to tenant needs in addressing the supply of social housing and ensuring housing quality. The need for strong partnerships between the council and housing associations is highlighted to create effective strategies for increasing the availability of affordable, high-quality housing.

**Q5) What steps could be taken to ensure that homes are healthy and safe to live in? How can the council work with health professionals and partners to ensure that housing is seen as an important part off overall health and wellbeing?**

Consultation highlighted several key trends and issues related to ensuring healthy and safe homes, as well as the collaboration between the council and health professionals, can be identified.

* **Integrated Health Approach:** Many respondents underline the need for close collaboration between the council and health professionals. They suggest the presence of housing representatives at joint meetings with health services to ensure an integrated approach to health and wellbeing, recognising the impact of housing on mental and physical health.
* **Maintenance and Inspection:** Proper maintenance, regular checks, and inspections are highlighted as essential to ensure homes remain healthy and safe to live in. Addressing issues such as dampness, ventilation, and insulation promptly is crucial.
* **Healthcare Professional Involvement:** Several respondents stress the importance of involving healthcare professionals in housing decisions. They recommend that the opinions of doctors and healthcare providers should be valued and considered in housing allocation and adaptations.
* **Data Sharing and Research:** Collaborating with health professionals and researchers to collect data on the impact of housing conditions on health and wellbeing is suggested. This data can inform policies and resource allocation effectively.
* **Accessibility and Adaptations:** Creating wheelchair-accessible homes and providing swift adaptations for individuals with specific health needs is mentioned. Some respondents urge for direct matching of suitable homes to people with urgent health requirements, bypassing the usual allocation process.
* **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Recognising the impact of housing on mental health, respondents emphasise the need for soundproofing, protection from noise disturbances, and access to green spaces to promote wellbeing.
* **Safety and Security:** Ensuring safety and security within housing communities is highlighted. Some respondents’ express concerns about the presence of disruptive or antisocial tenants and suggest measures to address such issues.
* **Community Engagement:** Engaging with local communities through consultations and grants to improve access to healthy and safe housing is recommended.
* **Policy Alignment:** Respondents highlight the importance of aligning housing policies with public health strategies and national objectives to ensure housing is seen as an integral part of overall health and wellbeing.
* **Accountability and Timeliness:** Respondents emphasise the importance of accountability in addressing housing issues promptly, especially for individuals with urgent health needs.
* **Fair Allocation and Equal Treatment:** Fair and equal treatment of all individuals, irrespective of their sexual orientation, mental health, or other attributes, is emphasised. Some respondents’ express concerns about prioritising certain groups over others.

Overall, the responses underline the need for collaboration, communication, and a comprehensive approach that integrates housing and health services. Creating healthy and safe homes requires effective partnerships, data-driven decision-making, and a commitment to addressing the specific needs of individuals with health challenges.

**Q6) How can the council encourage the development of low-carbon housing and ensure that existing homes are energy-efficient? What incentives could be put in place to encourage homeowners and landlords to make their properties more sustainable? How can the Local Housing Strategy Address Fuel Poverty/Cost of Living concerns and help ensure that all residents have access to affordable, efficient, and sustainable heating solutions?**

From the responses given several key trends and issues related to encouraging low-carbon housing, promoting energy efficiency in existing homes, and addressing fuel poverty were noted.

* **Incentives for Low-Carbon Housing:** Many respondents suggest introducing incentives to encourage the development of low-carbon housing. These incentives could include grants, discounts on council tax, and bonuses for improving energy performance.
* **Education and Information:** Providing information on sustainability and energy efficiency to homeowners and landlords is highlighted. Some respondents suggest that the council's Private Sector Team could play a role in educating landlords about sustainable practices.
* **Financial Support:** Several respondents stress the need for additional funding to achieve these goals. Some express concerns about the feasibility of implementing these strategies without sufficient financial resources.
* **Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs):** EPCs are mentioned as a way to assess and improve the energy efficiency of properties. They can provide information to homeowners and potential buyers about a property's energy performance.
* **Fuel Poverty Concerns:** Respondents highlight the importance of addressing fuel poverty and cost of living concerns. Suggestions include signposting to relevant services, offering grants for energy-efficient upgrades, and reducing energy costs.
* **Renewable Energy and Technology:** Solar panels, rainwater collection systems, and energy-efficient heating solutions like heat pumps are mentioned as ways to promote sustainable practices and reduce carbon emissions.
* **Building Standards and Planning Policies:** Incorporating sustainability and energy efficiency requirements into planning policies and building standards is recommended to ensure that new developments meet low-carbon housing goals.
* **Support for Low-Income Households:** Several respondents stress the need to provide financial support and incentives for low-income households to retrofit their homes with energy-efficient solutions.
* **Local Initiatives:** Respondents suggest that the council could offer support to local businesses, provide grants for solar panels, and collaborate with advisory groups to promote long-term sustainable solutions.
* **Focus on New Developments:** Many respondents highlight the importance of ensuring that new developments are built to high energy efficiency standards from the outset, incorporating technologies like solar panels and energy-efficient insulation.
* **Collaboration and Awareness:** Collaborating with the government to reduce energy costs and raising public awareness about the benefits of energy-efficient homes is suggested.
* **Balancing Budget Constraints:** Some respondents express scepticism about the feasibility of achieving these goals due to budget constraints and note the need for central government support.

Overall, the responses highlight the importance of financial incentives, education, planning policies, and sustainable technology adoption to promote low-carbon housing, energy efficiency, and affordability. Addressing fuel poverty and encouraging sustainable practices are key considerations in ensuring that all residents have access to efficient and sustainable heating solutions.

**Q6) How can the council ensure that new housing developments are sensitive to the needs of local communities? What measures could be put in place to ensure that new developments are safe and include community facilities, public spaces, and green areas?**

Based on the provided responses some common trends and key issues related to ensuring that new housing developments are sensitive to the needs of local communities and include community facilities, public spaces, and green areas are listed below:

* **Community Engagement and Consultation:** Several responses highlight the importance of involving local communities in the planning process. It is suggested that public consultation should be conducted to understand the actual needs and preferences of residents rather than making assumptions.
* **Infrastructure and Facilities:** There's a consensus that new developments should provide essential facilities like community hubs, schools, healthcare centres, and play parks and communal areas should be well-planned to accommodate the increased population.

Developers should take responsibility for creating inclusive and well-designed communities.

* **Mixed-Use Development:** Respondents recommend creating mixed-use developments that include residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. This approach promotes vibrant and self-sustaining neighbourhoods.
* **Access to Green Spaces:** Many responses emphasise the need for public spaces, green areas, and parks within or nearby new developments. These areas provide opportunities for outdoor activities, social interaction, and relaxation.
* **Safety and Accessibility:** Safety concerns are mentioned, with suggestions for well-lit streets, pedestrian-friendly pathways, and secure boundaries for family homes.
* **Sustainability and Environmental Concerns:** Some responses highlight the importance of incorporating sustainability measures in new developments, such as tree planting, energy-efficient design, and renewable energy sources.
* **Traffic and Road Planning:** Several responses mention the importance of considering the impact of increased traffic on local roads and infrastructure, ensuring adequate road design and parking spaces.
* **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Design principles should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate different household sizes and changing needs over time. Planning should account for the long-term impact of developments and ensure they contribute positively to the community.
* **Local Character and Identity:** There's a call to preserve the local character and identity of the area, considering architectural styles and cultural heritage.
* **Supporting Vulnerable Groups:** Some responses suggest ensuring that new housing is accessible and supportive of vulnerable groups, such as disabled and ageing communities.
* **Regulatory Oversight:** There's a call for stricter planning regulations and compliance requirements to ensure that new developments align with community needs.

In summary, the key issues that emerge from the responses revolve around community engagement, infrastructure provision, sustainability, affordability, safety, and the overall quality of life for residents in new housing developments.

**Q7) Do you agree with the priories listed to create a sustainable private rented sector? What other actions do you think we should consider? What challenges do you think the Council might face in implementing them and how do you propose addressing them?**

Based on the provided responses, listed below are some common trends and key issues related to creating a sustainable private rented sector and the challenges faced by the council in implementing them:

**Priorities for Creating a Sustainable Private Rented Sector:**

* **Financial Viability for Landlords:** Respondents highlight the need to ensure that the private rented sector remains financially viable for landlords. Some express concerns that landlords may quit the sector if it becomes unprofitable.
* **Affordability Measures:** Rent control and rent stabilisation policies are suggested to prevent excessive rent increases and make housing more affordable for tenants.
* **Regulation and Licensing:** Many respondents advocate for the implementation of comprehensive licensing and regulation systems for private landlords and rental properties to ensure compliance with safety, health, and environmental standards.
* **Energy Efficiency Incentives:** Several responses suggest offering financial incentives or grants to private landlords to invest in energy-efficient improvements to their properties, contributing to environmental sustainability.
* **Tenant Support Services:** Establishing tenant support services is recommended to provide guidance, mediation, and dispute resolution between landlords and tenants, fostering better communication.
* **Deposit Protection:** Many respondents support the introduction of mandatory deposit protection schemes to safeguard tenants' security deposits and prevent disputes.
* **Tenant Education:** Providing educational programs for tenants to understand their rights, responsibilities, and available support services is seen as important.
* **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging in open dialogue with landlords, tenants, and industry associations to understand concerns and perspectives is suggested for finding mutually beneficial solutions.

**Challenges and Proposed Solutions:**

* **Financial Challenges:** Respondents express concerns about the financial sustainability of the private rented sector for both landlords and tenants. Some propose offering incentives to landlords to make renting financially viable.
* **Affordability and Rent Control:** Balancing affordability with landlords' needs for profit is a challenge. To address this, some suggest finding a middle ground through rent control policies.
* **Regulation Implementation:** Implementing comprehensive regulation and licensing systems may be challenging. Some respondents propose collaborating with industry associations and experts to develop effective regulations.
* **Tenant and Landlord Relations:** Improving relations between tenants and landlords is seen as important. Tenant support services and educational programs can help address disputes and communication gaps.
* **Supply of Affordable Housing:** Respondents emphasise the importance of increasing the supply of affordable housing to provide alternatives to the private rented sector. This would involve substantial investment in social housing.
* **Red Tape and Administrative Burden:** Some respondents believe that excessive regulations create red tape and deter investment in the sector. Simplifying processes and regulations is suggested to address this.
* **Landlord-Tenant References:** Ensuring that both landlords and tenants have references to assess each other's suitability is suggested. This could be facilitated through a systematic process.
* **Long-Term Housing Solutions:** A few respondents advocate for focusing on building more social housing to provide stable, affordable alternatives to the private rented sector.
* **Political and Ideological Factors:** Some responses reflect political and ideological differences in views about the role of the private sector in housing. Balancing these perspectives can be challenging in policy implementation.

The key issues raised in the responses revolve around financial viability, affordability, regulation, tenant-landlord relations, supply of affordable housing and the broader social and demographic context. Finding a balanced approach that considers the interests of various stakeholders while addressing these challenges is crucial for creating a sustainable private rented sector.

The Consultative Draft LHS will also undergo a review by a panel of Scottish Government and local authority representatives. They will evaluate the LHS according to specific Scottish Government criteria and provide feedback to help improve the final strategy. This Peer Review Process is a key step in developing the LHS as it helps to ensure that it meets the required standards and is as effective as possible.

1. University of Surrey (2019) No Place Like Home Exploring the concerns, preferences, and experiences of LGBT\*Q social housing residents [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The research used the term trans\* to cover the gender identity spectrum. This includes, but is not limited to, people who identify as transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, non-binary, non-gendered and agender. We are using the acronym.

BME to refer to individuals who identified as belonging to Black and Minority Ethnic communities. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)